

## Climate Change : Climate Solutions

### Fighting Deforestation: Willing to Play and Pay?

**The United Nations proposes a new system to save forests worldwide. Rich nations pay for the protection of virgin forests in poorer countries. Daniel Murdiyarso of the Centre for International Forestry Research and lead author of the IPCC report on forests, explains the pitfalls and opportunities of REDD.**



**Daniel Murdiyarso, senior scientist at the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)**

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#### **Which forests are suffering most from deforestation?**

Certainly the eleven billion hectares of tropical forests are facing significant deforestation in three regions: the Amazon, Southeast Asia, and the Congo Basin. In these regions, many large-scale operators in humid tropical forests have permits for the long term, and so for not less than 30 years they can do what they want with their forest concessions.

It is a different situation when talking about small-scale forestry, for example in sub-Saharan Africa. There you may have non-commercial logging that degrades the forest but may not be considered deforestation. For example, in Burkina Faso and Mali where people are collecting firewood for charcoal production or for fuel for cooking.

Both types of forest suffers but in different intensity. We are looking at two different sets of forestry practices. Therefore there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to meet the challenges of deforestation. Unless you understand the cause of deforestation you won't be able to tackle the problem.

#### **And what causes deforestation?**

The underlying causes of deforestation are, to our surprise, outside the forestry sector. External processes drive deforestation such as infrastructure development including road construction, agricultural development, and human settlement. When we are talking about places with high rates of deforestation, these rates are mainly related to government planning and national development programs.

The development of pastures for cattle ranching and soybeans in the Amazon, or the oil palm development in Southeast Asia are generally subsidized by governments. If these subsidies were removed it might

be one way to encourage operators to be more sustainable.



**Picture Gallery (click on the picture to start)**

Ten key causes of deforestation and forest degradation (Photo: Reuters)

**How can activities like agriculture, logging or mining become more sustainable?**

One way to reduce rates of deforestation and forest degradation would be a carbon market. Unless the market can pay a reasonable price for forest carbon and for environmental services the owner of a forest area will continue to practice unsustainable logging or agriculture.

In the three major tropical forest regions it is time to look at what opportunities and challenges a scheme like Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) could offer. But we must make sure that the financial benefits of REDD can be distributed to those engaging with the forest. If local people whose livelihoods are dependent on forests are excluded, it is hard to guarantee that any benefits from the REDD scheme will be effective in protecting the forests.

If the community is given the opportunity to manage that resource they are able to harvest and use the forest. And when they rely on the forest, they must maintain it.

**What are the chances of REDD being implemented?**

Many developing countries are not prepared to play because their economic development is based on the quick yielding revenues from selling and processing forest products.

In addition, if REDD benefits only countries with high deforestation rates, "good guys" with low deforestation rates may feel that they are being left out of the carbon deals. Countries like Guyana or Suriname have high forest cover but low rates of deforestation might then not be part of this new game.

**What are the next steps to get things going?**

From the technical point of view I think we have good enough methodologies to start moving ahead with demonstration activities. The next thing to do from Poznan to Copenhagen is to match a willingness to pay in developed countries with a willingness to play in developing countries.

The EU, for example, was not interested at all in afforestation or reforestation projects, which turns out to be difficult to implement. But now, in Europe, there is more movement and I think Europe will be an important buyer of forest credits.

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In Poznan you could see that there were lots of issues related to capacity building, and it will take time before things can be implemented. If you want to be realistic, there might be some significant change from forestry 'business as usual' in 5 to 10 years time.

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