THAI JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION VOL.34, NO.2, April-June 1994 (April,1999)

Seasonal Migration, Employment and Income in The Rural Northeast: A Macro Perspective

Palapan Kampan[*]

Introduction

This article presents the pattern of migration at the macro perspective using data from the Labor Force Survey, to compare migration, employment and income of the rural Northeastern labor force during the agricultural peak and slack seasons.

The Labor Force Survey for 1989-1994 (Table 1) revealed that for the whole kingdom the labor force averaged 29.6 million during the agricultural slack season and 32.0 million during the agricultural peak season. The majority of the labor force were in rural areas, including 24.9 million during the agricultural slack season, and 26.6 million during the agricultural peak season. Among these, 5.9 million lived in the rural areas of the Central region, 5.5 million in the Northern region, 9.1 million in the Northeast and 3.3 million in the South. During the agricultural peak season the rural labor force increased to 6.2 million in the Central region, 6.0 million in the Northern region, 11.1 million in the Northeast, and an insignificant number of employees in the South.

[*] Research Fellow, Research Center, National Institute of Development Administration

Table 1 Rural Labor Force by Regions during Agricultural Slack and Peak Seasons, 1989-1994

Million
(percent)

Year	Labor Force		Rural Labor Force									
	Whole Kingdom		Total		Central		North		Northeast		South	
	Round		Round		Round		Round		Round		Round	
	Slack	Peak	Slack	Peak	Slack	Peak	Slack	Peak	Slack	Peak	Slack	Peak
1989	28.0	31.0	23.1	26.0	5.5	5.9	5.4	5.9	8.9	10.9	3.2	3.1
1990	-	31.5	-	26.4	-	5.9	-	6.0	-	11.0	-	3.2
1991	28.3	32.0	23.1	26.6	5.7	6.0	5.3	6.0	8.7	11.2	3.3	3.3
1992	30.5	32.3	25.2	27.0	6.2	6.5	5.7	6.1	9.8	11.5	3.3	3.3
1993	30.4	32.6	24.7	26.9	6.2	6.3	5.7	6.1	9.2	11.0	3.3	3.4
1994	31.0	32.5	23.8	26.8	6.1	6.4	5.5	6.0	8.7	11.0	3.3	3.3
Average	29.6	32.0	24.0	26.6	5.9	6.2	5.5	6.0	9.1	11.1	3.3	3.3
	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(83.9%)	(83.2%)	(20.0%)	(19.2%)	(18.6%)	(18.8%)	(30.6%)	(30.4%)	(11.1%)	(10.2%)

Source: The Report of the Labor Survey, Round 1 and Round 3, 1989-1994.

The labor force tabulated in the third round survey was higher than the amount measured under the first round, which took place during the agricultural slack season. The average rural labor force during the agricultural peak season in 1989-1994 was higher than during the agricultural slack season. Thus, the seasonal fluctuation of the rural labor force was as high as 1.7 million on an average; or the labor force in the agricultural peak season increased by an average of 4.8 percent above that in the slack season during 1989-1994. In the Northeast, the seasonal fluctuation of the labor force was 2.0 million, or 21.9 percent above the agricultural slack season in 1989-1994.

Migration of the Rural Labor Force

A comparison of the Labor Force Survey 1993, Round 1 (slack season) and Round 3 (peak season), is shown in Table 2. During the agricultural slack season, there were 774,600 migrants who stayed in Bangkok; 52.3 percent came form the Northeast, 19.5 percent form the North, 19.5 percent form the Central region and 8.7 percent from the South. While the number of migrants in Bangkok during the peak season decreased by 4.2 percent, persons who came from the Northeast decreased by 5.4 percent, those from the Central region decreased 11.8 percent, those from the South decreased 25 percent, and migrants from the North increased slightly during the peak season.

The migrants staying in the Central region totalled 1.8 million, or 52.5 percent; from Bangkok 18.4 percent, the Northeast 18.4 percent, the North 7.4 percent and the South 3.3 percent. During the peak season the number of migrants decreased by 1.9 percent, the number of migrants who had come from the Northeast decreased 11.1 percent, while those from the remaining regions increased.

