Assessing Socioeconomic Resilience of Rural Workers in an Ecuadorian Agrosocioecosystem using Ethnographic Linear Programming

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Abstract

This study presents an assessment of the current situation in a selected Coastal Ecuadorian agrosocioecosystem, by studying its principal components, their socioeconomic resilience, and economic output they provide. The study also assesses the benefits of remaining a small farmer, as an alternative to migration. There are a limited number of livelihood options in the study area. People can be small-scale farmers; can be town-dwelling, salaried plantation workers; can live and work on plantations; or can migrate. This lack of opportunity creates an unstable social situation. Four components or subsystems were studied overall: commercial banana plantations; town-dwelling plantation workers; small-scale farmers; and nature reserves. This paper deals with the first two and the entire agrosocioecosystem. Analysis was undertaken using Ethnographic Linear Programming (ELP), which uses qualitative and quantitative data to estimate systems outcomes under several scenarios. Elicited data were used to construct models. Households were subjected to sudden shocks, and those able to best respond were said to possess higher socioeconomic resilience. The study found that small-scale farmers are highly socioeconomically resilient to shocks. Town-dwelling plantation workers households possess little resilience. Transferring households from the town labor supply to small-scale farms improves economic output and adds resilience to the larger agrosocioecosystem.