

PALMS

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Palm harvest impacts in tropical forests

The general scientific objectives of PALMS, supported by the European Commission under FP7 Use of natural resources: the impact on biodiversity, ecosystem, goods and services, are to study the effect of extraction and trade of palms on forest in the western Amazon, the Andes and the Pacific lowlands.

Tropical forests harbour thousands of useful plants which are harvested and used in subsistence economies or traded in local, regional or international markets. The effect on the ecosystem is little known, and the forests resilience is badly understood. Palms are the most useful group of plants in tropical American forests. PALMS will determine the size of this resource by making palm community studies in the different forest formations and determine the number of species and individuals of all palm species.

The genetic structure of useful palm species will be studied to determine how much harvesting of the species contributes to genetic erosion of its populations, and whether extraction can be made without harm. How much palms are used for subsistence purposes will be determined by carrying out quantitative, ethnobotanical research in different forest types. It will then study the trade patterns for palm products from local markets to markets which involve export to other countries and continents. Palm populations are managed in various ways from sustainable ones to destructive harvesting; the different ways in which palms are managed will be studied by PALMS which in turn will propose sustainable methods to local farmers, local governments, NGOs and other interested parties. Finally PALMS will study national level mechanisms that governs extraction, trade and commercialization of palm products, to identify positive and negative policies in relation to resilience of ecosystems and use this to propose sustainable policies to the governments.

The results will be disseminated in a variety of ways, depending on need and stake holders, from popular leaflets and videos for farmers, reports for policy makers to scientific publication for the research community. The team behind the proposal represents 10 universities and research institutions in Europe and northwestern South America.



Further Information

	Project Duration January 2009 - December 2013
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