The migrants staying in the North during the slack season were 1.1 million. Those who had come from the North totalled 62.9 percent, Bangkok 22.7 percent, the Northeast 2.7 percent, and the South 2.1 percent. During the peak season the number of migrants in the North increased by 2.9 percent, persons who had come from the North decreased by 3.6 percent, from the Central decreased 9.1 percent, from Bangkok increased 23.3 percent, from the Northeast increased 26.6 percent; the number from the South changed slightly.

The migrants staying in the Northeast during the slack season were 2.5 million; the persons who had come from the Northeast were 40.3 percent, from Bangkok 39.4 percent, the Central region 15.8 percent, the South 2.8 percent, the North 2.2 percent. During the peak season migrants in the Northeast increased 12.9 percent, Bangkok increased 10.98 percent, the Central region increased 0.93 percent, and the percentage from the Northeast and the South changed slightly.

During the slack season 770,000 migrants stayed in the South. They came from the South 86.7 percent, from Bangkok 4.4 percent, from the Central region 4.3 percent, from the Northeast 2.7 percent, and the North 1.9 percent. During the peak season the migrants who stayed in the South decreased by 1.6 percent, those from the South increased 9.5 percent, from Bangkok decreased 35.3 percent, from the Central region decreased 12.1 percent, from the North decreased 6.6 percent, and from the Northeast decreased 14.3 percent.

The changing of the season affected the number of the labor force, migration of the labor force, those who were waiting for the new agricultural season, and persons who were not counted in the labor force.

Table 3 shows the percentage of migration in the Northeast during the agricultural peak and slack season, 1991-1994. Research shows that all migration rates during the slack seasons were higher than during the peak seasons each year.

The percentages of migration among the labor force during the agricultural slack and peak seasons (Table 4) show that during the agricultural slack season, the percentage of migrants from the Central region, the North, the Northeast and the South to Bangkok is higher than during the peak season. The percentage of migrants from the Central region, the North and Northeast to the Central region is higher than during the peak season. The rate of migration from Bangkok and the Northeast to the North during the slack season is lower than during the peak season; but migration from the Central region, the North and Northeast to the North is higher than during the peak season. The rate of migration from Bangkok, the Central region, the Northeast and South to the Northeast during the slack season is higher than during the peak season, but the rate of migration from the North to the Northeast is lower than during the peak season. The rate of migration from Bangkok, the Central region, the North, the Northeast and the South during the slack season is higher than during the peak season.

Table 2 Number and Percentage of Migrants at the Destination by the Previous Place of Residence before Migration during the Slack and Peak Seasons, 1993

Number : 1000 (percent)

Destination	Previous Place of Residence (slack season)					
	Bangkok	Central	North	Northeast	South	Total
Bangkok	-	**150.7**	**150.6**	**405.8**	**68.5**	**774.6**
		(19.5%)	(19.5%)	(52.3%)	(8.7%)	(100.0%)
Central	**345.5**	**986.4**	**139.5**	**345.2**	**43.9**	**1,878.3**
	(18.4%)	(52.5%)	(7.4%)	(18.4%)	(3.3%)	(100.0%)
North	**257.3**	**108.8**	**713.5**	**30.8**	**23.4**	**1,134.2**
	(22.7%)	(9.6%)	(62.9%)	(2.7%)	(2.1%)	(100.0%)
Northeast	**984.3**	**395.0**	**54.8**	**995.1**	**67.1**	**2,496.3**
	(39.4%)	(15.8%)	(2.2%)	(39.8%)	(2.8%)	(100.0%)
South	**34.0**	**33.7**	**14.6**	**21.0**	**665.9**	**770.0**
	(4.4%)	(4.3%)	(1.9%)	(2.7%)	(86.7%)	(100.0%)

Table 2 (Continued)

Number : 1000 (percent)

