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Monitoring Processes in Carbon Credit Projects and their Potentials for Farmer Organisations - A Case Study from Kenya

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Abstract

Carbon Credits and Voluntary Carbon Markets are experiencing an upswing and growing interest from different actors involved in global emission trading as well as development projects linked to climate change. However, the accounting of carbon sequestration which underlies the certificate of a carbon credits requires sophisticated data sets. Depending on the certification standard a specific monitoring process has to be developed and implemented in order to assure the collection of reliable data. This leads to various challenges, especially in the African context where for instance input documentation in agriculture is rather rare if not non-existent. Nevertheless, the establishment of these monitoring processes and resulting data might have beneficial effects that exceed the generation of carbon credits. Besides increasing transparency of the certification, reliable data on agricultural practices might be used to optimise extension service on sustainable agricultural practices that increase soil fertility, climate resilience, and improve yields. The Kenya Agricultural Carbon Project, implemented 2009 in Western Kenya, set an example for activity-based monitoring of the implementation of so called Sustainable Agricultural Land Management (SALM) practices. Yet, knowledge gaps on the potential benefits of the collected data for local actors like farmer groups and extension service, and challenges along the monitoring process remain. This study has the objective to systematically map the governance challenges, and to explore the potential role of farmers organisations. Expert interviews have been conducted to identify the most influencing aspects linked to these topics. Preliminary findings show challenges specifically on the local level. Trust and expectations of farmers towards data collecting institutions, project timeframe and pressure, the role of data cross checks, and data ownership are identified as critical aspects regarding monitoring processes. Additionally, projects often do not use existing organisational structures such as farmer organisations. This, however, could be advantageous regarding the critical aspects. The potential role of existing farmer organisations should therefore be examined further. From the perspective of such an organisation, participation in these projects might lead to institutional strengthening or even the development of a business model in case carbon revenues are used to fund extension service.

Keywords: Carbon Credits, Farmer Organisations, Kenya, monitoring processes

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