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Abstract

Current payment for environmental service (PES) schemes face challenges in the form of evaluation of opportunity costs and ecosystem service delivery, high transaction costs, and difficulties in ensuring conditionality. Even when these conditions are met, PES may be undermined by a lack of inclusivity, leading to societal conflicts over land use. We propose a new PES-type approach that we call Landscape Labelling that seeks to overcome these problems by combining PES and product certification principles applied at a landscape scale with local benefits realized at the community level.

Specifically, we propose that managed rural landscapes delivering valuable ecosystem services should be awarded a 'Landscape Label', that would be used to identify products produced from the landscape. A Landscape Label could also represent and indeed publicize ecosystem service delivery as well as cultural and symbolic attributes of the landscape, as defined by local communities. This would provide greater recognition to communities and help to empower them in negotiations with outside agencies. Thus a Landscape Label has the potential to improve market recognition, secure premium payments, and gain access to niche markets. The derived benefits can, in turn, secure an incentive for managing the landscape in such a way as to continue to meet the ecosystem service criteria required for certification. Payments for ecosystem services, under a Landscape Labelling scheme, would be delivered to appropriate community-based organizations for investment in community and social projects that would benefit a far wider range of people than is currently possible in current PES.

There are various challenges to the successful implementation of this scheme, an important one being the creation of fair and transparent community-based institutions. Other challenges include the risks of freeriders. In proposing a Landscape Label we seek to promote new ideas that have potential to overcome challenges associated with current PES-type schemes, and in discussing their deficiencies we hope to conceptually and practically advance PES-type approaches.

Keywords

Certification; Community management; Eco-labelling; Equity; Geographical indication; Landscape mosaic; Poverty alleviation