Rationale
This work package provides an understanding of wetlands as social spheres and places that have a cultural meaning and an economic value.

“Wetland management and utilization strategies are rooted within the local community, developed by local people, and based on local knowledge”
(Adrian Wood).

An interdisciplinary approach is applied to analyse:
- Social, political and economic dimensions of wetlands and their multiple uses.
- Formal and informal institutional influences on wetland agriculture.
- Conflicts and regulations concerning access and management.
- Gender relations in wetland agriculture.
- Existing and perceived health risks.
- Activities along a rural-urban gradient.
- The importance for livelihoods of local communities.

Determinants for smallholders’ access to wetlands

These factors interact in time and space. They influence smallholders’ access to wetlands and forms of land use. Their impact differs according to the farmers’ socio-economic background.

Determinants of smallholders’ wetland use

Highlights
Legal and political frameworks, social divisions and health implications are fundamental to analyse wetland dynamics.

Designing wetland conservation policies needs a bottom-up approach for a sustainable wetland use and livelihood development.

Key findings
Conflicts over access to wetlands have increased over the last decade.

National policies shape the division of labour between genders in wetland agriculture.

Weak institutions and organisations vs. high economic needs of the local users under mine sustainable wetland use.

Perceived and actual risks regarding agricultural uses depend on the underlying social, political and economic context.

The transformation of wetlands into sites of cash crop production in combination with a “traditional” or colonial gendered labour divide represses women’s access to land.

The emic understanding of health in relation to wetland agriculture is linked to socio-economic / political factors influencing the smallholders’ access and use wetlands.

Contact: Clemens GREINER
Authors: I. Mwaka, M. van Soest, J. Treidl, C. Greiner