

Process and Background of Rapid Expansion of Agricultural Land Use in Seasonal Swamp

A Case Study on Southwestern Highland of Tanzania

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In this announcement, we will show the process and background of the rapid expansion of agricultural land use into seasonal swamps in Tanzania. In Mbozi district Mbeya region, seasonal swamps had been mainly used for cattle grazing, and also for farming with indigenous cultivation methods. The recent expansion of new agricultural land in the swamps, however, has been narrowing the area for grazing.

The Mbozi district is one of the greatest coffee-producing areas in Tanzania. Since liberalization of the economy, many coffee farmers have become eager to expand their coffee farms in order to earn more money. By expanding coffee farms, they have converted their fields from maize to coffee due to the shortage of land, and consequently the cultivation areas for food crop have reduced. Not only the farmers with insufficient land started to cultivate maize one after another in seasonal swamps which were not substantially used for cultivation, but other farmers with sufficient land also started cultivating in the swamps to produce maize for sale.

In the process of such an agricultural expansion, a new wetland use based on an indigenous agricultural system was innovated and made possible the cultivation of maize in the center of wetland. Although farmers have long been depending on ox-drawn plow for cultivation, decreased grazing land has brought little problem, because the number of cattle decreased, the fewer cattle are now to be recruited from adjacent mountain areas, where cultivation fields are in such steep slope that people don't depend on ox-drawn plow for cultivation.

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