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## Farmers’ Perspective on Incentives for Ecosystem Services – Insights from Kenya and Tanzania

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### Abstract

Farmers often link ecosystem service (ES) provision to food production. They rely on ecosystems for crop cultivation and animal husbandry, but may at the same time provide ES for the larger society. Despite this dependency ecosystems are under threat in an environment ever more competitive for land, market access and cheap food provision. Producers often resort to unsustainable land use. Incentives for Ecosystem Services (IES) is one approach to deal with this challenge by looking for common ground among different agro-ecosystem actors. It requires a coordinated effort by the public and private sector, civil society and rural population. Farmer commitment to sustainable practices is particularly crucial for the viability of such IES schemes.

Our study analyses farmers’ perspectives on IES within the framework of an ongoing FAO project. Knowing their extrinsic and intrinsic motivations in relation to various adoption barriers for sustainable agricultural practices allows for designing viable and effective incentive packages for ES provision.

The reasoning of the analysis is based on relevant literature and a review of case studies from different developing and industrialised countries. In early 2015, the resulting hypotheses and models for best practice are debated and further elaborated in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in four different IES environments in Tanzania and Kenya. Farmers – including youth and women – are asked about their reasons to (not) commit to sustainable agro-ecosystems. Different motivations and their relative importance in the overall short- and long-term decisions will be visualised.

First insights suggest that monetary and in-kind incentives are perceived as a jump start or reward by many farmer communities. Beside access to knowledge and related increase in yield, indirect incentives such as market access, recognition of agricultural efforts and improved contacts to institutions are equally important.

Our analysis seeks to stimulate the ongoing debate on how to improve framework conditions for viable IES schemes contributing to food security. Hereby selected policy dialogue events will contribute to the dissemination of the findings, ultimately leading to increased consideration of farmers’ perspectives and their involvement in the negotiation, implementation and monitoring of IES schemes.

**Keywords:** East Africa, incentives for ecosystem services, policy dialogue, small-scale farming