

## China Agroforestry in the Mountains of Southwest China

### News from the Field

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#### About the Mountains of Southwest China

The mountains in this region range in height from under 2,000 meters in some valley floors to more than 7,500 meters at the summit of Gonga Shan mountain. Amidst the varied topography and climates of this region is a rich diversity of ecosystems. Some of the species unique to this region include the giant panda and the lesser panda.



The hotspot of China's southwest mountain region

#### Overview of the Project

We focus on agroforestry with the aim of having locals participate as much as possible in protecting the forest and mitigating the negative impact of climate change. Agroforestry combines forestry and agricultural technologies in order to ensure that the land is robust and sustainable and that it is used in a way that supports diversity, high productivity, and high profitability.

The first part of the project involved choosing a site for our activities. Next was a plan for gathering data on project results, such as how land productivity had changed, and then assessing this data. Furthermore, we are conducting a communication campaign to raise the public's awareness on matters such as climate change and farming methods with minimal environmental impact.

#### Project Site Finalized!

After field studies and discussions with local communities and government agencies in several sites in Liangshan Prefecture and Aba Prefecture, we selected Ganpu village, a Tibetan village in Li County, Aba Prefecture in Sichuan. The village has total population of about 959 people in 249 households.



Surveying an area

### About Ganpu Village

Ganpu suffered serious damages from the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. After the earthquake, the local government has been trying to recover the local vegetation through a reforestation project in the public forest area. The village is also developing eco-tourism and vegetable plantation.

Under the reforestation project, participants planted Minjiang cypress, an endangered evergreen endemic species to the province. However, the young Minjiang Cypress are often eaten or damaged by goats owned by local villagers. The ban of free-ranging goats in the forests imposed by the local government is ignored by the villagers mainly because there is lack of law enforcement and there is no penalty if villagers are caught farming their goats in the forests.



Goats roam freely

Local villagers grow Chinese cabbage to sell in the market. Villagers have been using chemical fertilizers to increase the productivity of the cabbage. However, when the price of the Chinese cabbage decreases, the villagers will use more chemical fertilizer and pesticides hoping to further increase the productivity, but they are not aware of the fact that overuse of chemicals actually cause severe degradation of the soil, which decreases the land production dramatically. In addition, the villagers use plastic film to cover the soil when planting the cabbage, but the films are then disposed randomly in the field which adds even more pollution to the soil and water. The plastic mess in the field also gives a negative impression to tourists.



Chinese cabbage field

## Next Step of Activities

We have proposed the following plan to Ganpu Village based on the results of a baseline survey and discussion with local stakeholders including forestry department, villagers, and experts from Sichuan Agriculture and Forestry Institute: 1) Support the establishment of a community conservation area and non-timber forestry products development, improve and strengthen the management of the public forest area, especially the tending of the young growth, so as to recover the local vegetation; 2) Work together with local communities to explore more eco-friendly agroforestry practices; 3) Support the establishment of a local community cooperative for marketing and sales of agricultural products; 4) Work together with local government to promote more sustainable and eco-friendly agricultural practices and to reduce the threats to the forest.

We have also begun collecting current data on conditions of biodiversity, soil, freshwater, temperature, climate, and socioeconomic status.



A farmer collects fodders

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