Destination	Previous Place of Residence (slack season)					
	Bangkok	Central	North	Northeast	South	Total
Bangkok	-	**134.2**	**162.8**	**389.2**	**51.2**	**737.4**
		(18.2%)	(22.1%)	(52.8%)	(6.9%)	(100.0%)
Central	**379.1**	**934.1**	**147.2**	**309.3**	**45**	**1,814.7**
	(20.9%)	(51.5%)	(8.1%)	(17.0%)	(2.5%)	(100.0%)
North	**317.2**	**99.1**	**687.8**	**37.7**	**26.4**	**1,168.2**
	(27.1%)	(8.5%)	(58.9%)	(3.2%)	(2.3%)	(100.0%)
Northeast	**1,254.9**	**419.2**	**79.4**	**972.5**	**62.9**	**2,789.9**
	(44.9%)	(15.0%)	(2.8%)	(34.8%)	(2.5%)	(100.0%)
South	**31.9**	**28.9**	**14.0**	**18.1**	**664.4**	**757.3**
	(4.2%)	(3.8%)	(1.8%)	(2.4%)	(87.8%)	(100.0%)

Source: The Report of the Labor Survey, Round 1 and Round 3, 1993

Table 3 Number and Percentage of Migrants in the Rural Northeast Labor Force during the Agricultural Peak and Slack Seasons, 1991-1994

Number: 1000

	Year							
	1991		1992		1993		1994	
Labor Force	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**
Total	32,765	33,168	33,877	34,264	34,387	34,767	35,217	35,447
Migrants	1,032	868	1,038	908	1,025	963	966	845
Percent Migrants	3.15	2.62	3.06	2.64	2.98	2.76	2.74	2.38

Source: Derived from the Labor Force Survey, Round 1 and Round 3, 1991-1994.

Table 4 Percentage Distribution of Migrants among Labor Force by Region during the Agricultural Slack and Peak Seasons, 1993, by Regions

Percentage

	Previous place of residence									
	Bangkok		Central		North		Northeast		South	
Destinations	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**
Bangkok			0.47	0.38	0.48	0.47	1.28	1.12	0.21	0.14
Central	1.09	1.09	3.11	2.70	0.44	0.42	1.09	0.89	0.13	0.13
North	0.81	0.91	0.34	0.28	2.25	1.19	0.09	0.10	0.07	0.07
Northeast	3.11	3.63	1.24	1.21	0.17	0.22	3.14	2.81	0.21	0.18
South	0.11	0.09	0.10	0.08	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.05	2.10	1.92

Source: Derived from the Labor Force Survey, Round 1 and Round 3, 1993

Employment of the Rural Northeast Labor Force

Table 5 demonstrates that during the agricultural slack seasons the employment in the agricultural sector was always less than that during the agricultural peak season, on an average by 4.7 million between 1991-1994. Meanwhile employment in other sectors increased around 1.3 million during the same periods. When compared to the number of the labor force during the agricultural peak season, construction labor decreased from the slack season by an average 31.6 percent, transportation decreased 17.4 percent, manufacturing 14.6 percent, commerce 10.8 percent, and service 5.1 percent.

Table 6 compares employment of migrants and non-migrants in the rural labor force during the agricultural slack and peak seasons in 1994. The employed migrants were 13.2 percent of the total labor force during the slack season, which was lower than during the peak season (14.8 percent). Employed non-migrants during the peak season were 47.3 percent of the total labor force, which was lower than during the peak season (63.1 percent). Unemployed migrants were 1.9 percent of the total labor force, which was higher than during the peak season (0.6 percent). Unemployed non-migrants were 3.1 percent of the total labor force, which was higher than during the peak season (0.7 percent). Seasonally inactive migrants during the slack season were 1.1 percent of the total labor force, which was higher than during the peak season (0.1 percent). Seasonally inactive non-migrants during the peak season were 7.2 percent of the total labor force, which was higher than during the peak season (0.3 percent). The migrants who were not in the labor force during the slack season were 0.5 percent of the total labor force, which was higher than during the peak season (1.9 percent). The non-migrants who were not in the labor force during the slack season were 27.2 percent of the total labor force, which was higher than during the peak season (18.5 percent).

