

An analysis of context specific conditions for applying payments for ecosystem services

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Short summary

Policy-makers at different levels of governance have shown support to voluntary instruments that offer a positive incentive for those who provide the ecosystem service or give up economic activity in favor of conservation. As payments for ecosystem services (PES) have been experimented in different ecological, socio-economic and institutional contexts, there is an opportunity to learn from experiences across contexts. In addition to the context, also the features of the PES applications and the motivations of the participating ecosystem service providing landowners differ. Our analysis, building on three PES applications, distinguishes the generalizable patterns from context specific PES features. We compare PES in contexts where the histories of PES differ: Australia, Portugal and Finland. We use survey data to compare land-owner perceptions of PES scheme design features and motivations to contract. Our analysis contributes to a general framework for the identification and analysis of PES features suitable for distinct application contexts.

Abstract

As new legal instruments for conservation face resistance and design and control challenges at many levels, payments for ecosystem services (PES) have become increasingly popular. Policy-makers at different levels of governance, from global to local, have shown support to voluntary instruments that offer a positive incentive for those who provide the ecosystem service or give up economic activity in favor of conservation. As PES have been experimented in different ecological, socio-economic and institutional contexts, there is an opportunity to learn from experiences across contexts. In addition to the context, also the features of the PES applications and the motivations of participating ecosystem service providing landowners differ. Our analysis building on three distinct PES applications is designed to distinguish the generalizable patterns from context specific PES features. We compare PES arrangements with private land-owners who provide a range of ecosystem services in contexts where the histories of PES differ: Australia with a long history of PES applications, Portugal with a PES arrangement that builds on the European Policies and Finland where the PES has been established from as a response to a major conflict. We use survey data from the three contexts to compare land-owner perceptions of PES scheme design features and motivations to contract. Our analysis contributes to a general framework for the identification and analysis of PES features suitable for distinct application contexts.