

## **AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF SMALL FARM PRODUCTION PRACTICES, CROP PROFITABILITY, AND THE ROLE OF COCOA IN FARMER LIVELIHOODS**

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Many recent studies and government initiatives have considered the possibility of agricultural systems such as polyculture agro-forestry as a way to sustain production while preserving biodiversity and natural resources. These studies have historically ignored the importance of economic affect on the local farming community to understand if their conservation measures are feasible without disrupting the way of life and destroying local farmers' means of livelihood. This study investigated the profit potential of various small-farm, polyculture, agro-forest systems through interviews with farmers in the Limón province of Costa Rica. The study was able to demonstrate that most farms were indeed profitable, but the degree of profitability was hard to asses because of many factors outside the constraints of the study. One of the main components assessed was the productivity of cocoa because its potential for biodiversity conservation has made it a focus of many of the alternative agriculture studies and policies in Latin America. Cocoa was shown to be productive but worked best within a mixed system that provided diversity both for the environment and for sources of income for the farmers. Finally, this study was able identify various types of crops which made up successful farms and to categorize them by their time period of revenue generation. From these categories, an economically productive and feasible system for small, polyculture, agro-forest farming is suggested.