

Issues and Challenges for Plantation Agriculture in Cameron Highlands: Interpretations from Socio-Anthropological Viewpoints

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Abstract : Cameron Highlands (4°28'N, 101°23'E) is an attractive mountainous region with steep slopes located in the state of Pahang, Malaysia stretching between 1070 and 1830m above sea level with a total land area of 71,218ha. It is one of the few places in Malaysia that has a tropical highland climate as the mean annual temperature of it is 18 °C (64 °F) thus making the atmosphere perfect for specialized agriculture. Being ecologically suitable, Cameron Highlands has recently been identified as a very strategic farming area, producing multifarious vegetables, flowers and tea with a commercial motive of marketing them to Singapore and all over the urban areas of Malaysia to meet the domestic and international demands. The main intricacies of this plantation agriculture are fully dependent on the policies formulated by a group of emerging entrepreneurs who employ foreign labourers to make these agricultural activities a success in the agrarian sector in Malaysia. Based on the socio-anthropological perspective, the paper entirely relies on empirical field data generated by interviewing 10 farm owners and 200 foreign workers to find out the intricacies of this plantation agriculture which makes the research innovative and pragmatically significant. The paper deals with important issues relating to this productive plantation agriculture of Cameron Highlands and as such, narrates the various exceptional and holistic skills adopted for this type of farming.

Keywords : Cameron Highlands Malaysia, plantation agriculture, issues and challenges, mechanisms

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