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“Development on the margin”

Biodiesel Production from *Jatropha curcas* L. in Mexico: From Governmental Promotion to Peasant Adoption

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Abstract

Jatropha curcas L. has been highlighted as a possible source of biodiesel production in many areas around the world. It is stated that its production improves socio-economic development of rural areas and that it is also useful to recover marginal and degraded lands. Furthermore, it is assumed to have little competition with food production and small negative effects on environmental services. For these reasons many policy makers, investors and NGOs are interested in tackled energy supply, emission reduction and rural development by cultivating *Jatropha*. However, socio-economic sustainability of the cultivation of *Jatropha curcas* L. for biodiesel production has been sparsely analysed. The present study analyses the promotion initiatives that are taking place in Chiapas State, Mexico, at different stages of the *Jatropha* production chain (cultivation, production or usage). Data were obtained through qualitative research methods, including literature review, interviews with key stakeholders, focus group discussions, farmer interviews, structured questionnaires and field observations. Our results show that governmental policies are not completely coordinated with farmer needs. *Jatropha* promotion by the state government aims to transform “un-productive” land into *Jatropha*, but production capacities or the agro-ecological potential of the area have not been taken into account. Additionally, extension agents did not have complete knowledge about the cultivation of the tree or the rules concerning promotion programs, generating reluctance to plant and confusion among farmers. Moreover, it seems that smallholders did not plant on forest areas but they planted *Jatropha* on lands where edible crops such as maize, beans or peanuts had been grown.

Keywords: Adoption, biodiesel, *Jatropha curcas*, land use conversion, socioeconomic impact