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Alternative Income Generation Using Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) in the Huascayacu Native Community, Alto Mayo, San Martin, Peru

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Abstract

The Aguaruna community of Huascayacu is located in the district of Moyobamba, northwest of Peru. In spite of the fact that physical and legal property delimitation has already been assigned by the state, the community is facing the threat of violation of their property by settlers due to pressure of migration. Moreover, there are indications that the native people are adapting customs from the settlers e.g. slash and burn to facilitate agriculture or the rearing of livestock. This leads to short-term benefits, but is devastating for efforts towards forest conservation and brings about changes in their traditional way of life. Nowadays, the community of Huascayacu uses wood and coffee for income generation, only. However, dealing in timber generates insignificant economic income and the revenues from coffee cultivation on a volatile market are an unreliable source of income. The principal aims of this study were (1) to gather information regarding the use of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) by the local people, (2) to determine future possibilities for sustainable use and for commercialisation of NTFPs, and (3) to make suggestions for alternative income generation employing “traditional species”. To achieve these goals interviews were carried out at the Huascayacu Community (covering 70% of the households) and in local markets, with special emphasis on big cities where the products may be marketable. Information about the abundance and distribution of the species was taken from the forest inventory and from the biodiversity analysis elaborated previously. Botanical samples were identified at the Herbarium of the University of Agraria La Molina, Lima, Peru.

Combining socio-economic information about the uses and marketing of NTFPs with the biological data taken from the sources mentioned above, appropriate NTFPs such as fruits, seeds, vines and medical plants were identified. Furthermore, the local consumption of these plant products was measured, to determine the surplus which could be traded. Finally, some recommendations for the different silvicultural treatments that should be applied to the target species are explained. We expect to make strong suggestions for alternative income generation using NTFPs in order to benefit the Huascayacu Native Community.

Keywords: Alternative income generation, forest management, NTFPs, Peru