

**Headline: Mesoamerican Agroenvironmental Program (MAP): Impacting the wellbeing of families in Rural Mesoamerica**

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**What, why and how much.** With the support of the Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish governments CATIE (The Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center) established the Mesoamerican Agroenvironmental Program (the “MAP”) in 2008. Between 2008 and 2012 the Norwegian contribution has been of 125´000.000 NOK. The MAP is an ambitious inter-sectorial multi-partner knowledge and innovation platform based on the livelihoods approach that aims at multiplying ecologically healthy, economically competitive and socially equitable use of natural resources to achieve Sustainable Land Management (SLM). The objective of the Program is to promote sustainable land management strategies that provide ecosystem goods and services to reduce rural poverty and to ultimately improve human wellbeing. To do so, MAP supports the development, testing and communication of methodologies, technologies and policies designed to integrate production and conservation. The Program focuses its efforts at various levels of impact that goes from the farm to territories and to more aggregated scales including national and regional levels.

**Results.** Impacts at the farm level have being thoroughly analyzed. The analysis focused on key determining aspects of family`s quality of live including a self-reported index of life satisfaction. Given that MAP is not the only initiative working at improving human capacities in Mesoamerica, the analysis included two different samples. The first sample comprised all MAP beneficiaries, independently on whether they also receive technical assistance from other institutions. A second analysis was performed in order to better isolate the impact of the Program; it included a sub-sample consisting on those families that only receive technical assistance from MAP.

The most immediate impact of MAP on beneficiary families is reported on income levels. Preliminary results indicate that by participating in the Program families can increase their annual income in more \$4.000. Nonetheless impacts of the program are also evident in a wider range of variables affecting families` well-being. Results for the first group show that beneficiary families are more satisfied with the technical assistance they receive and the existing possibilities of participating in community-based associations than their non-beneficiary counterparts. This result shows that the Program has being successful in improving satisfaction levels related to human and social capitals among its beneficiary families. In addition, participation in the Program is related to adoption of adaptation measures to face climate change at the farm level. Given that such measures constitute a type of insurance families are accessing to secure their future well-being, MAP has enhanced the ability its beneficiaries to safeguard their future.

Impact evaluation on the second group supports findings from the previous group and also shows that the Program has had a direct impact on the quality of life of families that do not receive technical assistance besides the on from CATIE. This greater impact is on self-reported life satisfaction index (measured on an increasing scale from 1 to 10 where both extremes indicate the lowest and highest values respectively). Based on this index, beneficiary families

report a greater life satisfaction level of more than 1.1 points. In terms of income equivalence, this difference is comparable to an annual income increase of \$865.

**Lessons learned.** The participatory approach of MAP, allowing exchange of experiences and involvement of families in processes aiming at improving their quality of life has proven to be successful. It shows that by empowering families to participate in their own development, not only works toward poverty alleviation but also enhances their satisfaction level with key aspects related to their overall well-being.