

**CHANGING TRENDS IN  
AGRICULTURAL LAND USE IN THE  
MONERAGALA DISTRICT OF  
SRI LANKA  
IMPLICATIONS FOR POVERTY  
ALLEVIATION**

BY

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Ph. D.

2014



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THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SRI JAYEWARDENEPURA FOR THE AWARD OF THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN GEOGRAPHY

ON

22-06-2015

### **DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE**

The work described in this thesis was carried out by me under the supervision of Emeritus Professor M. M. Karunanayake and Associate Professor T.M.S.P.K. Thennakoon, and a report on this has not been submitted in whole or in part to any other institution for another Degree/Diploma.

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Dedicated  
to  
My Wife Nilu  
&  
Son Kanchuka

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to record my great appreciation of the support extended to me by many individuals and organizations in the process of producing this dissertation.

First, I would like to express my gratitude to Emeritus Professor M. M. Karunanayake, former Chair of Geography, University of Sri Jayewardenepura my external supervisor, whose guidance, and support encouraged me to produce this thesis. I am also deeply indebted to my internal supervisor Professor T.M.S.P.K. Thennakoon Professor of Geography, University of Sri Jayewardenepura necessary to include for her valuable advice; guidance and encouragement in the accomplishment of this task despite her other academic commitments.

I record with great appreciation the advice, suggestions and encouragement provided by Professor M.D.C. Abhayratna former Associate Professor of Geography University of Sri Jayewardenepura examiner of the research seminar and Professor C.K.M. Deheragoda and Professor G.M. Bandaranayake, Department of Geography University of Sri Jayewardenepura who were the members of the Higher Degree committee from whose, expertise greatly benefited.

I am grateful to the Director General, and and Mr. Kirupa Moorthi, Assistant Director Land Use Planning Department for the administrative and other assistance given to me during the entire period of the study.

My special thanks go to Mr. J. Jayasinghe, former Director of LUPPD for his encouragement and invaluable guidance and also Mr. W.M. Danapala, Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Mr. J.J. Pitagampala and

Mr. Sisira Hapuarchchi, Assistant Directors, Land Use Planning Officer Mrs. Sureka (Head Office) and Mr. W.H.M.W. Aiyarathna for the encouragement and the support given at the final phase of my dissertation writing.

I wish to acknowledge staff of Land Use Planning Department, Moneragala specially Mr. Ratnayeke, Samantha and Mrs. Shasika and Sampath for their assistance in organizing the field work. The people of project sites and their leaders Participated enthusiastically in the field research. I record my sincere gratitude to all of them for their support.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the deep understanding and encouragement of my Amma, Appachchi and in particular, my wife Nilu and my son Kavindu Kanchuka who have always wished me the best in my academic endeavors.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **CHANGING TRENDS IN AGRICULTURAL LAND USE IN THE MONERAGALA DISTRICT OF SRI LANKA**

**: IMPLICATIONS FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

**BY: WIJESINGHE JAYAWEERA MUDIYANSELAGE DAYARATNE**

A recent study by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and World Soil Information (2012) revealed that approximately 1.5 billion people of the world depend on the land. Hence, improving agricultural land use practices is a key requirement for improving rural income and making a significant reduction in poverty levels. Over 70% of the world's poor are living in rural areas, with agricultural land use as a major source of income. Improvement of the productivity of land use systems is essential for increasing income and food security of the rural poor (Leslie and Cavatassi, 2003).

Sri Lanka is an agricultural country and likely to remain so at least for the next two to three decades. Agricultural sector is the third dominant earning sector (17%) of the economy in Sri Lanka despite recent contributions by manufactured goods and migrant labour (Central Bank, 2007). It also provides the main source of income for approximately 46% of the active labour force and utilizes nearly 45.0% of the total land area of the country.

However, nearly 85% of the poor families in the country still live in rural areas, where 80.1 % of the rural population is depending on agriculture for their livelihood (Sri Lanka Human Development Report, 2012). Poverty is particularly a rural phenomenon and correlates directly with agricultural land uses.

The impact of land use changes on poverty could be looked from two aspects. 1) Land use changes induced poverty (both positive and negative) 2) Poverty induced land use changes (both positive and negative). However the study mainly focused land use changes induced poverty (both positive and negative).

