Forest Fruits in Livelihoods

Policy Briefing Note to Non-Governmental and Community-Based Organisations

The research issue

Forest fruits contribute to the livelihoods of poor peoples in many parts of the tropics, but restricted access to natural resources, weak markets and poor information limit the realisation of benefits to forest-dependent poor peoples. Identifying these constraints can enhance livelihood strategies through promoting policy options which enable effective utilisation of forest resources.

This research concerns forest fruits in the livelihoods of forest-margin communities in Mexico.

Nance (*Byrsonima crassifolia*) in the wholesale market, Mérida, Yucatán

Livelihood opportunities

Mayan communities in Yucatán have a history of semi-domestication of NTFPs in home gardens. Market access constraints result in low cash incomes from forest fruits, *nance* (*Byrsonima crassifolia*), *sakpá* (*B. bucidaefolia*) and *zapote* (*Manilkara sapota*). *Poox* (*Annona purpurea)* has market potential but its existence is threatened

Agroforestry will build upon silvicultural practices to help reduce deleterious impacts of shifting cultivation and overharvesting. Formation of community-based groups and creation of simple extension materials in vernacular languages such as Mayan will enable the poor to achieve the objective of sustainable utilisation.

Well-supplied market stall, Valladolid, Yucatán

Non-forest initiatives

The long-term dependence on Federal subsidies primarily for maize production is inadvisable.

Other livelihood strategies including improved educational and employment opportunities, and income remittance are likely to be significant also in enhancing the livelihood strategies of the people

Initial Uptake of Project Output

The Yucatán State authority and Mayan communities are now supporting initiatives that include *poox* in species programmes.

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Recommendations

For the Mayan communities, improving subsistence use is the most feasible livelihood-enhancing strategy in respect of forest fruits. The recommendations reflect the importance of forest fruits in strengthening the local subsistence economy, as well as meeting the conservation and sustainability objectives that define sound forest resource management.

Poox

Constraint	Findings	Action
Access to natural resources	Fruit tree abundance and regeneration are low in both forest and home gardens. Fruit tree productivity is significantly higher in the home gardens than in forest as a result of management practices rooted in silvicultural tradition.	New knowledge and technology transfer for improved tree production in *solares* and *milpas* must be integrated with traditional silvicultural concepts and practices. Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán can undertake conservation and varietal development, in collaboration with SEMARNAT/CONAFOR. Hombre Sobre la Tierra and the Campesino University to disseminate new knowledge on the management of *poox*.
Access to markets	Limited transport to regional markets and low quality and quantity of marketable product constraint to commercialisation. Moreover, there is low preference for and recognition of indigenous fruits in urban markets.	Forest fruits have a the limited role of in cash income generation for Mayan communities, yet NTFPs in general have an important role within livelihood strategies of these communities. Markets for *poox* need further study. Alternative sources of income must complement that from forest fruits. In particular, improved access to labour markets and training will help diversify income sources and lower dependence on Government subsidies.

Full Project Title: Enhancing the Role of Forest Fruits in Sustaining Livelihoods of Forest Margin Communities.
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