

Slash and Burn

The majority of the 1 million (37%) poor in Panama are rural subsistence farmers who are the most affected by unsustainable land use practices. They are forced to occupy cheap, often hilly, marginal areas and it is here where one finds the greatest poverty and the greatest ongoing loss of biodiversity. Historically indigenous cultures and now poor farmers have used slash and burn agriculture techniques as the basis for their survival. Also known as “swidden”, this practice describes how forest is first cut and burned, then crops are sown for only one or two years before the soil becomes exhausted (deplete of its natural growing properties) forcing the farmers to move on to another patch of forest to eek out a living.

It is in these “conservation frontline” areas where the need for knowledge of how best to survive within environmental means is critical. The information, often very basic, is lacking in these communities where old, unsuitable traditions are used simply from lack of any introduced alternatives. Without this new information and training, these farmers are not able to break the cycle of poverty with far reaching results for their children and the ecosystem.

What you can do: Making a donation to CREA directly supports our Farmer Program