Common Property Resources as Development Drivers: A Study of a Fruit Cooperative in Himachal Pradesh, India, by Purnamita Dasgupta, SANDEE Working Paper No. 15-06

Abstract

This study investigates the role of common property resources as a source of sustainable income in the context of opportunities created by economic development. Commercialization of the common can increase rural incomes and create incentives for conservation. However, income opportunities can also enable households to take advantage of exit opportunities; hence the long-run impact of the resource can be ambiguous. These issues are explored by analyzing data from fifteen villages in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, India, where households are engaged in a fruit processing cooperative. The study finds that households gain with increased commercial use of tree products from the commons. However, welfare gains are skewed in favor of rich households because of the complementaries between land and market access and returns to common property resources. Further, richer households are more likely to plant new trees in their own land while commercialization appears to motivate poorer households to plant trees in the commons.

Key words: Common property resources, tree-planting, commercialization, sustainable livelihoods, market opportunities.