

RODRIGUEZ, CLAUDIA [S3-P11]

Payments for ecosystem services to support farmers' adaptation to climate variability in Mexico

In Calakmul Biosphere Reserve in southern Mexico farmers' welfare has been affected by climate variability. Calakmul, however, is not only a climate vulnerable region, but also a priority area for conservation programs. Payments for ecosystem services (PES) started several years ago in Calakmul and have allowed farmers to cope, and in some cases provided them resources to adapt by investing in alternative economic activities that reduce vulnerability to climate shocks. The experience of this case study shows that PES outcomes exceed conservation benefits. PES can support autonomous adaptation as well as adaptation policy if farmers invest the payments on economic activities that reduce their vulnerability to further climate stimuli. In this paper I analyze data from 280 interviews with farmers from 28 communities living in and around Calakmul Biosphere Reserve to understand what factors explain why some farmers use PES to adapt while others only use PES to cope. The findings show that farmers' participation in decision-making councils and empowerment within their communities provides farmers crucial skills, information, knowledge, political capital and networks, which support their ability to invest PES to adapt. This is, those who participate have larger adaptive capacity and are more likely to use PES to adapt than to cope. The paper contributes to conservation and adaptation literature and policies as it shows the existence of synergies between conservation and adaptation actions. It also contributes to environmental governance scholarship by showing the importance of participation to multiply the benefits of PES beyond conservation to aid adaptation to climate variability and change.