
Research: Shade coffee provides additional income besides the coffee crop

Agricultural intensification within agroforestry: the case of coffee and wood products. 2008. Rice, R. A. *Agriculture, Ecosystems, and Environment* 128:212-218. doi:10.1016/j.agee.2008.06.007

Robert Rice, of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, surveyed 338 owners of coffee farmers in Peru and Guatemala to determine what portion of total income from shaded coffee farms was attributable to non-coffee products derived from the farm. These were smallholders (under 3 ha of coffee; average total farm area was 10 ha in Peru and 6.2 ha in Guatemala). The value of the non-coffee products was based on local market prices, and included the value of products both used/consumed by the farmers, and exchanged or sold.

A fifth to a third of the total value came from non-coffee products. Fruit and fuelwood were the two biggest non-coffee income producers in both countries; lumber for construction materials was also important. Because yields and prices are higher for coffee in Guatemala, the percentage of income derived from non-coffee products was lower there, just under 19%. In Peru, it was 28%.

This is one of the first studies to quantify the “shadow economy” in shade coffee agrosystems that exists alongside of the economics of the coffee production itself. Diversification is particularly important for farmers producing a crop such as coffee, which is so sensitive to global price fluctuations. Hopefully, we are also working toward proper appraisal of the value of [carbon sequestration](#) and biodiversity preservation in shade coffee systems. When mechanisms are in place to compensate farmers for these less-tangible assets, it should provide further motivation for farmers to foster diverse shade in their coffee holdings.

Forest photo by Alexander Gonzelez.

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