

Thesis Abstract

No. _____

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Title of Thesis: Risks and Farmers' Behaviors in Vietnam			
Summary of Thesis: <p>The thesis examines Vietnamese farmers' behaviors under risks in economic development. The focus of the examination is the decision-making processes of the farmers in a rural Vietnam in the middle of fundamental changes, of which the 1986 Doi Moi, reforms toward market economy, was a part. The thesis calls attention to the behaviors exhibited by Vietnamese farmers and establishes the argument that the basis of their behavior is a complex calculation of losses than of gains. Loss aversion rather than gain seeking (thus, by definition, risk-taking) characterizes their behavior. The usual characterization by the development specialists that the farmers in developing countries are irrational in ignoring the merits of certain action overlooks the "rational" calculation by the farmers attempting to minimize losses.</p> <p>The thesis makes use of the descriptive data which I have collected through in-depth interviews of over 150 individuals including some 130 farmers in three districts in Vietnam over the past 9 years. The main group of the farmers for the investigation consists of some 70 farming families in Phu Cat, Bihn Dinh, central coastal province, of which 50 are the families with the children of the Agent Orange-induced birth defects. I have collected part of these data in cooperation with others especially those who have a longer medical and health research history in the areas of my fieldwork. These families provide powerful samples of behavior, which shows virtually no indication of having the misfortune among the family members, thereby showing how strong this tendency toward loss aversion, which is amply exhibited by the farmers who are spared the misfortune of the Agent Orange families. People's Committee members, local medical and health professionals offer also precious data that this thesis makes use of.</p> <p>The thesis makes use of some of the insights provided by some of the behavioral economists and risk analysts, such as Daniel Kahneman, Ulrich Beck and Richard Thaler, among others.</p> <p>Key Words: Land Reforms, Agent Orange, Risk, Reference Point, health</p>			