

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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Public policies and social actions to prevent the loss of the Chiquitano Dry Forest

T4.16 How to reconcile poverty alleviation with forest integrity in tropical dry forests: ecological research gaps and paradigm shifts for sustainable management.

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Abstract: The Chiquitano Dry Forest (CDF), with an area of around 23 Mha distributed between Brazil and Bolivia, is located in a transition zone between the Amazon rainforest and the dry forests of the Chaco and Cerrado. Biodiversity in this forest is very high and at least 70 species are of global conservation concern. The CDF is catalogued as one of the largest and best conserved Tropical Dry Forests in the Americas. Currently, this unique forest is highly vulnerable and under considerable pressure, which should generate global attention, considering its importance in terms of biodiversity, climate change and social impacts. Despite efforts made for more than two decades to prevent the loss of the CDF on the Bolivian side, the processes of deforestation and forest fragmentation caused by agricultural expansion and forest fires have continued to put its ecological integrity at high risk. Our study highlights deforestation in the CDF, outlines its socio-economic and environmental importance and provides recommendations from the local experience. We identified that until 2020, accumulated deforestation in the CDF reached a total area of 2.7 Mha. Moreover, in the last years wildfires have affected an area of around 2.4 Mha. We propose critical courses of action from the local experience with a strong integrated approach, including: (i) adjustments to public policies that encourage deforestation and strength environmental governance (ii) adequate land planning and management with focus on reaching economic targets while minimizing environmental effects, (iii) creation of protected areas and strengthening and better management of existing ones (iv) raising public awareness through environmental education and effective communication highlighting the real value of forests and the importance of intact ecosystems. The CDF faces a critical moment and requires urgent global and national coordinated actions and commitments at all levels to combat deforestation and forest degradation.