

Business Cases for Biodiversity: the smallholders' perspective

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Market-based instruments are increasingly being promoted as a promising measure to face the twin challenge of biodiversity conservation and development. In the realm of market-based approaches, an important instrument is the creation of biodiversity business: 'commercial enterprises that generate profit via activities which conserve biodiversity, use biological resources sustainably and share their benefits equitably'. The growing belief in biodiversity business as a conservation and development strategy evolved parallel to an increasing number of such enterprises worldwide in recent years. However, despite its prominence, the systematic evaluation of the strategy's performance and success factors has lagged behind. Up until today, most attempts are limited to project documents and grey literature, whereas quantitative and comparative evaluations of the strategy are extremely scarce. To address this gap, the Copernicus Institute of Utrecht University, with the support of the Dutch development organization HIVOS, recently initiated the research project Business Cases for Biodiversity: the smallholder perspective. The project aims to evaluate established biodiversity SMEs operating in the South by their conservation outcomes, socio-economic benefits and financial performance. Furthermore, the relationship between their overall success and a range of success factors will be investigated. In this poster, we present a newly created conceptual framework as the basis for the comparative analysis of biodiversity business success. The framework links the conservation, social and financial performance of biodiversity business to a variety of possible determinants. These determinants capture the array of most commonly reported 'lessons learned' in biodiversity business establishment, found after extensive literature study on the topic. Determinant categories cover the socio-economic and political context; the natural system; stakeholder factors; access to resources; and enterprise factors. The extracted list of key determinants to be used for further analysis in the research project is presented in the poster. With the presentation of these preliminary results, we hope not only to trigger the debate on the effectiveness and enabling conditions of biodiversity business, but also to inspire and inform a wide range of stakeholders about the lessons learnt and the potential of biodiversity business as a conservation and development strategy.