

The Experience of Using Forest Incentives as a Tool to Reduce the Impact of Wildfires in Guatemala¹

Mairon Méndez¹, Byron Palacios²

Abstract

In 1996 the Forest Act (Decree 101-96) was approved, giving life to the National Forest Institute (INAB) as the autonomous and decentralized public entity responsible for forest administration outside protected areas. Together with the Forest Act, the State of Guatemala, through INAB, created the Forest Incentives Program (PNFOR) to promote the establishment of plantations and sustainable forest management. Given the experiences with PINFOR, and the demands of small holders and community groups, in 2007 the Forest Incentives Program for Smallholders (PINPEP) was created through the cooperation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to promote reforestation, agroforestry systems and natural forest management. This program was institutionalized in 2010 through Law 51-2010.

These programs, with the implementation of more than 29,000 thousand projects, have contributed to the management and conservation of more than 430,000 ha of forest and plantations, representing a public investment of more than \$290 million. Economically, these projects have created community employment and improved the economy for more than 900,000 people. They have also contributed to the provision of timber products and ecosystem services such as water regulation, biological connectivity, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, among others. These incentive programs are a clear example of a payment for results, where the evaluation instrument is compliance with the forest management plan which includes forest protection activities.

Approximately 25% of the incentive payment budget is allocated to wildfire protection activities to comply with forest protection activities. These investments in forest protection have made a direct contribution to the reduction in fires within the areas under management. INAB statistics indicate that less than 1% of projects have been affected by fires thanks to the establishment and maintenance of more than 50,000 km of firebreaks and the commitment of program users to wildfire control activities, thus creating a culture of responsibility in the use and management of fire.

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² Departamento de Protección Forestal del Instituto Nacional de Bosques. Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala.