

CARE and the World Agroforestry Centre: Communities, Conservation and Carbon Initiative

The Challenge

While environmental degradation hurts us all, the consequences of fewer natural resources and faltering ecosystem services strike poor people in the developing world especially hard. Meanwhile, conspicuous consumption, chronic poverty, population pressure, poor governance and climate change threaten to intensify the scale and speed of degradation.

Our Response

CARE International and the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF) believe it is possible to reverse this downward trend. We are taking the lead in combating the intertwined challenges of rural poverty, environmental degradation and climate change by tapping the power of global carbon markets. Our Communities, Conservation and Carbon (C³) Initiative channels resources from these markets to support “multiple benefit” agroforestry projects that simultaneously:

- Provide incentives for sustainable land use
- Support biodiversity and ecosystem conservation
- Reduce the vulnerability of rural livelihoods to climate variability and change
- Make a cost-effective and verifiable contribution to mitigating climate change

Background

Using the land’s ability to absorb and retain (i.e. sequester) carbon in diverse, productive agroforestry systems is a **win** for reducing poverty,

a **win** for conservation and a **win** for mitigating climate change.

As part of an integrated sustainable agriculture system, agroforestry diversifies the asset-base of poor households and, in so doing, enhances both their income and food security. These systems can also help communities adapt to climate change since carbon rich soils store more water, and trees are less vulnerable to drought, floods and other forms of extreme weather than conventional crops. This method also reverses land and soil degradation while increasing functional biodiversity throughout the landscape.

Financial resources from the world’s carbon markets could provide the catalyst to implement these systems on a grand scale. However, this has not yet happened. One of the most formidable obstacles is the complexity and high cost of measuring and monitoring the rate of carbon sequestration – especially when projects are composed of many small farmers. Other significant obstacles include:

- A lack of widespread, basic knowledge about agroforestry systems (making it difficult to select the right mix of species for a particular project)
- A lack of widespread, basic knowledge about the economics of agroforestry (particularly in the context of project start-up)
- Perverse policies that discourage sustainable land management and agroforestry systems

© CARE 2007

www.careclimatechange.org

CARE & climate change

Using the land’s ability to absorb and retain carbon in diverse, productive agroforestry systems is a win for reducing poverty, a win for conservation and a win for mitigating climate change.



The C³ Initiative

To overcome these obstacles and release the potential of this “win-win-win” project type, CARE and ICRAF are collaborating to:

- Create a suite of methods combined in a toolbox to help project creators implement land-use smallholder carbon projects
- Implement model projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America

The toolbox will include a cost-effective, state of the art carbon measurement and monitoring system. It will integrate community collected, ground-based measurements with satellite remote sensing to obtain carbon stock baselines and dynamics. Partnering with local communities lowers costs while providing an educational benefit and ensuring communities a larger percentage of project funds. A soil carbon measurement system will allow the inclusion of this carbon pool that can increase the creditable carbon by as much as 30 percent. A carbon accounting system will help communities and project implementers to track carbon in a way that allows them to interface successfully with the carbon market.

In addition, the toolbox will provide access to information on the agroforestry biophysical aspects that will allow project developers to design successful agroforestry systems that are integrated into a complete, sustainable agriculture project.

This will include species mix, propagation and ways to successfully engage in capacity building with local communities. Project developers will use the toolbox to perform economic analysis to optimize the return for livelihoods on both cash and non-cash bases, as the return from the system’s enhanced productivity often exceeds the nominal value of the carbon credits.

Community Engagement

A common thread in both the carbon and land specific themes is engagement with communities. This includes ensuring that the benefits of these projects reach the poor smallholders for which they are intended and finding ways to build true partnerships with local communities. The toolbox will provide project developers with effective methods to engage with communities in order to achieve these goals.

Moving Forward

Tools will be made available over the web through an easy to use information portal. In addition there will be step by step instructions to guide project creators through the often complex process of implementing land use projects.

Essentially, the toolbox will remove the main barriers in terms of access to tools and information that have hampered this project type until now. Freed in this way, many more projects that combine land-use carbon sequestration with real poverty reduction will be able to go forward.



World Agroforestry Centre
TRANSFORMING LIVES AND LANDSCAPES

© CARE 2007

