**Subsistence Farming Towards Sustainable Economic Agriculture of Small Farmers in the Developing Countries**

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**Abstract:** Subsistence farming, a form of cultivation in which almost all crops or livestock are used to maintain farms and the farm family, leaving little, surplus for sale and trade. Pre-industrial farming peoples all over the world have traditionally practiced subsistence farming. Some of these people moved from one site to another as they depleted the soil at each site. As urban centers grew, agricultural production became more specialized and commercial agriculture evolved, as farmers produced a large surplus of some crops, which were traded for manufactured goods.

**Keywords:** Subsistence farming, Agriculture sector, Developing countries.

Subsistence farming is self-sustaining farming, in which farmers focus on growing foods that are sufficient for them to feed themselves and their families. A regular subsistence farm includes a set of crops and animals the family needs to feed itself during the year. The decisions of agriculture are taken into account what the family will need during the next year in the first place, then market prices in the second place. " Tony Waters 2007"

Subsistence farmers are people who grow what they eat, build their homes and live without buying regularly from the markets. “However, despite the priority that self-sufficiency poses in subsistence farming, most subsistence farmers now participate in trade to some extent, but usually for goods other than Necessary to survive. Most subsistence farmers now live in developing countries. Although their trade volume if measured in monetary value is less than the volume of consumer trade in countries with complex modern markets. Actually, many of them have important business contacts and commercial goods that they can produce with their own skills or in particular access to valuable resources on the market "Marvin 1968"

Subsistence farming continues now in large parts of developing countries such as some African rural areas, and parts of Asia and Latin America. Subsistence farming has largely disappeared in Europe with the start of the First World War and in North America, with partner and tenant farmers moving from south and central western America during the 1930s and 1940s. Until as recently as the 1950s, it was still customary for family farms in North America and Europe to grow most of the family food. The extent of subsistence cultivation varies from country to country in the economies in transition, however what is remarkable is its global presence. It is difficult to provide a comprehensive picture of the situation in Central and Eastern Europe, but the relative size of subsistence agriculture enormous. More than half of the consumption of the main agricultural products in Bulgaria Provided from small self-contained production units (Mishev *et al.,* 1999 and 2002, Kostov and Lingard, 2002).

Kostov and Lingard (2002) argue that even if the small and semi-subsistence subsistence farms are less technical efficiency, and the overall effects of their presence, compared to completely commercial agriculture is positive in terms of both production and consumption.

Farmers in heavily populated countries such as India and China use their small land holdings to produce enough for their consumption, while using the little remaining production to barter for other commodities. These farmers are trying to maximize crop productivity from the land available to them by intensifying cultivation methods, including preparing rice fields that can be used year after year. In more severe cases, farmers may establish terraces on the sloping hillsides to grow seedlings of rice. Such fields are found in populated areas in Asia such as the Philippines. They can also intensify agriculture by using manure, industrial irrigation and animal waste as fertilizer.

Primitive subsistence or mobile cultivation has the following advantages:

1-Ladang locations in pristine forests are usually chosen by experienced elderly people. Hill slopes are preferred due to the better drainage. Many degrees are located in remote inland areas, away from major population centers.

 This is partly due to historical reasons as most itinerant farmers have been forced into less favored areas by expanding more advanced farmers into lower and better lands. Their isolation impedes their progress and makes the spread of new ideas more difficult.

2- Deforestation is usually caused by fire and ash increases soil fertility. Trees that are not burnt by men or left are broken to spoil naturally. Consequently, mobile cultivation is also called "burning agriculture".

3- A few crops are raised in nurseries. The main crops are starchy foods, such as tapioca, cassava, potatoes, corn, millet, rice, beans and bananas. Crops are grown at calculated intervals, often among other plants, so that the crop can be harvested to provide food throughout the year. The same types of crops are grown on all farms.

4- Short periods of crop occupancy alternate with long rest periods. When yields no longer support the community due to overburdening the soil or invading weeds and shrubs, fields are abandoned and fresh areas are cleared. "Field rotation" is practiced instead of "crop rotation".

5-This form of "migratory agriculture" still supports many indigenous tribes from the tropical rainforests, despite efforts by local governments to resettle them. The depletion of nutrients in the soil, the degradation of light bamboo homes, the attack from insect pests, diseases or wild animals, are some of the main reasons why migration is a necessity.

A more advanced form of subsistence cultivation is "stable subsistence cultivation" in the tropical lowlands, where wasted fields are continuously reused and society permanently remains in one place. Crop rotation is also practiced in some places and more attention is given to land and cultivated crops.

In the absence of technology, the amount of land that a farmer can grow each season is limited by factors such as available tools and soil quality. The tools that subsistence farmers use are often rudimentary. Most farmers do not have access to large domesticated working animals, and therefore remove, toil and harvest their goods using pointed sticks, hoes or by hand.

Subsistence cultivation methods include "cutting and burning" disinfection as farmers disinfect agricultural plots by cutting all the brush, allowing debris to dry, and then burning fallen garbage. This cleanses the field for planting, while the ashes of the remains serve as manure. Sub-tropical societies often use this type of clearing technique throughout the fertile regions of South and Central America and parts of Indonesia.

If the land does not produce a surplus, due to soil fertility, climatic conditions, tools and techniques, or the types of crops available, the farmer cannot do more than hope to live on it. Under these conditions, poor harvest years often lead to food scarcity and starvation.

Not all subsistence farmers can get as much land as possible. Often times, socio-economic conditions prevent the expansion of agricultural plots and any increase in production levels. If the traditions of inheritance require that the plot be divided between the children of the owner upon the death of the owner, then the sizes of the land decrease steadily.

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