

# Restoration Cases Flagship Collection

## Case #15: *Scole'te*: Marketing carbon to support smallholder-based agroforestry and reforestation in Chiapas, México



*Producers in a reforestation plot in Tronconada, Salto de Agua, Chiapas.*

Photo credit: Cooperativa AMBIO

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## In brief

### Overview

In 1997, *Scolet'e* became the first voluntary carbon offset program in the world. The program is based on a participatory method that identifies opportunities for rural development and forest management that benefit smallholders and indigenous communities. *Scolet'e* engages individual farmers and communities in 24 municipalities in Chiapas and Oaxaca, Mexico to implement agroforestry, reforestation and forest protection on their land holdings. Participants develop a *plan vivo* by mapping existing land uses and planned interventions, scheduling work, and estimating costs. A locally based NGO, Cooperativa AMBIO, operates the program, provides technical support, sells carbon certificates, and distributes payments for environmental services to participants. *Scolet'e* has supported the conservation and management of over 9,668 ha of forests through the participation of more than 1,439 households and 17 community groups in 111 rural and indigenous communities. Payments for environmental services benefitted 3,334 families, while their managed lands captured over half a million tons of carbon dioxide.

### Exemplary practices

Potential participants are screened to ensure they have sufficient land or other resources to support livelihood activities. Producers sign an agreement to carry out the sale of carbon credits. Responsibilities and commitments are assumed by producer groups, but Cooperativa AMBIO assumes this responsibility if producers leave the program. Technicians are recruited from interested communities and trained to work within those communities, enhancing trust and local knowledge. On-farm interventions reinforce cultural and indigenous values and planted native species are selected by farmers. Practices developed by *Scolet'e* have matured into a well-structured system for carbon market transactions, which is now being applied successfully across many countries using the Plan Vivo Standard.

### Key lessons learned

- ◇ *Significant carbon sequestration benefits can be integrated into regional production systems, along with socio-economic, cultural, and environmental benefits.*
- ◇ *Reforestation approaches are more likely to be adopted by farmers if they respond to expressed needs of local people, reduce risks, alleviate constraints, and increase production.*
- ◇ *Participants become motivated to participate after seeing results in neighboring farms.*
- ◇ *Diversifying productive practices builds capacity for natural resource management, while fostering flexibility and inclusivity for participants.*
- ◇ *An effective and adaptive local organization is key to the success of community-based carbon credit programs.*

