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The Importance of the Wild Coffee Resource for Generation of Monetary Income for Farmers in South-West Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study investigates the importance of wild coffee as a resource for generating monetary income for local farmers in the South-Western region of Ethiopia, the Kaffa Zone. It is the origin and centre of the genetic diversity of *Coffea arabica*. The COCE project aims at generating an insight into the overall ecologic and socio-economic aspects of the wild coffee and its use, to assist in developing conservation plans to save the forest, the coffee's habitat, and the valuable coffee-genetic diversity for future breeding programmes. In respect of the concept of sustainable development, it is important to consider not only conservation but also socio-economic goals of the affected people. An important aspect in this context is the dependency of local, mainly subsistence farmers, on the use of coffee and other Non-Wood-Forest-Products (NWFP) to generate monetary income for future development. The livelihood (with a focus on the activity and income portfolio) of farmers and its diversification strategies are used to measure the farmers' dependency and focus on coffee production. The basic hypothesis of the work is, that farmers are highly dependent on coffee. It is assumed that besides the fulfilment of subsistence demand for household survival the second focus is put on coffee production to generate monetary income for economic development. The study is an empirical case study undertaken in South-West Ethiopia. Research data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. Interviews were realized with 32 farmers, all participating in coffee production. The analysis used descriptive statistics and key word analysis for qualitative data. Results are discussed with reference to the currently ongoing discussion amongst scientist and practitioners about the role of NWFP as a viable source of monetary income and contribution to conservation goals. The results account for the importance of NWFP use in the livelihood diversification process. The results show that farmers are highly dependent on coffee production to generate monetary income. Involvement in non-farm work as alternative source for monetary income generation is very low and limited. Low paid agricultural labour work is only carried out if no other option emerges. Farmers endue over a diverse activity portfolio, but mainly consist of subsistence oriented activities. As farmers use surplus from those primarily subsistence oriented activities as a source of income it is misleading to speak of the prevalence of a high income diversity. Farmers don't create a diverse income portfolio including off- and non-farm activities due to locational and cultural specifics and limited options. All aspects of development are connected to the income achieved through coffee production. If conservation measures will be carried out this will reduce the farmers' forest access and thus coffee resource use. As to fulfil the conservation goals, the consideration of the income importance of coffee is an essential aspect.

Keywords: Ethiopia, livelihood diversification, non wood forest products, peasants economics, wild coffee