

The Role of Collective Action and Property Rights in Integrated Natural Resource Management

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This paper presents a conceptual framework for analyzing the likely role of collective action and property rights for different types of natural resource management, and how these institutions can be addressed in research and policy. Technologies and resource management practices that operate over a large spatial scale call for coordination across different plots and farms. Collective action takes on a critical role in such cases. Those technologies with a long time frame between investment and when the benefits are achieved generally require tenure security to provide incentives to adopt. Property rights are therefore critical in such cases. Applying this framework, we see that because most natural resource management practices have large spatial scales and long temporal scales, attention to both collective action and property rights is critical. To understand the role of these institutions, however, requires going beyond conventional approaches that equate collective action with formal organizations, or that equate property rights with land ownership under statutory title. Recent research on social capital, collective action, tenure security, and legal pluralism point to much richer and more accurate understanding of collective action and property rights.