IUFRO
Interconnecting
Forests, Science and People

Press Release

International Union of Forest Research Organizations

EMBARGOED UNTIL: Wednesday, May 4 2022 at 10:30 CEST//04:30 EDT//08:30 GMT//17:30 KST

New Report Assesses Global Anti-Deforestation Measures

Comprehensive scientific report shows REDD+ progress and effects on climate, nature and people

Logs waiting to be transported in the Brazilian Amazon. Photo by Nelson Grima IUFRO/GFEP

- Reducing deforestation and forest degradation and their associated carbon emissions (REDD+) is part of the solution to climate change.
- However, the role that REDD+ plays in reducing these emissions, while important, is limited given the magnitude of the problem and actions required in other greenhouse gas emitting sectors.
- REDD+ implementation has the potential to deliver a range of benefits beyond reducing carbon if environmental and social aspects receive adequate attention.
- The performance of REDD+ could be improved considerably by reducing the complexity of its governance and leveraging synergies with similar global initiatives.

(Vienna, 4 May 2022) A major scientific assessment on REDD+ is published today, evaluating the world's progress towards goals to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. The report and policy brief, prepared by the Global Forest Expert Panels (GFEP) Programme led by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), analyses the past 10 years of REDD+ implementation with respect to forest governance, carbon measurements and effects on biodiversity and livelihoods. The findings are presented in a webinar during the World Forestry Congress week.

One major conclusion is that while REDD+ has provided a convenient umbrella for many forest and land use related activities aimed at reducing deforestation and forest degradation – and associated greenhouse gas emissions – the interlinkages and complexities of relationships between forests, land use and climate are profound.

The report, which aims to inform ongoing policy discussions on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, comes at a pivotal time: Human-induced climate change and increases in extreme weather events are impacting nature and people faster and more severely than had been expected 20 years ago. However, there is still a chance to reverse this trend and avoid further global warming, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This requires drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, particularly CO_2, most of which stem from burning fossil fuels. Forests also play an important role in the global carbon cycle: they absorb carbon as they grow and emit carbon when they are destroyed. Every year nearly one-third of the global carbon emissions produced by humans can be absorbed by forests, yet deforestation and forest degradation are responsible for up to 10% of the annual man-made CO_2 emissions.

In addition, interest in forests as a 'nature-based solution' has probably never been higher and the number of initiatives aimed at conserving, sustainably managing and restoring forests has increased considerably.

"For example, there has been growing interest in forest landscape restoration (FLR) since the launch of the Bonn Challenge in 2011. This and other initiatives contribute to REDD+ but also overlap with it and often create confusion among stakeholders. Optimizing synergies with them and with other sectors is both a

challenge and an opportunity," says IUFRO Task Force Deputy Coordinator and environmental consultant Stephanie Mansourian, one of the lead authors.

In addition to promoting forest protection and carbon sink enhancement, a key focus of REDD+ is to move the scope of interventions beyond climate impacts towards an integrated view of climate, biodiversity and livelihoods. REDD+ can deliver numerous environmental benefits, including reduced soil erosion, enhanced water quality and quantity, and increased resilience to drought and floods. It can potentially deliver important biodiversity benefits, although the availability of up-to-date biodiversity data remains a major challenge. "Such benefits have significant economic importance and may increase both the value of REDD+ programs and people's willingness to engage with them. However, in the implementation of REDD+, greater attention to biodiversity and livelihood outcomes is needed," says lead author and IUFRO President John Parrotta of the USDA Forest Service.

Background: REDD+ is a global action plan to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation primarily in tropical and sub-tropical regions, where the largest forest losses take place.

Initially created as "REDD" by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2007, the "+" was added in 2010 to include conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks, and sustainable management of forests.

REDD+ was conceived as a framework for high-income countries to pay low- and middle-income countries for the conservation, sustainable management, and restoration of their forests. This happens, for example, through bilateral commitments such as those between Norway or Germany (currently the largest contributors), and Brazil or Indonesia as major recipients.

Although experience to date from over 65 countries provides useful insights into both challenges and lessons for the future of REDD+, determining the actual effects of REDD+ on forests, biodiversity and people is hampered by insufficient or inadequate measurement and reporting.

Evidence from social evaluations of REDD+ interventions indicates that, where direct and indirect benefits are clearly visible to local stakeholders, and have been delivered, community engagement is strong and projects have achieved positive carbon and social outcomes, at least in the short term. Furthermore, explicit attention to rights and tenure issues provides more transparent mechanisms for the reporting and monitoring of environmental and social co-benefits, as well as better, more equitable outcomes, particularly for more vulnerable communities. Case studies from Indonesia show that insecure tenure can exacerbate distrust between resource users and the government, and can keep local people from further participating in REDD+ activities. Evidence from Latin America and the Caribbean suggests that deforestation is lower in areas where Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' collective land rights are recognized.

"Since 2012, implementation of REDD+ has advanced considerably in many countries but ultimately it is REDD+ governance that determines its performance. Yet, governance is distributed across a complex landscape of institutions with different sources of authority and power dynamics that influence its outcomes," says GFEP Programme Coordinator Christoph Wildburger.

REDD+ is being applied in a wide diversity of contexts with an equally wide diversity of governance strategies, which are changing over time. Brazil, for example, was initially a leading global source of deforestation, then a world leader in reducing deforestation, and is now experiencing rising deforestation once again. While Brazil's federal government has played a key role in these swings in deforestation rates, a number of Brazilian states are pursuing their own REDD+ initiatives with positive outcomes. Ghana, a relatively small country where deforestation has been strongly linked to the production of cocoa for export, is pursuing the 'world's first commodity-driven' REDD+ strategy with private sector investments in 'climate smart cocoa'. Both Brazil and Ghana illustrate the important role that actors other than national governments may play in shaping REDD+, such as sub-national state actors or private companies trading in forest risk commodities like cocoa.

Report and policy brief: Download link
Fact sheet: Download link
Online study launch: Webinar

The **International Union of Forest Research Organizations IUFRO** is a world-wide organization devoted to forest research and related sciences. Its members are research institutions, universities, and individual scientists as well as decision-making authorities and other stakeholders with a focus on forests and trees.

The IUFRO-led **Global Forest Expert Panels GFEP** Programme provides policymakers with a stronger scientific basis for their decisions and policies related to the contributions of forests to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

For more information, please contact: Gerda Wolfrum at +43-1-8770151-17 or wolfrum(at)iufro.org