

Marketing ecosystem services....exposing challenges for developing country governments and civil society

This is a summary of a recently published paper by Esteve Corbera and Katrina Brown in the leading development studies journal *World Development*:

Corbera, E. and Brown, K., Building institutions to trade ecosystem services: marketing forest carbon in Mexico. *World Development* 2008:
doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2007.09.010

Enhancing carbon sequestration and storage by tropical forests is viewed as a potentially important part of global climate change mitigation strategies, and using market-mechanisms to trade ecosystem services is enthusiastically promoted within the Kyoto Protocol and more widely. However, research comparing government-led initiatives, such as those proposed under the CDM, to voluntary, retail-based, carbon markets in Mexico, finds that there are severe constraints to implementing trade in ecosystem services to mitigate climate change.

A new paper published in the leading development studies journal *World Development* exposes the difficulties in designing institutions to market forest-carbon and the constraints and challenges facing developing country governments if they are to effectively participate in global markets. These include the unwillingness of some civil society actors to engage in markets, the lack of capacity to implement projects, and the misfit between community, national and international rules.

In order for market-based mechanisms to protect forest ecosystems to be effective, these constraints must be overcome, but this is immensely expensive for developing countries, in terms of time, expertise and effort. Sophisticated rules and the scale of investments may mean that poorer countries are excluded.

This has clear implications for further development of Kyoto mechanisms particular given a likely greater emphasis on carbon sequestration in forest ecosystems.

Related research on examining the evolution of Mexican government's carbon forestry programme is published as:

Corbera, E., Gonzalez Soberanis, C. and Brown, K., Institutional dimensions of payments for ecosystem services: An analysis of Mexico's carbon forestry programme. *Ecological Economics* (2008) doi:10.1016/j.ecolecon.2008.06.08

The authors have also explored the equity and development dimensions of carbon forestry schemes:

Corbera, E., K. Brown and W.N. Adger, 2007. The equity and legitimacy of markets for ecosystem services *Development and Change*. 38.4: 587-613.

For further details of the Tyndall Centre's research programme into international development and climate change www.tyndall.ac.uk/research/programme4