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Family collecting wild coffee. Credit M Tromp

Protecting the home of wild coffee whilst improving local livelihoods: Participatory Forest Management for coffee forest conservation in Ethiopia

Coffea arabica evolved as an understory shrub in the Afromontane forests of south-west Ethiopia. Despite being a global commodity and Ethiopia's dominant export, conservation of the birthplace of coffee has been poor. While the importance of conserving the coffee forests is now recognised, conservation policies have been unsuccessful because they have alienated local communities.

This project uses a Participatory Forest Management (PFM) methodology tested and implemented successfully over a period of 10+ years in nearby districts which links forest maintenance and livelihood development.

Developing a revenue stream from the forest to help reduce poverty, improve local livelihoods and motivate sustainable forest use is crucial. Two enterprises are now operating with a focus on non-timber forest products which don't impact negatively on the forest. The quality of the coffee from the 'coffee forest' and that from the wild plants in the 'natural' forest has been

assessed by a number of UK based coffee buying organisations. The 'natural' forest coffee has been identified as potentially particularly suited for niche marketing. A carbon assessment has also been completed, providing the basis for generating income from carbon trading.

The project is also exploring ideas of international relevance, especially the way in which PFM can be an appropriate approach to *in situ* conservation. In this way forest maintenance is owned by communities and is sustainable without external support as there are economic motivations from forest-based incomes. The project is generating lessons that may be suited to areas where more traditional approaches, such as biosphere reserves, have faced problems.

For more information [click here](#). To access to a short film [click here](#). Contact Fiona Hesselden: F.Hesselden@hud.ac.uk