H03-P02

Forest dependence in the western highlands of Guatemala

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Introduction

Despite the growing body of literature on the role of forests in rural livelihoods, few studies have presented valid and reliable quantitative estimates of the importance of forest products at household level, particularly in the tropics and sub-tropics. This research aims at estimating total income (cash and subsistence) and forest dependence of households in rural communities located across the Montane Forests ecoregion in western Guatemala.

Methods

- 106 randomly sampled households in 9 villages were visited in the western highlands of Guatemala during August 2005 - December 2006.
- Annual and quarterly surveys were conducted by local enumerators using the Poverty and Environment Network (PEN) questionnaire developed by CIFOR (www.cifor.cgiar.org/pen).
- Detailed data on total income were analysed with *Stata®* in order to calculate basic statistics, income distribution across quintiles and forest income shares.

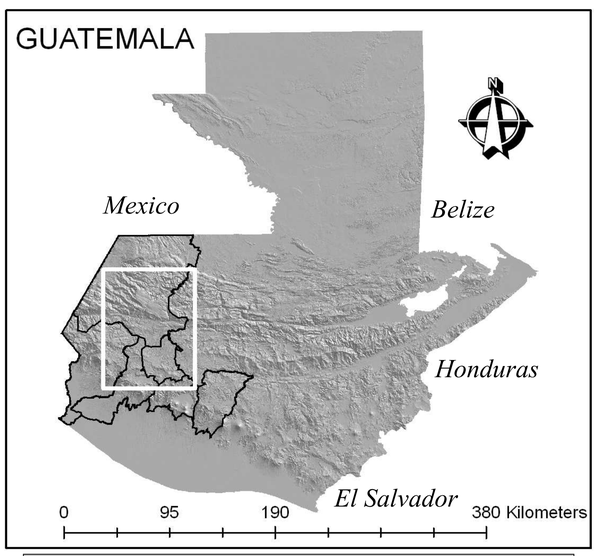


Figure 2. Study area (map made by Jonathan Reynoso)



Figure 1. One of our enumerators during the testing round of the survey (photo taken by Pedro Chacón)

Results and discussion

- The main sources of income were agriculture, forests and wages (Figure 3).
- Absolute forest income increases with total income while relative forest income is the largest for the poorest households (Figure 4).
- Forest income plays an important role for subsistence (Figure 5).
- Firewood, poles, leaf litter and timber are the most important forest products (Figure 6).
- Forest income is steady over time, providing a safety net (Figure 7).

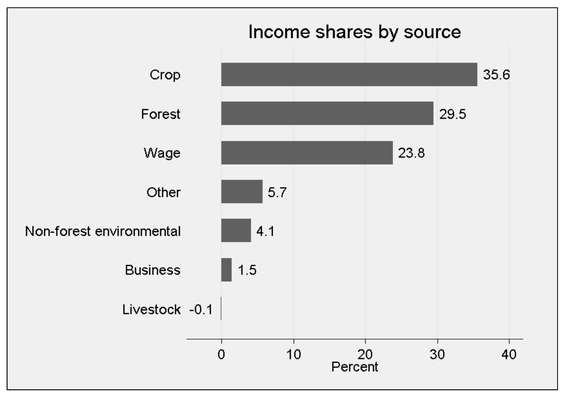


Figure 3. Main sources of income

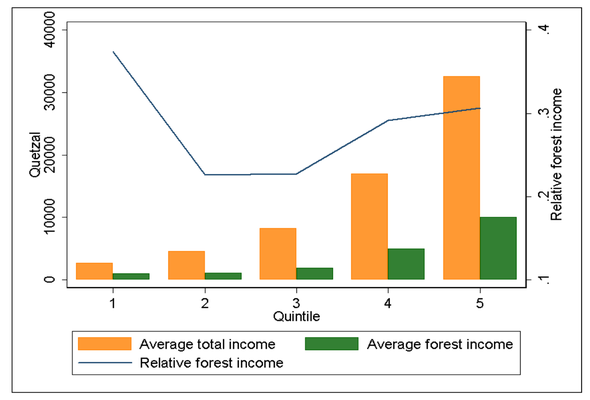


Figure 4. Forest income share of total income across quintiles

- These households are regular subsistence users of forest products whose agricultural systems make use of leaf litter for fertilisation.

