

Rescuing the Value and Use of Secondary Forests in Santa Catarina State, Brazil

Alexandre Siminski¹, Alfredo Celso Fantini¹, Raymond P. Guries² and Maurício Sedrez dos Reis¹.

¹ Programa de Pós-Graduação em Recursos Genéticos vegetais, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, SC, Brazil.

² Department of Forest Ecology and Management, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, USA.

The secondary forests in the small farms of Santa Catarina State, Brazil were traditionally used for slash-and-burn agriculture. Legal uses of these forests depend on their stage in the succession process (according to Law 11.428/2006). Farmers claim that their activities were strongly impaired by this regulation, arguing that the law ultimately prohibits the continuation of the agriculture they have been practicing for decades.

Semi-structured interviews with 62 farmers provided an understanding of the relationships and intentions of these farmers with these remnant forests, and allowed to better characterize the land uses within their farms.

The farmers are unsatisfied and attribute the decline of agricultural activities and the growing difficulties they face to fulfill their needs to the present regulations. They recognize the importance of secondary forests as a source of products and services, demonstrating knowledge of the local species and the environment. The recent restrictions on forest resource use led to changes of landscape composition. Such changes included a decrease of the area used for traditional agriculture and an increase in the replacement of initial secondary vegetation by more advanced forests. However, it is known that farmers illegally replace their forests by other land uses if possible.

Our results show the importance of secondary forests as a source of revenue for small farmers of the region, and an incentive to promoting conservation of the ecosystem as a vital source of environmental services.

Keywords: Brazilian Atlantic forest, Secondary Forest.

Contact Information: Alexandre Siminski, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Recursos Genéticos vegetais, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Rodovia Admar Gonzaga 1346, Itacorubi, Florianópolis-SC, Brazil, CEP 88034-900; Fax: 5548 – 3721.5335; Email: alesiminski@yahoo.com.br