

3rd International Conference on Earth Science & Climate Change

July 28-30, 2014 DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel San Francisco Airport, USA

Trade-offs and compromises in sustainability political ecology of food, wood, and stimulant crops in Ethiopia

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Sustainable management of natural resources is about balancing conflicting interest across space, time and political divide. The production and use of food, wood and stimulant crops in Ethiopia challenges sustainability paradigm. Khat (*Chata edulis*) small holders' preferred crop for its comparative advantage having significant export value at a national level is considered "drug of abuse" blamed for causing physical and mental diseases. Enset (*Ensete ventricosum*) dubbed today "tree against hunger" was regarded as undignified food among the conquerors of southern Ethiopia during 19th century. Eucalyptus (*eucalyptus spp*) exotic tree crop with over 100 years history in Ethiopia is praised for its adaptability, fast growth and multipurpose. Yet it is criticised for negatively influencing hydrology, biodiversity and soil organic matter. Today these crops have thrived in the Ethiopian social-ecological landscapes mainly by the efforts of smallholder farmers despite the challenges including political, environmental and socio-cultural. To examine trade-offs and compromises in sustainability paradigm, this presentation looks into the following two contrasting notions by narrating cases from Ethiopia using political ecology frame of reference. 1) Farmers' decision making of crop choice can have large scale environmental, economic and cultural ramification. Are farmers always right!? 2) Political attempt to restrict growing certain crops may have unintended outcomes. Are top-down directives justified!?

Biography

Gessesse Dessie holds BSc in Forestry Management from Swedish University of agricultural Sciences (SLU) Sweden, MSc in Forest Survey from International Institute for Aerospace Survey and Earth sciences (ITC) the Netherlands and PhD in Physical Geography from Stockholm University (SU) Sweden. Before joining UNU-INRA in 2012 as a research fellow in Capacity Development, he was an Assistant Professor at Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources in Ethiopia (WGCFNR) between 2007 and 2012. While he was working in WGCFNR, he coordinated post graduate climate change program (2011-2012), served as a Dean of Faculty of Natural Resources (2007-2009), headed the office of research, publication and extension (1997-2000), and led department of forest management (1991-1994). He has taught several undergraduate and postgraduate natural resources courses. He has authored and co-authored referred journal articles, working papers and curricula documents at undergraduate and graduate level.

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