FORESTRY

Sustainable income

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Credit: Jan Stochor/Alamy Stock Photo

Research has focused extensively on the environmental sustainability benefits of community forest enterprises (CFE) for the production of timber from tropical forests. Less attention has been paid to their financial viability, and their ability to alleviate poverty — issues of vital importance for the continuation of these kinds of forest conservation initiatives.

One example of CFE operating in the Brazilian Amazon is Coomflona, a mixed cooperative of the Tapajós National Forest, including more than 200 members from local communities in severe poverty. Shoana Humphries of the Earth Innovation Institute, San Francisco, USA, and colleagues analysed the overall financial viability of the timber operation managed by Coomflona, as well as the cooperative's impacts on poverty, over 2007–2013. They found that the cooperative, by improving workers' productivity through learning-by-doing, increased the efficiency of their various activities and made them profitable, offering substantial financial benefits to local people. In 2013 alone, Coomflona generated over US\$1.5 million in income for workers together with other important social benefits for the poorer community members of the Tapajós forest.

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