During the agricultural slack season some of the agricultural labor mobilized to the non-farm sectors but a large number of agricultural workers were still unemployed. These workers were outside the active labor force and were defined as "waiting for the agricultural season" or as the seasonally inactive labor force. Table 7 shows the amount of this seasonally inactive rural labor force during the agricultural slack season over the years 1991-1994, averaging 1.2

Table 5 The Number and Percentage of Rural Employment Distributed by Sector during the Agricultural Slack and Peak Seasons, 1991-1994

Number: 1000

Sector	1991		1992		1993		1994		Average	
	Season									
	Slack	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**
Agriculture	13,834.4	18,606.1	14,745.8	19,531.0	14,140.9	18,080.4	12,189.1	17,772.0	13,727.6 (59.3%)	18,797.4 (69.6%)
Mining	48.7	49.5	63.3	56.1	55.5	52.4	59.7	40.7	56.8 (0.2%)	49.7 (0.2%)
Manufacturing	2,639.7	2,203.9	2,988.2	2,347.7	3,209.1	2,739.9	3,596.6	2,596.6	3,026.2 (13.1%)	2,472.0 (9.3%)
Construction	1,356.0	905.3	1,532.2	989.1	1,383.6	1,151.2	1,993.6	1,363.4	1,566.4 (6.8%)	1,102.3 (4.1%)
Infrastructure	55.8	48.5	59.8	59.9	81.6	80.5	93.3	92.0	72.6 (0.3%)	70.2 (0.3%)
Commerce	2,071.3	1,976.3	2,161.6	1,911.1	2,296.3	2,047.0	2,355.9	2,065.5	2,221.3 (9.6%)	2,000.0 (7.5%)
Transport	487.5	476.6	482.5	389.1	552.4	476.3	540.4	452.4	515.7 (2.2%)	448.6 (1.7%)
Service	1,729.1	1,622.0	1,918.9	1,778.5	1,936.7	1,887.0	2,190.1	2,089.1	1,943.7 (8.4%)	1,844.2 (6.9%)
Total	22,222.5	25,888.2	23,952.3	27,062.5	23,656.1	26,514.7	22,689.7	26,471.7	23,130.2 (100.0%)	26,553.9 (100.0%)

Source: The Report of the Labor Survey, Round 1 and Round 3, 1991-1994

Table 6 Employment of the Rural Northeastern Labor Force during the Agricultural Slack and Peak Seasons, 1994

: 1000

Status	Slack		Peak	
	Migrants	**Non-migrants**	**Migrants**	**Non-migrants**
1. Current labor force				
employed	1,596 (11.7%)	6,520 (47.3%)	2,057 (14.8%)	8,803 (63.1%)
unemployed	241 (1.9%)	400 (3.1%)	77 (0.6%)	93 (0.7%)
2. Seasonally inactive	119 (1.1%)	969 97.2%)	14 (0.1%)	40 (0.3%)
3. Not in labor force	353 (0.5%)	3,653 (27.2)	260 (1.9%)	2,577 (18.5%)

Source: Derived from the Labor Force Survey, Round 1 and Round 3, 1994

million people, from which 6.5 million or 55.9 percent were in the Northeast. Some of those waiting for the agricultural peak season would be unemployed only during the agricultural off season. When the next agricultural peak season came these people would re-enter the labor force. The average number of the seasonally inactive labor force for the whole kingdom during the agricultural peak season decreased to 0.11 million. Of this number, only 43,000 were in the Northeast.

