

The Impact of Sustainable Farm Management on Paddy Farmers' Livelihood: The Case of Malaysia

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Abstract : The paddy farmer's performance and ability to improve productivity for increased incomes is driven by their level of farm management practices. Knowledge on the nature and level of sustainable farm management (SFM) practice provides opportunities for supporting the competitive advantages of paddy farmers to sustainably break away from the poverty cycle. Little attention has been given to measuring the performance and impact of SFM for the improvement of paddy farmer's livelihood in Malaysia. Without understanding SFM, it is difficult to make policies and provide targeted, impactful support to paddy farmers. The objective of this study is to assess the level of SFM among paddy farmers by calculating the Sustainable Farm Management Index (SFMI) using the Rice Check (RC) guideline established by the Department of Agriculture. The structured questionnaire was designed to capture the nine elements of farming practices based on the RC and was then distributed to 788 paddy farmers in Malaysia's main granary areas, namely MADA, KADA, and BLS. Each practice was given a score to determine whether the guidelines were followed. The index ranges from 0 to 100, with 0 being unsustainable and 100 being highly sustainable. A multiple regression analysis was employed as well to estimate the effects of SFM adoption on farmer livelihoods. The findings show that adopting SFM has a positive and significant effect on farmers' livelihoods. The paper, therefore, recommends that farmers should be educated on the importance of sustainable farming practices as this is essential for the sustainable livelihood development of poor farmers who rely on government subsidies.

Keywords : sustainable farm management, paddy farming, rice check, granary areas, farmers livelihood

Conference Title : ICARE 2023 : International Conference on Agricultural and Resource Economics

Conference Location : Istanbul, Türkiye

Conference Dates : October 16-17, 2023