Agroforestry – Food Security Nexus: Future Potentials of Bamboo to Food Security Enhancement in Ethiopia

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Background
- Ethiopian rural households earn a significant part of their livelihood with natural resources in general and with forest products in particular
- Bamboo is one of the most important forest resources
  - 850,000 hectares lowland bamboo varieties
  - 350,000 hectares highland bamboo varieties
- Source of energy, fodder, construction, and input for SMEs via forward and backward linkages
- Major part of farming system and source of livelihood for rural people
- Despite a high potential for enhancing livelihoods and environmental sustainability, the sector has been overlooked for a long time
- Being cognizant of the benefits of bamboo, attention has been given to the sector since recently

Objective
- Assess the current status and future potentials of bamboo to enhance sustainable livelihoods and food security of smallholder farmers in Ethiopia

Results
- Bamboo has untapped potential to ensure food security, especially to poor rural smallholder farmers
- Households’ food consumption profile improves with higher levels of income from bamboo
- Wealth index has a strong positive relationship with food consumption score, dietary diversity score and a negative relationship with coping strategies index
- Food crises are tackled by
  i. Consumption switching strategies (eat inferior foods, reducing food variety)
  ii. Bamboo related strategies (selling bamboo culms, eating bamboo shoots, harvest immature crops)
  iii. Other strategies (borrowing cash, help from neighbors, sell assets)

Way forward
- To tap into the full potential of bamboo, a collective action of the government, NGOs and other stakeholders is required mainly to create awareness among smallholder farm households and artisans about
  - diverse benefits of bamboo
  - improved methods of growing and extracting culms
  - adoption of improved technologies