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BRIEF

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Policy Brief

EXPECTATION PAPER COP 21 PARIS

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INTRODUCTION

The 2015 UN climate change conference in Paris (COP21) is a pivotal moment. Governments have set December 2015 as the deadline to agree on a new climate regime for 2020 onwards. This deal must give the world a fighting chance to avoid dangerous global temperature rises. Such an agreement needs to be fair, ambitious, and transformational. At the same time, COP21 provides an opportunity to showcase efforts that countries, the private sector, and civil society are making to combat climate change – and to accelerate and scale up these actions.

The land sector – and forests in particular – has a critically important role to play in both the post-2020 agreement and the immediate actions necessary to avert catastrophic climate change. REDD+, as well as other policy approaches such as Joint Mitigation and Adaptation, can contribute significantly to reduce emissions and support sustainable development, build resilient livelihoods, and safeguard biodiversity and ecological services.

WHY IS THE LAND SECTOR SO IMPORTANT?

The land sector, including forested and agricultural lands, is central to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Around 25% of all global emissions come from agriculture, forestry, and other land use

(AFOLU),¹ making it the largest source of emissions after the energy sector. About half of those derive from deforestation and forest degradation, and the other half come from agricultural activities. In many developing countries AFOLU is the main source of emissions. The IPCC says the land sector could provide 20-60 per cent of cumulative mitigation by 2030. Without actions in the land sector, it will be impossible to keep global temperature increases to less than 1.5/2°C above pre-industrial levels.

Mitigation actions in the land sector can also help countries adapt to climate change. For example, conservation, sustainable management, and restoration of ecosystems such as forests and mangroves do not just reduce emissions: they are also cost-effective ways to build resilient livelihoods and help people and nature adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The land sector is extremely important for people: 70 per cent of the world's poorest people depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, while 1.6 billion people rely on forests for food, water, fuel, medicines, cultural traditions and livelihoods. Forests, especially in the tropics, also support 80 per cent of terrestrial biodiversity. Yet around a quarter of the world's agricultural land is severely degraded;² 129 million hectares of forest have been lost since 1990 and the FAO reports that destruction continues at roughly



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¹ IPCC. 2014. *Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU)*. www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg3/ipcc_wg3_ar5_chapter11.pdf

² *The New Climate Economy*. 2014. *Land Use: Protecting Food, Forests and People*. <http://2014.newclimateeconomy.report/land-use>

AN EFFECTIVE CLIMATE REGIME MUST INCLUDE THE FOREST AND LAND SECTOR . THE AGREEMENT ADOPTED IN PARIS NEEDS TO RECOGNIZE THIS.



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8.8 million hectares each year ,³ often with devastating impacts on communities and indigenous peoples.

An effective climate regime must include the forest and land sector. The agreement adopted in Paris needs to recognize this, using a simple, flexible, and transparent approach, which promotes high ambition and environmentally sound emissions reductions while protecting biodiversity and rights. Negotiations continue to highlight the need to guarantee food security and recognize associated economic impacts of mitigation and adaptation actions in the land sector.

THE NEW CLIMATE REGIME - POST-2020 ACTION

LAND SECTOR IN THE CLIMATE AGREEMENT

WWF calls for the inclusion of the land sector in the Paris agreement in a way that recognizes its significance in the global carbon cycle and critical role in avoiding dangerous climate change. The agreement text must provide incentives and maximize the opportunities for each country, to make sure sustainable land use is part of their path to climate-smart economies. It should support a high level of ambition for reducing emissions and conserving and enhancing carbon stocks in the land sector.

To achieve a real and positive climate impact through mitigation actions in the land sector, all countries need to “account for what the atmosphere sees.” Accounting must be comprehensive and complete, including both sinks and sources. The new climate agreement needs to provide a framework that encourages Parties to take action in the land sector as part of their nationally determined mitigation contributions.

WWF therefore asks for the development of land-based accounting rules for the land sector (covering relevant agriculture, forestry and other land use (AFOLU)) activities, to enhance and facilitate comprehensive, complete, and comparable accounting. Relevant tools include the 2006

IPCC Guidelines and the rules under the Convention, which employ a land-based system of reporting that should equally be applied to accounting. Decisions in Paris must include a clear roadmap to achieve this.

Current agreement text

WWF welcomes the references to the special characteristics of the land sector in different parts of the latest draft text, including in the Preamble; we strongly support retaining the references in the mitigation section, and ensuring transparent accounting for land sector contributions. In this sense, WWF supports the underlying notion reflected in several options within Article 3, regarding the need to have a set of principles to guide and assess countries’ accounting of land sector sources and sinks.⁴ In addition, COP decisions in Paris should include the mandate to start working on the framework to transition to a common land sector accounting framework.⁵

WWF asks Parties to retain the references to the principles that must frame climate action in the land sector in order to ensure increased transparency and completeness. The COP should also approve a decision that creates a process to develop comprehensive rules and guidance for land sector accounting.

REDD+ AND FORESTS IN THE NEW CLIMATE AGREEMENT

Forests, especially tropical forests, play a crucial role in climate regulation. In aggregate, tropical deforestation and degradation account for 14-21 per cent of all anthropogenic carbon emissions, while CO₂ absorption within primary and recovering tropical forests provides 10-15 per cent of carbon mitigation potential.⁶ These numbers do not include the mitigation potential of mangroves and peatlands.

REDD+ provides one solution to address the drivers of forest loss in developing countries. The framework, created under the UNFCCC, offers financial incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation

³ FAO, *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015*

⁴ See Para 37 of the Decision text (Version of 10th of Nov. 2015) which refers to Art. 3 para 10.

⁵ See Art. 3 para 10 Option 2 of the Agreement text (Version 10th of Nov. 2015) which includes such a mandate..

