

An Analysis of The Use of Network Management Approach to Reverse Deforestation and Enhance Economic Growth Related to The Tea Industry in Rwanda

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of deforestation on the Rwandan economy, particularly on the tea processing businesses, and analyses network management as a solution to address this pressing challenge. The main objective of the research is to analyze the use of a collaborative network approach to effectively minimize deforestation while ensuring economic viability for stakeholders involved in tea production in Rwanda. The study used a mixed-methods approach, including stakeholder analysis, feasibility studies, and the development of organizational and communication structures tailored to the unique context of Rwanda.

The methodology involved a purposive sampling of critical stakeholders, including representatives from government agencies, NGOs, tea processing companies, and local communities, with a total sample size of 50 participants. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys to gather qualitative and quantitative insights on stakeholder perspectives, interests, and the socio-economic impacts of deforestation. The findings reveal that more than traditional technical solutions are needed to resolve various stakeholders' complex interplay of interests. Instead, a network management framework is recommended, emphasizing the importance of engaging high-power, interested stakeholders while adequately informing and monitoring those with lower power and interest.

Practical Implications: the results indicate that a well-structured network can significantly enhance the chances of successful implementation of sustainable practices, such as the introduction of biogas businesses as an alternative to wood fuel in tea processing. In conclusion, the report advocates for the establishment of a network headed by a steering committee comprising key stakeholders to facilitate consensus-building and collaborative decision-making; something that is not common in Africa. By prioritizing network management, biogas businesses will create a sustainable future for the tea industry in Rwanda, balancing economic growth with environmental conservation. The insights gained from this research underscore the necessity of inclusive stakeholder engagement and strategic communication in tackling deforestation effectively.

Keywords: Network management, Stakeholder analysis, Exploitation of forests, Tea industry in Rwanda