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**Research Opportunity – Achiote Project Financial Sustainability and Replication Potential**

**Summary**

Nature and Culture International seeks a social scientist or natural resource economist to assess NCI´s achiote (*Bixa orellana*) pilot project to better understand cost drivers, market potential, possible barriers to uptake etc. and develop a business plan to help bring the project to scale within the Jamboé Valley.

**Description of organization**

Nature and Culture International (<www.natureandculture.org>) is a conservation NGO that protects biologically diverse ecosystems in Latin America by working in concert with local people. We were founded in the southern Ecuadorian city of Loja in 1997 and have since expanded into six countries: Ecuador, Perú, México, Colombia, Bolivia, and Brazil. In our twenty-plus years of existence, we have helped protect 5.6 million hectares of some of the world´s most biodiverse and endangered ecosystems.

**Local Context**

In 2009, NCI purchased 890 hectares to create the Jamboé Reserve, which protects critical habitat and enhances habitat connectivity within the buffer zone of Podocarpus National Park. Subsequently, NCI has developed a pilot project planting achiote (*Bixa orellana*) as well as replanting native forest on abandoned pasture land around Jamboé Reserve. The project goals are to reduce additional deforestation by reclaiming productive land while providing supplementing income for local residents. Currently, NCI is collaborating with 15 families who have planted 5 hectares of achiote.

https://natureandculture.org/achiote-harvest-in-ecuador/

**Research objectives**

*Note: We expect to narrow and refine these research objectives and questions in collaboration with the researcher(s).*

This project is in the pilot phase. Our goals are 1) to make the project financially sustainable without long-term reliance on grant funding and / or NCI support and 2) if feasible, to replicate achiote cultivation as a sustainable livelihood throughout the Jamboe Valley and beyond. To achieve those goals, we need to analyze the results of the pilot phase and develop a feasible plan based on that analysis. The researcher would lead this analysis and planning effort in collaboration with NCI staff.

We are also interested in evaluating the impacts of the achiote project on community and household wellbeing, using financial metrics such as increased and diversified income but also assessing broader livelihood impacts such as improved standards of living, increased access to healthcare or education, creation of new household assets, reduced vulnerability to external shocks like extreme weather etc. We would be interested in learning more about the project´s impacts on women and on poorer members of the community.

**Location**

Jamboé Reserve, Zamora Chinchipe Province, Ecuador.

**Requirements**

* Strong background in natural resource economics or other social science discipline
* Self-motivated and resourceful. Able to work with little supervision in a remote rural location.
* Advanced Spanish. Fluency is not required but must be able to collect information from key stakeholders in Spanish.

**Contact**

Contact Matt Clark (mclark@naturalezaycultura.org) with questions.