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“Development on the margin”

Forest Management Practices in Central Highlands of Vietnam: Case Studies in two State Forestry Companies

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Abstract

State forestry companies (SFCs) are the main owners that manage production forests in Vietnam. During the early 1990s of the Doi moi (market-oriented reform policy) era, SFCs have played an important role in the forestry sector and impacted the livelihood of millions of people living in those managed areas. However, being mainly based on natural forest harvesting, the forests under management of SFCs have been declining in term of both area and quality. Unsustainable forest management is supposed to be a major problem. To date, no natural forest management in Vietnam is recognised to follow sustainable forest management (SFM) principles despite there are now reform policies and SFM approach in tropics.

The investigation focuses on reviewing, understanding and evaluating the conventional forest management practices in SFCs based on a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis of forest management. In the study, two SFCs in Central Highlands of Vietnam are examined. The research objectives are to identify interventions for promotion of SFM after revealing the disadvantages under conventional forest management practices in SFCs. Special aspects suppose to be examined the weak forest management competency of the owners, the continuous existence of semi-autonomous entities, the lack of environmental awareness, and land-use conflicts with local communities.

As expected, the reforms have to focus on the integration of adaptive management concepts of sustainable yield regulation, introduction of reduced impact logging, participatory forestry, multi-scale planning, biodiversity conservation. Moreover, market-based instruments for incentives coming through payment for environmental services (PES), benefit from forest certification (FC), and payment in exchange for reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) should be applied. Consequently, the SFCs have to be fully reformed in order to become independent business SFCs including the autonomy of plan, finance and human resources.

The respective promotion steps will be elaborated and connected in an advanced SFM model.

Keywords: Central highlands, model, production forest, state forestry companies, sustainable forest management, tropical forest, Vietnam