

Abstracts Oral and Poster Papers



FORTROP II International Conference “Tropical Forestry Change in a Changing World”

Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand
November 17-20, 2008



***JHUM* CULTIVATION IN KHAGRACHARI HILL DISTRICT OF BANGLADESH – EFFECT OF FALLOW PERIOD AND FARMING EXPERIENCE ON ITS PRODUCTIVITY**

C. S. Swapan¹, A. Kazuo¹ and S. Muhammad²

¹Kyoto University, Kyoto-Fu, Japan

²Bangladesh Agricultural University Mymensingh, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

In the hilly regions of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh, slash-and-burn agriculture (*jhum* cultivation) with upland rice as the major crop is the predominant land-use system. With low population densities and moderate expectations, this system may be ecologically sound and can be adapted to the resources available. Fast population growth has resulted in shorter fallow cycles and consequently increased soil erosion in the hills with loss of soil fertility. Realizing the key roles of skill/ experience and fallow periods in *jhum* cultivation, there are ongoing research activities to explore the status of the *jhum* farmers with regard to these aspects. The initial findings of this research effort are summarized and discussed in this paper. With respect to the skill and experience of *jhum* cultivation, the landless were more experienced (average seven years) than small and medium farmers, whereas large farmers were found to have no experience in it. This result may result from the fact that landless farmers have no paddy land and so they are bound to practice *jhum* cultivation. On average, 50 of the studied *jhum* farmers had been practicing slash-and-burn agriculture with average fallow periods for the landless, small and medium farmers of 2.9, 3.1 and 2.5 years, respectively. Almost all of the interviewed farmers felt that the fallow period has been consistently shortening and productivity of the fields has been declining. Assuming the present average of three years (2.8) in fallow, this period is too short for vegetation regeneration and to regain soil fertility.

Keywords: *Jhum* (Slash-and-burn) cultivation, Khagrachari Hill District, fallow period, farming experience and productivity