PROTECTION OF THE TROPICAL DRY FOREST THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF APICULTURE

Project No: NIC/OP3/2/06/11 & NIC/OP3/2/07/29 & NIC/SGP/OP4/CORE/Y3/09/14

Grantee: Cooperativa de Apicultores de Maunica R.L (COPAPIM)

Location: Maunica-El Carbonal, Ciudad Dario, Matagalpa, Nicaragua

SGP Contribution:

OP3 – US$49,373.00

OP4- US$22,280.00

Cash Co-Financing: OP3- US$82,852.00

OP4- US$9,781.00

In-Kind Co-Financing: OP3-US$11,889.00

OP4- 12,148.00

Number of people served: 65 Families

Focal area: Biodiversity

Background

The Sub-basin of Maunica - Carbonal is located in the dry zone of the department of Matagalpa, which covers a total area of 29.57Km^2. The sub basin is qualified in the Municipal Development Plan as a high vulnerability zone. This characteristic is stressed by unsustainable agricultural practices implemented by farmers on hillsides,summits and mountain tops. In addition, this type of agriculture, together with the extraction of fuelwood, has put strong pressure on the forest and water resources of the sub basin.

Project Description and Key Activities

As an alternative to unsustainable agricultural practices the project aimed to protect the local ecosystems and improve the biodiversity of the area. For this purpose, the community -with the support of SGP- established itself as an apiculture cooperative since the sub basin is characterized by the presence of vegetation that is extremely suitable for this activity.

Key activities included: the establishment of nurseries; tree planting in deforested zones; awareness raising at the community level about burning and clear-cutting practices as well as the protection of sources of water; trainings and development of honey by-products: expansion of the apiary; acquisition of further equipment; and participation at fairs.

Further support from the GEF SGP allowed the cooperative to strengthen and create the necessary conditions to market and position their products. The latter enabled them to improve their incomes and encourage them to undertake reforestation practices w to reduce the effects of environmental degradation.

COPAPIM's venture has gained a reputation at the local and international levels with the participation of the cooperative in fairs and events that will hopefully connect them with prospective international buyers.

Environmental Impact

SGP support to COPAPIM contributed to the welfare of the ecosystems the expansion of the number of apiaries increased the perpetuation of native species through natural pollination. Awareness raising activities resulted in a decrease of unsustainable environmental practices. The reforestation process allowed the planting of 5000 native trees; facilitated the conservation of local genetic resources and protected key sources of water important for harvesting and local livelihoods.

Socio-Economic Impact

Together with the development of the cooperative, this project also contributed to promote apiculture as an alternative and sustainable source of income for rural families of the sub basin Maunica-Carbonal. Throughout the collaboration between SGP and COPAPIM, the direct beneficiaries of the project have been given trainings to improve their ability to promote their products. These trainings, as well as the activity of apiculture itself have been given to men and women, which contributed to the empowerment of the latter. The increase to 150 beehive sand the development of honey by –product permitted the producers to increase their income to US$ 3,500.

Replication and Upscaling

COPAPIM is currently a role model for many other cooperatives and initiatives, such as the apiculturist cooperative Orlando Treminio (a women`s organization) that this year (2011) received financing from the GEF SGP.

Policy Impact

Inspired by its activity of apiculture, the cooperative is now member of the National Apiculture Commission which promotes its interests in front of the government.

THE PROFESSION OF APICULTURIST:

The craft of apiculture is no easy task. Bees create super societies with complex structures and very specific characteristics which allow few variations.

Apiculturists have to comprehend the distinct behavior of the queen, drones, workers, and larval stages; as well as their methods of reproduction, among others. In a nutshell, the management of a colony of bees is a task that requires acute skills and a deep knowledge of the topic. Performing this complicated operation with the additional risk of having some 50,000 bees potentially sting you in an instant makes this profession one of the most challenging.