

Socioeconomic impacts of forest conservation and reforestation PES contracts in Hojanca Costa Rica

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Although when the Costa Rican PES program was launched in 1996, it was not intended to help reduce poverty, the program has been subject to increasing pressure of having positive socioeconomic outcomes. This shift toward measuring the program's effectiveness based on social indicators, coincide with the growing recognition at the international level that conservation is also about people. Furthermore, the social dimension of the program is mandatory by Costa Rican law due to its high dependency on public funds. In this study we analysed the socioeconomic impacts of two payments modalities (conservation and reforestation) in Hohancha, Costa Rica. The study is based on a household survey conducted in 2011. It included a total of 207 landowners, 31 participating in forest protection, 32 with reforestation contracts and 138 respondents that served as control group. Socioeconomic impacts were measured through three indicators: household consumption level, changes in living conditions between 1998 and 2011 reported by the respondent; and, off-farm income in 1998 and 2011. Results show that by participating in the program, households are not made better-off but are not negatively affected either. An interesting finding is that income from non-agricultural sources increased more during the study period (1998-2011) among non-PES participants than among PES households.