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Decentralization of Tree Seedling Supply Systems for Afforestation in the West of Yunnan Province, China

Jun He · Hai Yang · Ramni Jamnadass ·
Jianchu Xu · Yongping Yang

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Abstract At present, China has the highest afforestation rate of any country or region in the world, with 47,000 km² of tree plantations undertaken in 2008. While the prominent role of the central government's afforestation programs is well-known, little is understood of how the system of tree seedling production and distribution supports afforestation efforts. More importantly, little attention is paid to how small-scale farmers access high quality tree germplasm in the afforestation programs. This paper examines the seedling supply system in the west of Yunnan Province in China by focusing on the three types of tree nurseries (state, collective and individual) that are being operated for the development of smallholder forestry especially in the context of decentralization. The research reveals that forestry decentralization has provided support for smallholder access to high quality planting materials and improved the effectiveness of nursery management. The reform has enabled the engagement of various forms of nurseries and created a hybrid system of state nursery operations. However, the state monopoly over the major seedling supply system using its inherent technical, market, policy and institutional

J. He (✉) · H. Yang · J. Xu

Centre for Mountain Ecosystem Studies, Kunming Institute of Botany, Kunming 650204, China
e-mail: h.jun@cgiar.org

J. He · H. Yang · J. Xu

World Agroforestry Centre, ICRAF China and East Asia Node, Heilongtan,
Kunming 650204, China

J. He

School of International Development, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ, UK

R. Jamnadass

World Agroforestry Centre, ICRAF, United Nations Avenue,
Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya

Y. Yang

Kunming Institute of Botany, Kunming 650204, China