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Forest-based bioeconomy in Argentina: Identifying social actors and dominant, marginal and alternative discourses

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Abstract

The expected contribution of this study focuses on the ongoing forest-based bioeconomy policy process in Argentina and the different visions and social actors associated with it. The concept of bioeconomy continues to spread worldwide leading to a panoply of bioeconomy-based policies and strategies. Nonetheless, there is no consensus over its definition, but rather different visions and ideas on its meaning, relating the concept to what can be defined as a floating signifier. As a result, local and national bioeconomy policy agendas draws on discourses and perspectives shaped by the political struggle over its meaning. In Argentina, the dominant vision on forest-based bioeconomy relates to a bioresource-based pro-economic growth vision relying on industrial tree plantations and promoted by the private sector and its interest groups. However, this fixation of meaning has marginalised alternative bioeconomy visions and actors, inhibiting the prospect of a more inclusive bioeconomy project.

The study aims to identify the different forest-based bioeconomy-related stakeholders in Argentina, including those excluded in mainstream public policy debates. We apply social network analysis techniques and discourse analysis on the base of data gathered through documental analysis and semi-structured interviews. Preliminary results indicate dominant visions promoted mainly by interest groups and two main discursive excluded communities: an academic complex related to biotechnology-oriented visions and civil society actors, including indigenous communities and local NGOs, associated with alternative bioeconomy visions where forest provide holistic livelihood, including non-timber forest products.

The topic is relevant in the context of food and agroforestry systems aiming sustainable production and consumption. The identification and recognition of different forest-based bioeconomy-related stakeholders are essential for the development of an inclusive and comprehensive bioeconomy that considers alternative visions and actors, including indigenous communities and local NGOs. Such an approach can contribute to sustainable production and consumption of forest-based products and services while considering the social, economic, and environmental aspects of the forest-based bioeconomy.

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