Tropentag, September 17-19, 2013, Stuttgart-Hohenheim

"Agricultural development within the rural-urban continuum"

Developing Community Forestry Management Strategies for Multiple Ecosystem Services and Benefits in the Mid-Hills, Nepal

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Abstract

The concept of community forestry (CF) in Nepal is to improve forest conditions, and to increase forest products and livelihood promotion through stakeholder participation. The community forest user group (CFUG) as a local institution is responsible to develop and implement the community forest management plan with technical support from the District Forest Office (DFO). So far within the community forest programme much emphasis has been placed on social processes and participation of various social and ethnic groups with the CFUG. Identification of production potentials regarding to timber and non-timber products as well as a variety of ecosystem services, the specification of management goals as well as sound silvicultural tools to achieve such goals have not yet received so much attention. As a consequence developed plans may not be technically sound and not fully implemented due to lack of technical know how regarding silvicultural operations and insufficient planning procedures. Addressing these issues the aim of the current research was to assess the currently practised operational forest management in specific forest areas and to propose management alternatives where deemed necessary. In this contribution we use Taldanda CF in the mid-hill region of Nepal as example to highlight major issues and to demonstrate potential alternatives to improve the utilisation of forest resources to the benefit of the CFUG.

DFO staff and 7 focus groups from the community were consulted to collect the local knowledge and develop a locally accepted set of criteria and indicators to assess forest management. An input-output analysis of forest management operations and a forest inventory provided valuable input for a thorough assessment of current management and the development of improved management alternatives.

The careful assessment of the forest resource should be done based on qualitative and quantitative data, users' expectations to achieve multiple products and ecosystem services that enhance livelihood of local people while maintain or improving forest conditions.

Keywords: Community forest, criteria and indicators, input-output analysis, management strategy, Nepal

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