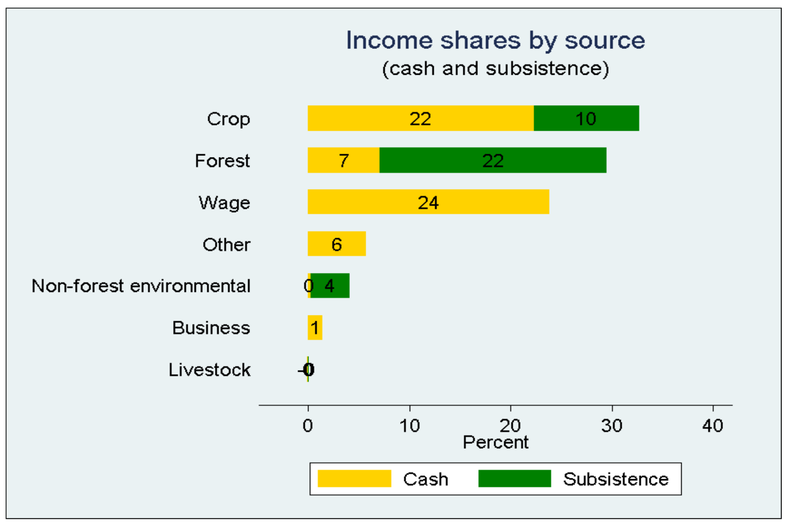


Figure 5. Cash and subsistence income

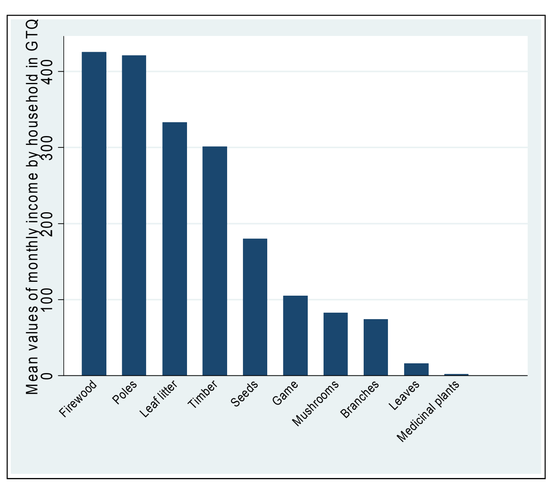


Figure 6. Mean values of forest-products household income

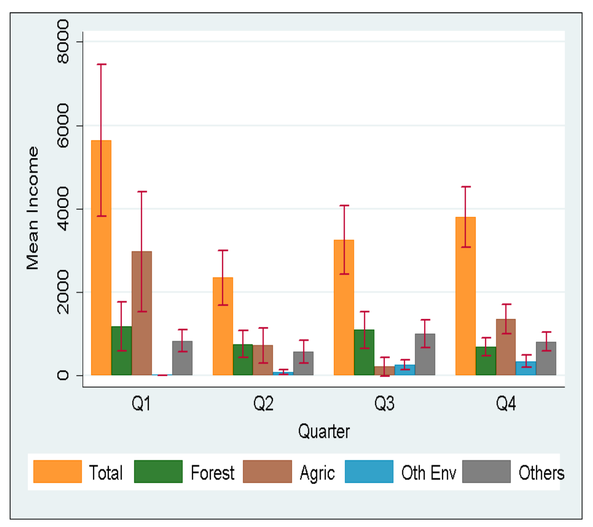


Figure 7. Seasonal income-diversity trend

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