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“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

Forest Resources, Poverty and Inequality in Peruvian Amazon: The Role of Tenure Regimes and Remoteness

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Abstract

Indigenous populations have historically been marginalised. Most indigenous people from Latin America live in villages with communal land ownership in remote areas. This population is highly dependent on forest resources by virtue of their traditions, culture, and forest knowledge but also due to remoteness and the presence of less degraded forests. Tenure regimes are considered to influence income and type of products extracted from forests. In Peru, according to law, all communal lands in forest areas are owned by indigenous population. Scarce literature analyses the relation among forests and livelihoods and most of previous studies could not assess to what extent the contribution of forests to livelihoods is mediated by either tenure regimes or remoteness. This research attempts to fill this gap in literature by focusing on the economic contribution of forest products to rural livelihoods and considering variations in tenure regimes (communal and private ownership) and remoteness. We use data from 400 households located in 50 villages in lowland forest areas in Loreto Region, in Peru. We use Ordinary Least Square and Fractional Response Models to assess total income and forest reliance, respectively. The Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) index of poverty and Gini coefficient were used to analyse differences in rural poverty and income inequality between villages with communal and private ownership. T-test was performed to evaluate forest income contribution on tenure regimes on the one hand and remoteness on the other. We found that forest income reduces inequality across households in villages in communal tenure. We show evidences that forests are an important income source for the poorest households and this contribution is more pronounced among households living in villages with communal tenure regime and in remote areas. Game meat and non-timber forest products are the most important subsistence income source for households living in remote villages and in villages with communal ownership. Our findings confirm the importance of forests for rural livelihoods in remote areas and in areas with communal land. This calls for policy interventions to develop alternative income sources and to avoid forests overexploitation which threaten the sustainability of forest resources.

Keywords: Forest dependency, forests resources, inequality, Peruvian Amazon, poverty, remoteness, sustainability, tenure regimes