




An African account of ecosystem service provision: Use, threats and policy options for sustainable livelihoods

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Abstract

Scientific work on ecosystem services has been growing globally as well as in Africa. Human dependence on provisioning ecosystem services in particular is mostly acknowledged in developing countries like those in Africa, where many people are poor and reliant on natural resources. The reliance of communities on natural resources in Africa varies from place to place as aridity, vegetation and socio-economic conditions change. In the humid and forested areas in the west and central parts of Africa, food and raw materials coupled with agriculture are important ecosystem services while in the dryer arid and semi-arid countries in southern and northern Africa, tourism, water and grazing are priorities. Overexploitation of resources coupled with large scale agriculture threatens both ecosystem services and livelihoods. The need to safeguard ecosystem services is urgent. There are some efforts to safeguard ecosystem services in Africa. However, realizing benefits to livelihoods still faces serious challenges due to climate change, recent land grabbing and urbanization. These challenges are compounded by the land tenure situation in Africa. Whilst policy goals have been established at both the international and national levels the implementation of such policies and likelihood of them leading to sustainable land management for delivery of ecosystem services remains a key challenge.