



Korup National Park, Cameroon. © Mauri Rautkari/WWF

VALUING RESPONSIBLE TROPICAL FORESTRY THROUGH CLIMATE SMART FORESTRY

INTRODUCTION

If we want forests to continue to provide us with resources, keep our climate stable and conserve biodiversity, then we need to tackle the threats they face, urgently and decisively. WWF strives toward “zero net deforestation and forest degradation” (ZNDD), meaning no further loss in the quantity or quality of the world’s forests. Our target is to achieve ZNDD by 2020, and maintain it from then on.

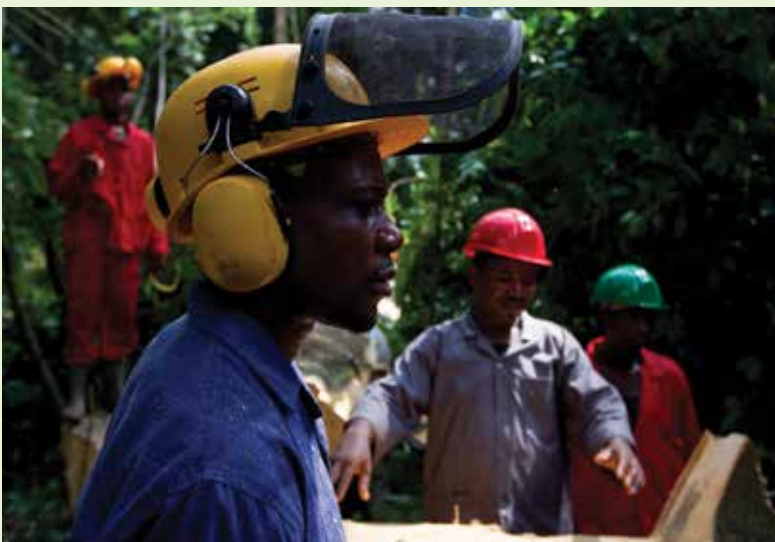
Climate change is one reason why ending forest loss is so urgent. The agriculture, forestry and land-use sector accounts for about a quarter of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with deforestation as one of the main contributors. Degraded forests can change from carbon sinks to carbon sources, accelerating runaway climate change. Achieving ZNDD by 2020 would make a big contribution to keeping global temperature rise below 2°C.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Over 20 per cent of tropical forests globally are designated by national governments for production. Well-managed forests have an important role to play in realizing ZNDD and, therefore, in reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Various sustainable forest management measures can help to retain carbon stocks and reduce emissions, such as selective logging, cutting trees at an older age and protecting key areas within concessions. Timber, when coming from well-managed forests, can also substitute for materials such as steel and cement, which produce significantly higher GHG emissions.

Despite this potential, conversion to other land uses and illegal or irresponsible logging are often more economically attractive in the short-term than sustainable forestry. Responsible forest management is a huge challenge in tropical forest regions, which are often characterized by weak governance, corruption and poverty. Less than 5 per cent of forestry operations in the tropics use reduced impact logging (RIL) practices.

More positively, however, many governments in the tropics recognize the role of improved forest management in their national REDD+ strategies. The recent groundswell of commitments to “deforestation-free” production, commodity sourcing and financing is also a promising development. These two trends offer an opportunity to significantly increase responsible forest management that can help mitigate climate change.



Company practicing sustainable forest management, Cameroon. © Brent Storton/Getty Images/WWF-UK

ABOUT THE RIL-C METHODOLOGY

RIL-C provides a framework for quantifying emissions reductions. Practices may entail a range of improved logging and harvest planning practices, including:

- Directional felling
- Improved harvest planning via pre-harvest inventory
- Skid trail planning and/or mono-cable winching
- Reduction in width of haul roads and size of log landings.

The effectiveness of RIL-C practices, and accounting of emissions reductions attributable to those practices, is assessed on the basis of their impacts post-harvest. Emissions reductions are accounted for by applying a performance method approach, whereby emissions reductions (net of baseline and project emissions) are assigned as a function of the difference in measured impact (proxy) parameter between the project and a set crediting benchmark for each emission source category.

To ensure credible application of emissions reductions, the impact parameters applied are quantitative and outcome-based, rather than process-based which are typically limited to demonstrating that the practice is in place but may provide no information on how successful the implementation of the practice is. Further, emissions reductions are estimated as a continuous function with the (proxy) impact parameter values with which they correspond, providing better resolution of outcomes than a flat default factor.



Pre-harvest demarcation of skid trails in Madre de Dios, Peru. © Rafael Venegas / WWF-Peru



Extraction routes orientation for harvest planning in Madre de Dios, Peru. © Rafael Venegas / WWF-Peru

“CLIMATE SMART” FORESTRY IN THE TROPICS

WWF and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) want to see responsible “climate smart” forestry rewarded.

TNC has developed a practical methodology – known as RIL-C – for measuring and verifying GHG emissions reductions achieved through reduced impact logging practices. Providing logging companies with access to financial incentives for climate-friendly practices that reduce the impact of logging operations increases the value-added to standing forests, reduces the likelihood of conversion to other land uses, and encourages greater uptake of sustainable forest management practices.

Studies in Indonesia (East Kalimantan, Borneo) conducted by TNC and in the Amazon (Madre de Dios, Peru) conducted by WWF have shown that RIL-C can reduce emissions by 20-50 per cent. With appropriate adaptations, RIL-C can be applied to tropical forests globally.

Following the principles and criteria of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) inherently means that forest operations will have a lower impact than conventionally logged forests. However, efforts need to be made to align RIL-C with national FSC standards, to ensure that this lower impact approach is operationalized. We recommend that climate change mitigation programmes recognize FSC certification as a means of demonstrating emissions reductions.

VALUING RESPONSIBLE FORESTRY

Presently, logging companies have been unable to access incentives to reduce their climate impacts with RIL practices that reduce carbon emissions. Less than five percent of logging operations in the tropics currently use RIL, so there is a large need to access incentives through adoption of these methodologies in REDD+ strategies.

The challenge ahead is to showcase the potential of RIL-C and similar methodologies and make them applicable to multiple geographies. This would help incentivize responsible forest management, which is one of the key solutions needed to reduce forest degradation and ultimately deforestation. In order to do so we need to:

- Secure direct private sector investment in REDD+ programmes that supports CSF and processing practices.
- Finance sector-wide emissions reductions programmes for credibly certified forest management; and
- Adopt proxy measures supporting sustainable / certified production in national REDD+ strategies.

ABOUT TNC

TNC is one of the leading conservation organizations working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. It addresses the most pressing conservation threats at the largest scale. Everything TNC does is rooted in good science — aided by hundreds of staff scientists. TNC pursues non-confrontational, pragmatic solutions to conservation challenges. TNC partners with indigenous communities, businesses, governments, multilateral institutions, and other non-profits. TNC has the support of more than 1 million members who enable it to continue working on a scale that matters and implement solutions that endure.

For more information, visit www.nature.org

ABOUT WWF

WWF is one of the world’s largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF’s mission is to stop the degradation of the earth’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world’s biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

For more information, visit panda.org/forests