⁶ International Sustainability Unit. 2015. *Tropical Forests: A Review*. www.pcfisu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Princes-Charities-International-Sustainability-Unit-Tropical-Forests-A-Review.pdf (this percentage is in relation to carbon emissions only.)

(REDD), as well as to conserve and enhance their carbon stocks and sustainably manage their forests (the plus in REDD+).

Technical negotiations have been concluded, and more than 50 developing countries worldwide have made significant progress in the design of their REDD+ strategies and action plans. The next step is to support country implementation and catalyse large-scale actions – which requires political commitment from tropical forest countries and long-term financial support from donor countries.

REDD+ has high emission mitigation potential. It can play a major role in achieving the New York Declaration on Forests targets of ending forest loss by 2030 and restoring 350 million hectares. Reaching these goals will eliminate an estimated 4.5-8.8 billion tonnes of CO₂ per year by 2030⁷ – though urgent action to end deforestation by 2020, as stipulated in Goal 15.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, would achieve much greater and more immediate emissions savings.

For REDD+ to be realized on the ground, it is pivotal to send strong and positive signals both in the agreement text and through agreed actions by 2020. An explicit mention of REDD+ in the climate agreement will reaffirm countries' commitment to make this approach successful in the long term, significantly contributing to shifting developing economies onto low-carbon development pathways.

Current agreement text

The current agreement text includes several references to REDD+ in the Preamble as well as in the Mitigation section. Although these references have been strongly advocated and supported by many developing countries, the language remains in brackets and will be negotiated in Paris

WWF asks all Parties to send a strong political signal and commitment to make REDD+ work by emphasizing and recognizing all

the progress made to date under the UNFCCC in the agreement text, including the Warsaw Framework for REDD+, in particular in the Finance section. For many developing countries it is essential to refer to REDD+ in the agreement in order to send the right messages to political leaders and equally to donor countries to ensure the long-term effectiveness of REDD+ post-2020.

THE ACTION AGENDA NOW - PRE-2020 ACTION

WWF believes that a strong, universally binding agreement is essential to frame global action on climate change after 2020. However, scientists agree that to prevent potentially catastrophic global temperature increases, greenhouse-gas emissions need to peak before 2020. Action can and must be accelerated and scaled up now.

Activities in the forest sector have the potential to contribute substantially to closing the “gigatonne gap” between mitigation actions committed, or currently under way, and what science says is needed – and at a lower cost than equivalent activities in other sectors. Ongoing country efforts in this sector could be amplified through international support (e.g. through REDD+), with potential annual emission cuts of 1.3-4.2Gt CO₂e in forestry by 2020.⁸ WWF wants to see countries effectively addressing the drivers of forest loss, working towards zero net deforestation and forest degradation by 2020 – a target echoed in the Sustainable Development Goals and supported by many leading businesses and financial institutions.

Forests are one of the pillars of the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA), which aims to catalyse ambitious action on climate change before 2020 to complement the formal negotiations. Increasing ambition will require both individual leadership and collaboration, concrete examples, and the enabling conditions for such examples to multiply.



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⁷ Wolosin, M. 2014. *Quantifying the Benefits of the New York Declaration on Forests*. www.climateadvisers.com/quantifying-the-benefits-of-the-new-york-declaration-on-forests

⁸ UNEP. 2012. *The Emissions Gap Report 2012*. United Nations Environment Programme. www.unep.org/pdf/2012gapreport.pdf

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OUR VISION

WWF's Forest and Climate Programme works to ensure that the conservation of tropical forests as carbon stores is secured by green economic development that benefits people, the climate and biodiversity in transformational ways.
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Why we are here
To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.
www.panda.org/forestclimate

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biodiversity, while also recognizing the potential for restoring degraded land and enhancing carbon sinks. Any climate-related activities in the land sector must respect safeguards to guarantee the participation of relevant stakeholders, respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as biodiversity concerns. All climate action – by state and non-state actors – should observe the highest social and environmental standards.



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⁹ unfccc.int/files/meetings/bonn_oct_2015/application/pdf/ws_2.pdf

¹⁰ Bastos Lima, Marion G, et. al, 2015. Forests Post-2015: Maximizing Synergies between the Sustainable Development Goals and REDD+. World Wildlife Fund. http://d2ouvy59p-0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/brief_3_sdgs_sept2015.pdf

WWF asks all Parties to increase collaborative efforts to scale up ambitious actions and support in the forest sector pre-2020 and beyond. WWF supports the narrative of the forest pillar of the LPAA, which highlights the importance of promoting partnerships between countries and among state and non-state actors. Through a collaborative process, forest countries would quantify the additional emissions reductions that they could achieve with extra resources, and donor countries and non-state actors would recognize that leadership by matching it with appropriate and timely material support. This framework could accelerate ambition in the forest sector and, if successful, serve as a prototype for other sectors.

The high-level dialogues and events laid out in the current Workstream 2 text⁹ reflecting pre-2020 actions could serve as a platform to bring together relevant actors, catalyse new forest initiatives, and match support.

A STRONG CLIMATE REGIME FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

We should leave Paris with clear signals that all Parties are ready to take action, under a new strong, transparent, and inclusive climate regime that promotes environmental integrity, equity, and fairness. Forests and the land sector must form an integral part of any such regime. Furthermore, an appropriate recognition of the role of the land sector in the Paris outcome can support achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁰

In addition, WWF calls on countries to make clear finance commitments that will enable developing nations to immediately scale up action to reduce emissions from deforestation and increase carbon sinks through forest restoration. These actions need to be big, transformative, science-based, accountable, inclusive, and supplemental.

In the forest sector, the new climate regime must prioritize preserving and maintaining natural forests and protecting