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Hidden Benefits to Small Scale Farmers from Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) Projects in Africa. A Case Study from Lake Naivasha, Kenya

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Abstract

Payment for Ecosystem Service (PES) schemes have been the subject of many studies that look at the effectiveness of nonstate governance of natural resources. The bulk of work on PES is focusing on quantifying economic benefits to service providers, but very little has been done on investigating softer benefits, such as capacity building and information access. Using a case study from Kenya the present paper is assessing farmer motivations to participate in PES schemes.

In the Naivasha PES project the participating farmers gain a number of benefits as payment for more sustainable farming practices. The benefits are either materials or capacity development. The materials vary from small vouchers for farming tools or chemicals, to plant seedlings, i.e. multipurpose grasses, tree and fruit tree seedlings. The capacity development-part is training in sustainable farming practices.

According to our interview results the PES farmers report tangible changes to their livelihoods after joining the PES-program. The PES-farmer perceptions were that their milk and crop production had doubled since the start of PES. Even the newest PES-farmers reported a 50% higher milk and crop production. Over half of the PES-farmers indicate a higher level of erosion control in comparison to pre-PES situation. Also around a third of the PES-farmers mentioned the positive impact of more trees on farm and the improved soil fertility as a positive change. It is interesting however, that by a large margin the PES-farmers were able to mention more indirect benefits compared to the No-PES-farmers. These indirect benefits were: increased soil fertility, erosion control, shade and fodder for animals.

The farmers overall reported a high level of satisfaction to the PES-programme and a higher level of well-being due to the PES-program. They felt more confident with their farming practices, had better control over their environment and farm production. In general, the farmers felt more empowered. 100% of the farmers said that they will continue with the PES-land use practices after the PES-project ends.

Keywords: Benefits to farmers, erosion control, farmer livelihoods, farmer training, payments for ecosystem services (PES)