

## Transitioning shifting cultivation to resilient farming systems in South and Southeast Asia

### **Key messages from: Policy Brief: Supporting Myanmar's land governance reforms**

- In Myanmar, customary agricultural land is legally categorised as wasteland and subject to appropriation, land grabbing and confiscation for use as commercial agricultural land or mining concessions. Against this scenario, instead of being rendered illegal occupants of their own land, customary land rights holders and their ancestral rights over their shifting cultivation land must be recognized.
- This should form a central concern during the policy-driven transition from shifting cultivation systems to more settled agriculture ongoing in South and Southeast Asia. There is the need to recognize and respect the customary systems of upland communities and to avoid compromising such arrangements due to the transition.

### **Key message from: Policy Brief Quantifying the extent of shifting cultivation**

- Inaccuracies in methodological approaches plague landuse and landcover estimations in the context of shifting cultivation and hamper arriving at accurate, updated estimates of its extent, which carry, in turn, serious ramifications for climate change mitigation and poverty alleviation efforts, seriously undermining efforts to achieve SDGs and Agenda 2030 objectives. Therefore, landuse and landcover classification need to be urgently revised and the process should be set in motion immediately.

### **Key message from: Policy Brief Ensuring seasonal food availability and dietary diversity during and after transition of shifting cultivation systems to settled agriculture**

- The policy-driven replacement of shifting cultivation with settled agriculture in South and Southeast Asia has depleted crop diversity adversely affecting seasonal food availability and dietary diversity with potentially negative effects on nutrition and the phenomenon of hidden hunger – boosting serious implications for meeting the targets of Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those linked to SDG 2 on Zero Hunger.
- In this sense, government and development programmes promoting the transformation of shifting cultivation must include focused interventions for the promotion of home gardens to which food crops from shifting cultivation can be translocated with intercropping as an essential component to encourage, promote and maintain crop and dietary diversity.

**Key message from: Policy Brief Shifting cultivation landscapes in transition: Where are the forests?**

- For every hectare of shifting cultivation transformed to settled agriculture, a proportionate area of forests is permanently lost. While traditional shifting cultivation entails long fallow cycles that allow regeneration of fallows into secondary forests, settled systems permanently erase this possibility resulting in an irreversible change, thus negating the land degradation neutrality process inherent in shifting cultivation
- The long-term ramifications for the sustenance of ecosystem services and for global warming and climate change are obvious. It also defeats the very purpose for which the transition was introduced: arrest deforestation, increase forest cover and prevent environmental degradation. Thus, government programmes designed to facilitate transitions in shifting cultivation must take measures to address the negative fallouts and ensure the sustenance of ecosystem services while drawing lessons from community innovations available across the region.