Income of the Rural Northeast Labor Force

Income of the rural Northeast labor force during the agricultural slack and peak seasons is given in Table 8, which shows the average wage per month of the rural labor force in the Northeast among five economic sectors. During the slack season the approximate average wage per month in the agricultural sector was 1,861 baht, in the manufacturing sector, 2,322 baht, the construction sector 2,711 baht, the commerce sector 2,896 baht, and the service sector 2,015 baht. The total average wage per month of all employees during the slack season was 2,336 baht. During the peak season the amount for the agricultural sector was 1,983 baht, for manufacturing employees 2,292 baht, in the construction sector

Table 7 Number of Seasonally Inactive Rural Labor Force during the Agricultural Slack and Peak Seasons, 1991-1994

Number: 1000

Sector	1991		1992		1993		1994		Average	
	Season									
	Slack	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**	**Slack**	**Peak**
Central	286.1	16.7	125.8	37.9	90.9	31.9	133.2	5.3	159.0 (13.6%)	23.0 (20.0%)
North	474.8	62.7	206.8	2.8	277.5	27.8	326.1	2.1	321.3 (27.5%)	23.9 (21.0%)
Northeast	1,133	22.8	542.6	4.5	832.1	93.2	108.9	55.2	654.2 (55.9%)	43.9 (37.7%)
South	20.7	31.1	70.2	18.6	30.3	40.5	18.3	1.4	34.9 (3.0%)	22.9 (20.2%)
Total	1914.6	133.3	945.4	63.8	1230.8	193.4	586.5	64.0	1,169.3 (100.0%)	113.6 (100.0%)

3,104 baht; employees in the commerce sector received 3,669 baht, and in the service sector 3,022 baht. The total average wage per month of all employees during the peak season was 2,544 baht, or around 8.90 percent higher than during the slack season. In the service sector during the peak season wages were around 50.52 percent higher than during the slack season. Monthly wages for employees in the commerce sector during the peak season were 26.69 percent higher than during the slack season; the construction sector was 14.49 percent, and the agricultural sector 6.55 percent, However in the manufacturing sector the average wage per month during the peak season was slightly lower than during the slack season (1.29 percent).

Table 8 Average Wage per Month of Private Employees in the Rural Northeast during the Agricultural Slack and Peak Seasons, 1994

	Average Wage per Month (baht)		
	Slack Season	Peak season	Difference(%)
Agricultural	1,861	1,983	6.55
Manufacturing	2,322	2,292	-1.29
Construction	2,711	3,104	14.49
Commerce	2,896	3,669	26.69
Service	2,015	3,033	50.52
Total	2,336	2,544	8.90

Source: Derived from the Labor Force Survey, Round 1 and Round 3, 1994

Conclusion

Employment of the new entrants into the labor market in various production sectors was also subject to seasonal fluctuation. During the agricultural slack season employment in the agricultural sector always declined, while that in other sectors increased during the same period. It should be noted that most of the increased employment in the non-agricultural sector occurred in the agricultural-related sectors such as industry, transportation, commerce and

services. After the harvesting season, the farm products were sold and transported to the markets or direct to factories for processing. Thus, the number of labor recruited for these activities in various marketing processes also increased. In addition, the construction sector also required additional labor, since most construction trade is always carried out during the dry season. Even some of the agricultural labor were employed in other sectors during the agricultural slack season; but the remainder, the majority of the seasonal unemployed, could not find alternative employment.

The seasonal migration of the labor force can be explained by simple migration theory. Distance was one of the intervening obstacles, which can explain why more migrants had moved within regions than between regions. Besides, the assumption of push and pull factors can explain why a lot of migrants moved to destinations more developed than their origins, especially movement between Bangkok and the Northeast. During the peak season the number of migrants in the Northeast increased more than during the slack season by 11.5 percent, because they moved back to the Northeast during the peak season; while in Bangkok, the Central region, the North and the South, the number of migrants who had stayed in the Northeast before moving was decreasing.

The seasonal migration of the Northeast people is a massive movement affecting the number of migrants in all regions. Whenever the number of migrants in the Northeast increases the number of migrants in other regions will decrease. On the other hand, when the number of migrants in the Northeast decreases, the number of migrants in other regions will increase.