

Mobility as a Response for Fish Cage Farming Households in Northern Thailand to Multiple Risks in the Dry Season

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ABSTRACT

Extreme climate events, such as drought or floods, and socio-economic stresses, such as sharply increasing production costs or market collapses, are potentially drivers of mobility. Mobility maybe an anticipatory response to risks or a reaction to realized impacts. In either case, whether mobility, is perceived as a plausible option depends on household burdens and capacities, as well as the external opportunities available. In this study, in-depth, multiple-visit qualitative data was collected from 42 fish cage farming households along different reaches of the Ping River in Northern Thailand, to help better understand the multiple risks farmers faced and the role of mobility in adaptive responses to dry season challenges to fish production. Drought in 2013-2014 meant low water levels in the river, causing fish deaths and production failures. Poor market conditions and higher input costs compounded the impacts on profits and contributed to debt accumulation. Some farmers discontinued fish farming operations, whereas others adopted various *in situ* strategies to try and manage risks. In seven households, a decision to move for employment and income was seen as an important response. In the rest of the households, various fish farming and household burdens constrained mobility in the dry season as an adaptation option, or households were confident that they could manage the risks *in situ*. In the longer-term, a drying climate or reduced water flows in rivers for other reasons, such as increased water consumption, would appear to represent a major climate-related challenge to fish cage farming in the Ping River.

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