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Terraced paddy development by ethnic minorities in northern Vietnam: a preliminary study

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Ethnic minorities in Sapa, Lao Cai Province, in northern Vietnam are developing terraced paddy at a large scale. Facing a rapid population increase of about 3% per annum, the agricultural system of the region shifted from slash and burn cultivation to wet rice production; Boserupian agricultural intensification occurring in one go. This study reports results from our recent interviews to farms in this region. We attempt to demonstrate that (1) number of male siblings determines the area of new developments, (2) development through mutual labour exchange reduces income disparity among households, but (3) subject to availability of land for new development.

Keywords: terraced paddy development, agricultural intensity, ethnic minority, South East Asia