The poor farmers can only participate in economic growth if they have access to the means and ways of raising their economic productivity of their agricultural lands. Thereby improving their income and the command they have over those things that determine their standard of consumption and conditions of living. Hence, how to improve the productivity of lands of poor households are the most urgent issues for policy planner's responsible for poverty alleviation programmes implementing agricultural areas in the country. Therefore, understanding the linkages between agricultural land use changes and poverty is essential for designing policies which ultimately help to reduce rural poverty through the adaptation of sustainable land management practices in the country.

The study mainly focused on agricultural district of Moneragala, where 85% of the population is rural and 80% of the rural population is engaged in agriculture, to assess the impact of the agricultural land use changes on poverty alleviation during last fifty-years. During this period there had been significant changes in agricultural land use as well as in poverty alleviation.

Agricultural land use changes in last 50 years were assessed using Geographical Information System (GIS), based on land use maps / satellite images from 1956 to 2012. Household and Plot level data were collected through field investigations to track the



land utilization types in the area with particular attention on the implications for poverty alleviation.

Overall results show strong linkages between poverty alleviation and agricultural land use changes in the study area. Some changes show a negative association with poverty alleviation while some changes showed positive effects for poverty alleviation. Hence, the study has identified and recommended specific indicators which could also be applied for measuring poverty in impoverished agricultural regions in the country and recommended a few Land Utilization Types (LUTs) suitable for poverty alleviation and sustainable development in the study area.

The study revealed that selected LUTs such as Rubber smallholder with intercrop, private owned family labour, Export agricultural crops (pepper, cinnamon), private owned, smallholder family labour, in the IM zone and Banana, smallholder, private owned, single crop semi mechanized with family labour and Vegetable mixed crops, private owned, smallholder, family labour in the DL zone have generated better income for farm households and these lands have been transformed from marginal LUTs to sustainable, environmental friendly and profitable land utilization types. A change into a land use type which facilitates agro-based industries would undoubtedly generate higher income and create more employment opportunities in the Moneragala district. The study also observed that some land use types such as Paddy rain-fed (only maha season), private owned, uplands, oxen+family labour, Chena mixed crops, encroached, family labour, Seasonal crops, family labour (sloping lands) and Chena mono- crops (pumpkin, maize), encroached, semi mechanized that are not physically, socially, economically and environmentally not sustainable, should be eliminated or changed for a suitable LUT.

Based on the findings the study, recommended new outlook in local, economic and social development practices to formulate policies, strategies and mechanisms in the farmer participatory development process for poverty alleviation through relevant institutions which are directly and indirectly involve with land management practices for poverty alleviation. Through holistic approach which involves all these institutions, proper agricultural land use types for farmers for poverty alleviation in the study area could be introduced.

The study also recommends that indicators for measuring poverty especially in agricultural areas in the country should be reclassified with the area specific indicators. i.e. main LUT practiced by the settlers, agricultural potential in the area, landlessness or near landlessness, water for agriculture, and basic needs such as safe drinking water, electricity, and housing conditions, health nutrition.

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## **ABBREVIATION & ACRONYMS**

ABGEP	Area Based Growth Equity Programme
APZs	Agricultural Promotion Zones
CAP	Change Agent Programme
CBN	Cost of Basic Needs
CBOs	Community Based Organizations

CDD	Community Driven Development
CMR	Colombo Metropolitan Region
DCS	Department of Census and Statistics
DLSP	Dry Zone Livelihood Support Project
DSD	Divisional Secretary's Divisions
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FORLUMP	Forest and Land Use Mapping Project
FOs	Farmer Organizations
GND	GramaNiladari Division
HDI	Human Development Index
HPI	Human Poverty Index
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPS	Institute of Policy Studies
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
LDO	Land Development Ordinance
LGPRO	Local Governance Programme
LUPPD	Land Use Policy Planning Department
LUT	Land Utilization Type
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MFP	Ministry of Finance and Planning
MICDP	Moneragala Irrigation and Community Development Project

MONDEP	Moneragala Development Project
MPPI	Ministry of Policy Planning and Implementation
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
NPPD	National Physical Planning Department
OPL	Official Poverty Line
OSF	Other State Forest
PAMP	Poverty Alleviation and Micro Finance Project
PIDA	Participatory Institute for Development Administration
RDD	Regional Development Division
REAP	Regional Economic Advancement Project
SCDLIP	Second Community Development Livelihood Improvement Project
SDA	Southern Area Development Authority
UBNI	Unsatisfied Basic Need Index
USGS	United State Geological Survey