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Removing Obstacles to Allow Private Participation in Biodiversity Conservation. What are the Options for Private Landowners to Dedicate their Properties to the Conservation of Biodiversity in a More and More Globalized World?

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Abstract

The conservation of biodiversity on private land has a great potential in Latin America and particularly in Bolivia, where 84% of the land is in the hand of private owners, indigenous people and farming communities. Nevertheless, as a main obstacle, the private conservation approach lacks incentives to motivate these groups to participate in conservation.

Since 2001, an investigation in Bolivia is evaluating the existing incentives and those that may be developed to promote private conservation in places of high conservation value. The results of the evaluation of case studies in two regions (Andes and Chiquitano Forest) indicate the importance of the following incentives: security in land tenure and reduction of the payment of taxes.

The security in land tenure is the most important incentive for private owners of more extensive areas as it allows them to justify their land property rights. In contrary, the reduction of taxes is of minor importance as most owners anyway are not paying them. None of these incentives are attractive to communities of farmers and indigenous people because they do not need to justify their land properties rights neither have to pay land taxes.

In a global context the incentives that should be developed must provide economic profit, not only directly but also indirectly, to be attractive for the owners. The analysis of case studies indicate that there is potential to develop the following incentives: diversification of sources of possible income through the property by alternative activities compatible with conservation, green image to improve marketing of products, technical assistance in management and production, compensation funds for the reduction of the use of wood, compensation funds for CO₂ sequestration.

Those incentives are observed to promote a favorable mutual feedback between conservation and production activities, which up to date, seems to be the best model to promote sustainable private conservation. This could render the private conservation group competitive in the global economic dynamics.

The incentives to promote conservation in private lands depend on each specific situation and therefore innovation and diversification are basic principle to identify the most effective ones.

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