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Community Forest Management in Mexico

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Abstract

Mexican common property community forestry and community forest management have several unusual features which make it an important global model for emerging community forest regimes elsewhere in the world. In Mexico 80% of forests are the common properties of thousands of communities, mexican forests are home to 12 million people. Most inhabitants of forested regions are residents of ejidos and comunidades, political agrarian units that hold forests and rangelands as common properties, ranging in size from 100 to 100,000 ha.

Community forest management in Mexico is a form of co-management, where government regulators and local communities share resource management responsibilities; communities log their forests within a framework of logging permits based on management plans and the intervention of foresters, but they implement forestry within their own common property management systems and structures of community authority. In a common property situation, forest management for timber production provides the means and incentives for communities to develop and strengthen local enforcement capabilities; the participation of the people who inhabit forest regions helps generate effective enforcement structures and facilitates the evolution of adaptive management.

Community-based forestry has made impressive gains in Mexico, and offers hopeful examples of forest conservation and restoration that contrast with general patterns of deforestation. The Mexican case provides a model for the devolution of forest lands to local communities, and shows that community initiatives and policy support can result in common property regimes that can organise to deliver social, economic and ecological benefits.

The challenge of community forest management in Mexico is the stewardship and use of the forests and forest lands in a manner and with an intensity that they preserve their biological diversity, its productivity, its capacity for regeneration, its vitality and ability to achieve, in the present and in the future, the ecological, economic and social functions relevant to local and national level, promoting the fair use of forest resources.

Keywords: Common property, community forestry, Forest policy, Mexico

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