31/08/2010

MSc Dissertation
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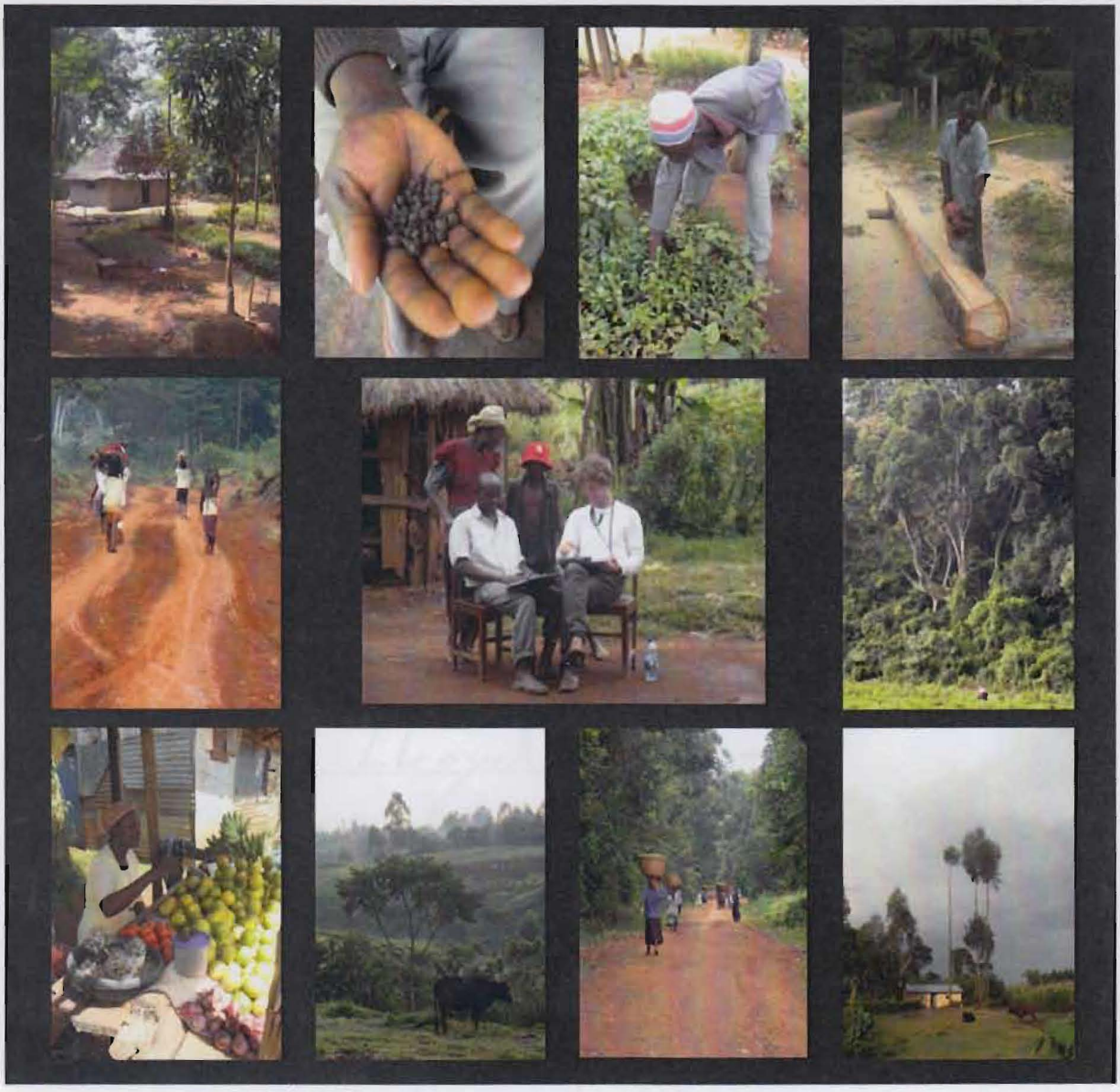
Degree Programme: MSc Practising Sustainable Development

Increasing Food Security through Agroforestry?

Agroforestry adoption patterns around Kakamega Forest, Western Province, Kenya



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Abstract

This study investigated whether trees on farms can increase household food security among the rural poor in Western Kenya. It found that farm-based trees have been promoted globally for better resource management. In Western Kenya, farm-based trees serve mainly other purposes, however. Ecological resilience is not valued as much as simple need for credit. Inequity of land ownership, coupled with continued population growth, and infrastructural deficits pose powerful obstacles to wider agroforestry diffusion in Kenya. At present, farm-based trees serve the role of savings cash accounts, providing smallholders with savings of resources that can be liquidated in times of need. As such, trees can increase food security via the income stream, but not via increases in farmland productivity.

Moreover, a major finding of this study indicated that tree adoption patterns are user-group specific. Adoption is governed by individuals' constraints and situational potential. As such, the promotion of any new technology of tree must appropriately target intended user groups. Otherwise, sustained adoption for ecological as well as economic benefit might not result at all.

In the case of Kenya, it has been argued that land misappropriation – which had historic reasons - must be reversed in order to allow for spatially demanding tree technologies to diffuse efficiently. At present, shortage of land among the rural poor lies at the heart of both hunger and continued resource degradation.