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Master thesis

Methods for identifying farm households' objectives in land-use decision-making: An empirical application in Northern Thailand

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the

Master of Science in

Agricultural Sciences, Food Security and Natural Resources Management in
the Tropics and Subtropics.

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Hohenheim,

January 2, 2007

6 Conclusion

The current research showed different methods applied to grasp farmers' objectives. Though the methods differ in application from each other, however, some similar results can be traced along all the methods in all the objectives categories. In response to business-oriented objectives, farmers expressed their wish to have maximum income, with high ranks in objective ranking and coins allocations. They expressed also that they avoid being indebted as much as they can in Q method and Likert scale results. In addition most of them try to grow profitable crops, which reflect high traditional business orientation among the farmers. However, many of them were not willing to allocate more resources, e.g. water and labor, to farming.

In all the methods, the results showed a high valuation of children education, with only one surprising exception, which is open-ended question. Less than one third of the farmers expressed the objective of giving the children. Lowe percentage of farmers mentioning education supports the opinion that farmers do not always have the ability to express their objectives clearly by direct question. On the other hand, the results of all methods showed very high scores or ranking. This might be the reflection from farmers' awareness about the opportunities education can give to their children. They also expressed an objective to keep the land in the village for the locals only. Many farmers also expressed an objective to conserve the soil from erosion by a method like vertiver strips. But only few were willing to give up some profit to maintain the quality of soil.

Coin allocations and ranking results were almost identical giving over all ranking for family, then business, and at last environment. Likert scale results were verifying the same ranking of importance as the pervious two methods. Q method average scores were somewhat different; it put family on top, and swings the second position between business and environment.

However, the real power of Q method results was in grouping the farmers rather than giving simple scoring for categories. Four farmers' groups were distinguished by Q method: profit-oriented dedicated farmers, environmentalists, resource users, and the King's followers. Each group has different profile of distinguishing statements, and hence objectives. Profit-oriented and dedicated farmers showed their wish to gain more profit, but they expressed that they like farming as a style of life. Environmentalists showed their concern about soil erosion and pesticide use. Resource users were group

of younger farmers who are willing to allocate more resources, e.g. water and labor, to get more profit. The King's followers were satisfied by their life and very pro for the King's idea to combat soil erosion by vertiver strips.