Community Management for the Sustainable Use of Forests: the Case of México

Workshop of Strategies and Forestry Policies in Honduras.

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Forest Resources

- National Area: 197.3 mill ha
- Natural Vegetation: 141.7 mill ha. (70%)
- Native Forests: 56.9 mill. Ha (11° in the world)
- Elevated biodiversity and endemic species (4° in the world)
- Rate of Annual deforestation: 600 mil ha
Social and Economic Conditions

- 13-15 mill. people inhabit forest regions
- 55% are in extreme poverty
- 43 ethnic groups (5 mill.)

- Commercial forest area: **21.6 M ha**
- Area under use: **8.6 M ha**
- National production: **9.4 M m³**
- Contribution of the sector to the PIB: **1.83%**
Trends in Forest Lands

Comunal y Ejidal 80%

Privada 15%

Pública 5%

Fuente: SARH, 1993
Forest Areas under Community Possession or Control in the World
Ambitious and long process of return of forest land to a cooperative or indigenous community (1910-90)

The Government maintains control over usage rights for forest resources: regulation and concessions to private and public businesses (1940-70)

New policies and legal reforms encourage the appropriation of forests by cooperations and communities and their organization for the commercial production of wood: The first Community Forest Businesses (EFCs) rise (1974-86).

The process receives much support from civil and social organizations of the second and third level and supports itself in the social capital of rural traditional communities.

New governmental boost to Community Forestry, with programs and budgets with no historical precedent (SEMARNAT, 1994 and National Forestry Commission, 2001)
Forest Communities in México

Social Units (Indigenous Communities and “Cooperatives”) in forest areas: 9000 (Aprox. 45 M ha)

- 45% belongs to indigenous groups.
- 65% count on commercial potential.
- 20-25% count on forest management programs (1,800 social units).
- 5-9% with developed EFCs
### Typology of Community Forest Businesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type I</th>
<th>Communities that sell in trees by foot</th>
<th>Producers who live off of land investments who sell wood by foot in thirds.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type II</td>
<td>Communities who Sell Wood by Piece</td>
<td>Producers who sell prime materials with no transformation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type III</td>
<td>Communities who Sell Sawed Wood</td>
<td>Producers with ability for transformation and commercialization of prime materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type IV</td>
<td>Communities who Sell Finished Products</td>
<td>Producers with the ability to process sawed wood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developed with ends of commercial production of wood in a regimen of common property (Only model of its kind in the world)

Success associated with elevated social capital by traditional forms of government (permanent tension between community tradition and business tradition).

Based in a social rationality: alternative model to that of private and public businesses.

Results from different internal arrangements in traditional forms of government and business management.
They’ve faced the challenge of transition into community control of forest and vertical integration after the era of concessions.

A high percentage of EFCs have demonstrated that they are profitable in all levels of vertical integration.
Economic and Social Benefits of EFCs

- EFCs have advanced toward vertical integration to give the most added value to their products and to generate better benefits.

- The viability of vertical integration is correlated to the extension of the commercial forest area (5-10 mil ha).

* Datos de 42 EFC´s del estado de Oaxaca.
They contribute to social and economic development:

- 1) Creation of jobs;
- 2) Investments in infrastructure and programs for social benefits;
- 3) Productive Reinvestment in EFCs;
- 4) Distribution of individual benefits.
25 communities certified by the FSC (518,600 ha; > 1M m3, abril 2003): highest percentage in the world.

Face challenges to commercialize their products in the globalized economy. The majority sell in local and regional markets and some are accessing international markets.

Superficie Forestal Comunitaria
Certificada por el FSC
(Miles de Ha)
Environmental Benefits of EFCs

- High percentage of communities located in areas of critical value for biodiversity in tropical and temperate ecosystems (1500 in 3 states of the southeast).

- Communities in 7 M ha. Invested US$ 2/ha in conservation, vs. US$1/ha invested in ANPs.

- Advanced EFCs invest in: creation of community reserves, reduction of intensity in short, protection of critical habitats.

- Advanced EFCs develop new ecosystem management schemes: productive diversification to other forest goods and services (ecotourism, PFNM, water and others)
Community forestry is an effective instrument of sustainable development.

Social capital is indispensible to boost community forest development.

Development of technical abilities between producers who generate dynamics of self-management that are more autonomous and efficient.

Community Forest Businesses (EFCs) power the appropriation of productive dynamics.
The technical and commercial inter-community relationships contribute to strengthening the community management and acquiring a regional vision with the usage of forest resources.

The productive diversification of various forest products and services increases income options.

Individualized government attention is integral and continues on to producers to strengthen ability of management and social capital.

Technical and professional services are decisive for the sectorial development of forest communities.
Challenges of EFCs in the new decade

- Tension between traditional forms of community organization and a business culture.
- Strengthening the social capital of community institutions (democracy, participation, equity of type, transparency, surrender of accounts).
- Productive diversification and access to emerging markets of environmental goods and services.
- Over-regulation.
- Commercial opening and competition with commercial forest plantation products.
- Problems with access of small producers to the international market of certified products.
1. The return of public and private lands in regimens of common property generates an economic and social well-being and improves the management of forest ecosystems.

2. The Mexican EFCs are the only case in the world where communities manage forest common property resources for the commercial production of wood.

3. The strengths of Mexican EFCs show that they can be accumulated to the community level that can improve the level of life to the level of individual homes.

4. Governmental actions can create new forms of social capital in rural zones and favor the development and competitiveness of EFCs.

5. The leadership and vision of many communities with successful EFCs has had an illustrative effect, creating social capital and reducing social conflicts.