Towards integrated farming and biodiversity protection landscapes for improved livelihoods in a Southern African TFCA: policy and governance considerations

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Presentation Outline

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Introduction

• A review of literature shows that the world faces a challenge to balance food production and biodiversity protection - that there is need to meet the increasing demand for food through ecologically sustainable agricultural approaches.

• The Transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs) scheme which has gained popularity in Southern Africa presents an opportunity for addressing this challenge.

• TFCAs aim to achieve the conservation and sustainable use of biological and cultural resources (along national boundaries) whilst promoting regional peace, co-operation and socio-economic development.

• The aim of TFCAs overlaps with the goals of ecoagriculture (an approach for integrating conservation and farming at landscape scale to improve livelihoods).
Ecoagriculture is a broad framework for land use transformations that enhance rural livelihoods and agricultural production systems while conserving or restoring ecosystem services and biodiversity at a landscape scale.
Introduction (cont.)

• Local communities can possibly contribute towards achieving TFCAs’ goals through implementing ecoagriculture.

• Policies, laws, regulations and governance (manner in which access to resources is regulated and monitored) provide the framework and context in which local communities make decisions and take actions that affect biodiversity.

• Hence the present research sets to investigate policy issues that might affect the contribution of local communities towards the achievement of TFCA goals.
Study Objectives

- To evaluate the influence of public policies and customary rules on the utilization and management of indigenous tree resources by communal farmers and how this affects the development of ecoagriculture policy.

- To assess local perceptions on availability of wild tree resources in the area

- Indigenous forests and woodlands or scattered trees in agricultural fields are a major component of ecoagriculture landscapes.
Methods

- **Name**: Mathenjwa Tribal Authority (MTA)
- **Communal farming area in northern KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa**
- **Within Lubombo TFCAs; Lies in Maputaland Centre, a biodiversity hotspot.**
- **Home to some of southern Africa’s poorest people who rely heavily on local natural resources**
Methods

- Primary and secondary data information sources used:
  - questionnaire surveys (170 local farmers’ household heads; + 30 household representatives)
  - key informant and group interviews,
  - direct observation.
  - public policy/legislative documents

- Study area was divided into three zones: lower zone (low-lying gently sloping coastal plain, around 150m ASL), middle zone (rugged and mountainous area around 350m ASL, transitional between lower and upper zones) and upper zone (dissected plateau, about 550m)
Results and Discussion

Problems associated with lack of indigenous tree resources were marginally felt in the area.
Results and Discussion (cont)

The greater proportion of respondents perceived an increase in natural bush, woodland or forest cover in their localities. Perceptions can influence attitude towards biodiversity conservation.
Comparison with complementary studies

- **Fleury (2011)** analysed landcover from satellite imagery - ¼ of the land area was cleared, ¾ were under natural vegetation cover.

- **Torquebiau et al. (2010)** analysed a series of aerial photographs from 1942 to 2010 found an increase in tree cover over this period.

- Implying that vegetation of the area is in a reasonably undisturbed condition.
Observed challenges

• Study revealed challenges relating to existing governance regimes:

  • State legislation provides for protection of specified tree species; restricts amounts harvested, or harvesting method whereas customary norms allows free and open access for local residents with no restrictions.

  • Reluctance to comply with legislation protecting plants perceiving this as prioritizing conservation at the expense of livelihoods.

  • Conflict between local traditional structures and municipal or provincial authorities.

  • The day to day conduct of the local people is determined mainly through customary norms.

  • Enforcement of public legislation in these circumstances becomes a challenge without cooperation from local community.

  • Key informant interviews revealed that the state lacks capacity to enforce and monitor compliance.
Unmonitored harvesting & sale of forest products
Implications for ecoagriculture policy

• Many countries including South Africa have no ecoagriculture policy to guide and support agriculture-biodiversity integration.

• Ecoagriculture approach is gaining recognition across the world - many countries likely to consider developing ecoagriculture policy.

• Potential challenge: lack of effective enforcement like other environmental policies.
Conclusion

• Suggestions for ecoagriculture policy development:
  – Incorporate customary rules
  – Effectively engage local community members – e.g. scenario planning & community visioning.
  – Operationalize through local traditional leadership structures in collaboration with other stakeholders.
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