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Collective Action for Promoting Sustainable Land Management Systems: case Study of Agroforestry in Zambia

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Abstract

This paper highlights how property rights regimes and other customary practices pose important institutional constraints to widespread up-scaling of sustainable land management and production systems. In this paper, we use agroforestry-based soil fertility management practice as a case study. First we will describe the technical details of the sustainable practices emphasising their relevance to the development of stable production systems to meet food security of smallholder farmers and environmental conservation in the region. Then we highlight institutional challenges that constrain rapid dissemination of the practice among farmers, and describe how collective action by stakeholders at the grass roots level has alleviated constraints to scaling through bi-laws. A sample of 200 households in eastern Zambia was used to assess the impacts of the policies on different social groups in the rural communities. The analysis of the data reveals that the bi-laws have helped to promote sustainable practices, but have different impacts on various members of the community. The results showed that collective actions can provide important framework for policy interventions on sustainable land management systems in rural communities, but distribution of the benefits (or costs) associated with natural resource commons and, the dynamics of power structure among stakeholders in the community are critical for enhancing or inhibiting successful implementation of such interventions. In general, the bi-laws impacted positively on farmers who have adopted the sustainable practices and women-headed households but, they had negatively effects on children and livestock owners. It is concluded that in addition to biophysical performance of sustainable land management practices, local institutional arrangements and the pattern of distribution of benefits (or costs) of the practices are important conditions and framework for their sustained and widespread uptake in rural communities

Keywords: Adoption, Impact assessment, Land tenure Policy dialogue, Property rights, Zambia.