

ROLE OF COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT: A REVIEW

*¹O. M. AGBOGIDI, ²A. U. OFUOKU AND ¹D. E. DOLOR

¹Department of Forestry and Wildlife,

²Department of Agricultural Economics/Extension,

Faculty of Agriculture, Delta State University,

Asaba Campus, Nigeria. E-mail:omagbogidi@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to evaluate the various ways community forestry can help to ensure sustainable forest management and development in Nigeria. It stresses that local communities have a mutual relationship with forests and could be partners in forest development efforts if the needs, desires, aspirations and perceptions of the various participants are accommodated in the planning and decision-making process. It is posited here that no strategy to conserve or manage the forest ecosystem on a sustained basis would be successful unless the needs of the least advantaged and most vulnerable sections of the society are considered. This paper emphasizes that with community forestry, the local inhabitants could be made to know that continuous expansion of human enterprises is out of balance with the shrinking forest resources and the diminished environmental services of forests is an immediate global problem. The challenges of communal forestry in ensuring sustainable forest management as highlighted in the paper include lack of expertise, funding, conflicts, and un-preparedness of forestry commission and staff to change. Others include lack of commitment to goals of partnership by stakeholders, inadequate support from community leadership as well as the present globalisation of the world economy; liberalisation and privatisation of national economies negatively impact on natural resources. The paper however, concludes among other things that the way forward include security of long term rights of local communities, adequate funding, effective conflict management, research and capacity building in community forestry as well as the establishment of community forestry development project unit at both Federal, State and Local Government levels that will mobilise and create awareness in the communities.

Keywords: Community forestry, participatory management, sustainable development.