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Livelihood diversity, dietary diversity and resilience: Findings from rural households in the Bolivian Amazon

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Abstract

Food security and resilience are of great importance to rural households and closely connected with their livelihoods. In the Amazon basin, the rural population of Pando, Bolivia, traditionally lives from a combination of forest-based activities, agriculture, livestock rearing and wage jobs. Lately, rural households were subject to increasing changes driven by a growing road network, immigration, and the exploitation of natural resources. So far there is little information regarding the status of livelihood diversity, food security and resilience in Pando. We hypothesise that the livelihood diversities of these populations, determine their food security and their overall social-ecological resilience, which are core issues for their sustainable development. Hence, we applied a dietary diversity assessment (24h recall) and a socioeconomic survey to rural households (n=91) and evaluated their interdependencies by means of descriptive statistics as well as correlations and regression analyses. Our results, shown that most households pursue several livelihood activities (typically one main and several side activities), among which the collection of Non-Timber Forest products (predominantly Brazil nut) accounts for over 40 % of their overall income. Household dietary diversity scores are on average high (9,25 out of 12) and range from 6 to 12 indicating a diverse diet. However, against our expectations no significant correlation between household dietary diversity and livelihood diversity or specific livelihood activities were detected. The households in the region were affected by diverse environmental and socioeconomic shocks over the last years. Nevertheless, our interviews indicate that the diversity of livelihood activities, and the access to natural resources allowed households to shift between activities and thereby softening the impact of external hazards. This work contributes to the growing number of research in the region to better understand the situation of the rural population and thereby potentially improving policies to support local livelihoods and preserve the tropical rainforests in the Pando region.

Keywords: Amazon, Bolivia, dietary diversity, food security, household interviews, Pando, resilience, rural livelihood