Bio

Elinor Benami is Ph.D. Candidate in the Emmett Interdisciplinary Program on Environment and Resources in the School of Earth Sciences. Her research focuses on how different forms of governance shape social and environmental outcomes in agricultural production.

Prior to joining E-IPER, Elinor was a research analyst at Climate Policy Initiative, where she worked on policy and finance related to renewable energy in the US and land use in Indonesia. She holds a B.A. from UNC-Chapel Hill in economics.

She's part of Eric Lambin's Land Change Lab, and is co-advised by Marshall Burke in the School of Earth, Energy, and Environmental Sciences. Lisa Curran out of the Department of Anthropology/Woods Institute, Roz Naylor and Wally Falcon from Stanford's Center on Food Security and Environment have also shaped and informed her work.

Research & Scholarship

CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

The question motivating my dissertation work is how can public and private governance affect social and environmental outcomes among commodity agricultural producers?

To answer this question, I consider the cases of two high value perennial commodity crops (oil palm and coffee) in Brazil, an agricultural powerhouse whose actions and reactions can affect producer livelihoods and consumer prices throughout the world.

First, I consider the extent to which a public governance program – centered around an agro-ecological zoning initiative – may have influenced the footprint and pathway of oil palm development in the Eastern Legal Amazon.

Second, I evaluate the role of voluntary eco-certification in influencing behavior among medium to large scale coffee producers in Southeastern Brazil who have encountered climactic shock in the form of a multi-year drought.

In my work, I draw upon theories, tools, and frameworks from production economics and land system science in efforts to offer insight into both the effects of these governance programs and also the processes through which they influence producer outcomes. My toolkit includes GIS and satellite imagery analysis, field interviews, and econometrics.