

The Use of Ecological Indicators as a Basis for Operationalizing a PES Scheme on Forest Conservation in Northern Argentina

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Payments for ecosystem services (PES) aim to improve the supply of ecosystem services (ES) by making payments to service providers, which are conditional on the provision of those services. Payments cannot be conditional unless the service can be effectively monitored. Direct monitoring of ES to assess conditionality could be methodologically complex and operatively expensive. To overcome such constraints, the pilot “GEF-PES Project” of Northern Argentina has developed a set of five indicators on forest conservation status (CS) as a basis for estimating the amount of ES provided –considering a positive correlation between the CS of a forest and its level of provision of ecosystem services –and for operationalizing the PES. Field data indicate that selected indicators: (i) exhibit strong correlation with the amount of carbon and biodiversity provided by forests according to their CS, ii) are cost-effective to monitor ES conditionality and (iii) allow easy application of payment levels.