



The fire management dilemma in the Brazilian Amazon

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ABSTRACT – The agricultural fires observed in the Brazilian Amazon have an inherent duality of being both efficient tools for land preparation and sources of air pollution, global warming and accidental fires. Despite multiple policies, fire management practices are scantily adopted by communities of fire-dependent smallholders. Which is mainly due to a social dilemma where benefits are diffuse, and costs are individually bore. In order to identify causal factors that enable and disable solutions to such a dilemma, the paper analyses case studies of community-based fire management through the lens of institutional economics. The mechanisms through which individual similarity, government and non-government intervention, community turnover and market access influence fire management are detailed. It is concluded that public policy should be redesigned towards community-based and participative approaches, seeking synergy with NGOs and supporting communities on monitoring and sanctioning. Integration of agrarian settlements to the land markets must be reconsidered, especially where land tenure is ill-defined.

Keywords: Fires; amazon; institutional economics; self-governance; community-based fire management

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