



Tropentag, September 20-22, 2023, hybrid conference  
“Competing pathways for equitable food systems transformation:  
Trade-offs and synergies”

## Comparative analysis of sustainable productive systems for the Honduran Mosquitia

LUISA CLAROS, ANDRÉS CHARRY, ELIAS BUCARDO, JENNY WIEGEL

*The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, Colombia*

### Abstract

The Honduran Mosquitia is the largest protected area in the country and is the home of over 96 thousand people between mestizos and 6 indigenous communities. This area is of high environmental importance due to its high biodiversity, key role in water provision and connectivity with the other large Mesoamerican forests, nevertheless, the region is under threat of deforestation due to the migration of “colonos”, the expansion of agricultural activities and illegal timber extraction.

To tackle deforestation and empowering local communities in the conservation of their forests, various organisations, including WCS have been promoting sustainable agricultural systems to provide alternatives to illegal and environmentally impactful activities, with different levels of success. In this study we assessed and compared 5 productive alternatives that have been promoted, are currently in place or have received express interest by the local communities: cacao, timber (except from mahogany), basic staples (rice and beans), swa (*Carapa guainensis*), and allspice (*Pimenta dioica*).

We assessed the productive alternatives using seven dimensions to understand their upscaling potential, co-benefits, opportunities, risks, and challenges in multiple areas: market potential, community preferences, income generation, environmental risk and compatibility, social equity, enabling environment and nutrition improvement potential. For this, we conducted a literature review combined with focus groups with representatives of the local communities and semi-structured interviews with key experts and representatives of the different productive systems.

Our results show that given the distance and connectivity to input markets and consumption centres, all productive systems face serious challenges for their competitiveness, especially for internationally traded commodities. Nevertheless, the lack of cash generating activities available in the region (other than cattle ranching and timber extraction) poses serious threats to the livelihoods of the families and the conservation of the landscapes. An integrated approach combining the improvement of food security interventions and complementary income generating activities may be an avenue to support the families in improving their overall conditions, with cocoa and basic staples showing higher potential than the other alternatives analyzed, but the lack of access to basic services and remains a serious bottleneck that would demand non-market interventions.

**Keywords:** Honduran Mosquitia, participatory rural appraisal, protected areas, sustainable livelihoods, value chain analysis