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The Community Forestry Enterprise in Mexico: Driving Unit for Sustainable Community Forestry Development

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Abstract

The economic globalization process represents a challenge for Community Forestry Enterprises (CFE) in Mexico, as a key unit for improving sustainable community forestry development. The study was conducted to assess the impact of economic globalization on sustainable community forestry and, specifically, on sustainable community forest enterprises, and to identify strategic mechanisms and policy actions to support their development. The study was carried out in the states of Durango, Chihuahua, Jalisco, and Michoacán—the most important forest-producing states in Mexico, contributing nearly 70% of the national timber production.

The main variables analyzed were: current situation, marketing, flexibility and capability, economic diversity, competitiveness, social well-being, and income generation. As a result, an integrated model was developed to promote the empowerment and competitiveness of the Ejidos and Communities and, specifically, community forestry enterprises. This holistic model aims to advance CFE development toward improved competitiveness in the context of globalization. Additionally, the study produced a forest business plan for trading the forest products of the Asociación Regional de Silvicultores Baja Tarahumara, A.C. in Chihuahua State. Multidimensional strategies were also defined for the application of this business plan, advancing development and competitiveness. A key strategy was the establishment of a Rural Production Society to support the implementation of the forest business plan and improve productivity processes within the CFE of the Asociación Regional de Silvicultores.

This holistic participatory model is the first of its kind and, therefore, differs from traditional approaches. It provides a framework for promoting a regional development policy tailored to the needs of local communities. The model is flexible and versatile, allowing replication in diverse geographical areas and socio-cultural and economic environments.

Keywords: Sustainable Community Forestry; Forest Business Plan; Forest Competitiveness; Economic Globalization; Holistic Forest Model; Forest Cluster

Editorial

Trade liberalization presents a challenge for Community Forestry Enterprises (CFE) in Mexico, serving as a driving force to achieve sustainable community forestry development. The Ejidos and forest communities (EyCF) are vital components of the productive chain in the forestry sector and, simultaneously, key sociocultural and

ecological systems for grassroots development with a focus on sustainability [1,2]. Within this system, challenges arise concerning the development of competitive community forestry businesses.

As a result of trade liberalization, Mexican forestry products face difficulties in accessing international markets while maintaining their share of the domestic market. Exports have declined, and imports have increased, contributing to a growing trade deficit. The sawmill industry, the most significant in terms of processing volume and the number of industrial plants, has been particularly affected. In recent years, the import of sawn wood has risen significantly [3], increasing Mexico's commercial dependence on imports, with a significant portion of national sawn wood consumption supplied by Chile, the United States, Brazil, and Canada. Despite this, forest communities, Ejidos, and community forestry businesses have not reaped the expected benefits in terms of sustainable development and competitiveness.

The objective of this study was to assess the impact of economic globalization on the development of community forestry and CFEs in Mexico and to propose mechanisms and policies that contribute to their development.

A case study approach was adopted, focusing on the states of Durango, Chihuahua, Jalisco, and Michoacán, which together generate approximately 70% of the country's timber production. Study units were selected based on typologies defined by the National Forestry Commission [3], which classifies forest producers according to their level of vertical integration within the production chain: a) potentialproducers, b) producers who sell standing timber, c) producers of forest raw materials, and d) producers with transformation and marketing capacities.

The variables considered were: current situation, marketing, flexibility and responsiveness, economic diversification, competitiveness, social well-being, and income generation. Primary and secondary data were collected through field surveys of selected EyCF in the four states, technical documents, interviews with key forestry sector stakeholders, and institutional databases [4].

The study found that forest product marketing in the studied communities is influenced by factors such as management capacity, decision-making processes, competition, intermediation, and quality control. A comprehensive model was developed to promote the empowerment and competitiveness of EyCF, specifically targeting community forestry businesses. The model includes: Strategies for horizontal and vertical integration within the forestry cluster, Empowerment of EyCF, and Participation in national and international markets [4],

contributing to biodiversity conservation.

The model incorporates structural components, including: The Ejido/community and its biodiversity as the foundation for CFE integration, Strategies for strengthening managerial and administrative capacities, Business organization, Production, transformation, and marketing process management, The CFE as a competitive unit, Multidimensional support processes, Monitoring and evaluation of decision-making processes, and A feedback loop for biodiversity conservation and improvement. This holistic model aims to advance sustainable CFE development and competitiveness in the context of economic globalization.

To enhance responsiveness, Mexico's forestry policy considers CFEs as fundamental components of the forestry sector, forming the backbone of the productive forestry chain. CFEs have significant strengths, such as resource quality and labor availability, but face ongoing challenges, including unsustainable productivity practices and limited competitiveness in the economic-ecological context. The proposed holistic model seeks to address these challenges, promoting sustainable community forestry and advancing CFEs toward better competitiveness in a globalized economy [4-6].

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