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“I like to conserve the forest, but I also like the cash”. Socioeconomic factors influencing the motivation to be engaged in the Mexican Payment for Environmental Services Programme

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ABSTRACT

Two of the main motives for people to be engaged in the Mexican Payment for Environmental Services (PES) programme are forest conservation and the income received from the programme. We explore the socioeconomic conditions that support choosing these motives. We used data from a 2012 nationwide survey, processed through *logit* models. Significant factors influencing the desire to conserve as a motive were family welfare improvement, land use change intention, and training. Those affecting income as a motive were formal education, indigenous people participation and training. Finally, factors related to both conservation and income, as a motive, were formal education, training, PES influence in water management, and land boundary conflicts. Income and conservation are not mutually exclusive motives for engagement

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in the programme, given that in developing countries income from PES may reduce the socioeconomic pressures triggering land use change, and has a role in conservation efforts, already present in many rural communities.

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Introduction

The concept of environmental or ecosystem services (ES) was devised originally to highlight the importance of the benefits derived from ecosystems' functioning for human life (Costanza et al., 1997). Since the 1990s, public policies have fostered their valuation and incorporation into markets in the form of payment for environmental services (PES), as an incentive to promote forest conservation (Wunder, 2008; Pagiola et al., 2005; Gómez-Baggethun et al., 2010). From economic perspectives many ES are positive externalities that provide benefits to third parties, but that are not recognized as such by society and therefore they are not internalized in economic decision-making (Kosoy and Corbera, 2010). Thus, it is assumed that PES programmes, as an economic instrument for environmental management, can potentially halt ecosystems degradation, resulting in the maintenance or even increase of ES provision (Kelly and Huo, 2013). According to Wunder (2008), ideally PES transactions are voluntary, involving at least one "user" and one "provider", being both well defined, and should include criteria such as conditionality and additionality.

Various authors have shown that, in practice, most PES programmes do not comply with this model, and Mexico is not an exception. Deviation from the ideal market model results from the diverse institutional arrangements that develop in different social, economical, political, cultural and environmental contexts in which PES is implemented (Kosoy and Corbera, 2010; Shapiro-Garza, 2013). The diversity of PES schemes and those conditions under which they are applied have a strong influence in the programmes performance, and in who participates and how. Hence, Muradian et al. (2010) highlight the need for a more flexible concept that incorporates the socio-environmental complexity of local contexts in which these mechanisms operate and the inherent uncertainty of information about ES provision. The programme should then be more like an incentive or reward system designed to align the interests of different social actors towards models of land management that maintain ES provision.

The Mexican PES programme beneficiaries are social actors characterized by their particular identity, social values and specific perceptions about their relation to non-human nature, and are often organized through social interactions and local institutions (Corbera et al., 2009). The main objectives of the Mexican PES programme are both forest conservation and poverty relief, but the particular socioeconomic contexts of the programme's beneficiaries may influence their motivations to be engaged in it. Various authors have analyzed the motivations to be enrolled in PES programmes, in diverse socio-environmental contexts (e.g. Kosoy et al., 2008; Echeverría, 2010; Neitzel et al., 2014). In this study, we explore some of the socioeconomic variables influencing the main motives to be engaged in the PES programme in Mexico: the desire to conserve the forests and/or the income received. Our research is guided by the following research question: Which socioeconomic factors influence forest conservation and/or income, as the main motives of beneficiaries to be engaged in PES?

In this text we first present a brief review of the Mexican PES programme, followed by a theoretical framework regarding the socioeconomic factors that may influence forest conservation and/or income as the motives for rural communities to be engaged in it. We then explain the methods used in this investigation and analyze the socioeconomic factors influencing the motives of beneficiaries to be engaged in the Mexican PES. Finally we discuss our results in the light of the long-term viability of the programme, and the accomplishment of its objectives.

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