

WWF Forest and Climate Programme

Forests at UNFCCC-COP21: Brief



Why Include the Land Sector in the Paris Agreement

Background

Forests are a key part of the global carbon cycle. On one hand, they are a hero in the effort to stop climate change, as they are the second largest store houses of carbon, after oceans. On the other hand, our use and misuse of forests contributes to climate change. The land sector is responsible for nearly a quarter of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. About half of that (5 - 10 GtCO₂e annually) comes from deforestation and forest degradation—the largest sources of CO₂ emissions after the burning of fossil fuels. Deforestation and climate change have devastating impacts on many human communities, ranging from food, water and fuelwood insecurity to more frequent and severe weather-related disasters.

The need to save the world's forests is urgent. WWF's Living Forests Report shows that if current trends continue over the next 15 years, 11 of the world's most ecologically important forest landscapes will be lost. They will account for 80 percent of the loss between 2010 and 2030, according to WWF's analysis.

Current State of the Negotiations

Currently, all references to forests, the land sector, and REDD+ in the draft Agreement and Decisions texts are bracketed, which means they do not enjoy support from all Parties and are still up for negotiation. All references to REDD+ are also accompanied by equally weighted, also bracketed, references to the Joint Mitigation and Adaptation Mechanism, which is an alternate approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

However there are opportunities for substantive developments in the post-2020 climate regime. The mitigation section of the Agreement text includes the potential for a mandate for the Conference of Parties to develop rules and guidance for tracking countries' progress towards final goals. In the Decision text, REDD+ and the land sector are mentioned in the mitigation and finance sections, especially with regard to accounting rules and the development of land sector principles that ensure ecosystem integrity and food security.

WWF's Position

WWF calls for the inclusion of the land sector in the Paris agreement. The land sector must include forests and agricultural land—not just forests—because most of the world's deforestation is caused by expanding agriculture. WWF calls for explicit inclusion of the land sector in three sections of the agreement:

- Finance - Adequate and predictable finance for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation in developing countries is needed if we want to achieve results in the land sector. WWF believes REDD+ is the best approach for channeling this funding. At the heart of REDD+ is creating and implementing national level strategies to address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation so that, ultimately, emissions are reduced and results-based payments for the emissions are made. WWF wants, at a minimum, for the finance section of the agreement to guarantee financial support for REDD+ beyond 2020. WWF also wants the REDD+ funding to be allocated and used in a way that safeguards the rights of indigenous people and local communities to their land and way of life.
- Mitigation *and* Adaptation- The land sector must be recognized for its role in mitigating climate change. It also must be recognized for its role in helping communities adapt to the impacts of climate change. Healthy forests, for example, play an important role in local hydrology and weather patterns that may be adversely impacted by climate change.
- Transparency - We need provisions for the land sector in this section to promote environmental integrity through the provision of sufficient information to avoid greenwashing or accounting errors. Determining the contribution of the land sector can be complex due to the interaction of human activity and natural processes and the fact that the land sector can be both a source of emissions as well as a carbon sink.

If the agreement does not include land sector-specific considerations, WWF wants to make sure that, at the very least, the finance section includes a reference to REDD+ that effectively guarantees financial support for REDD+ beyond 2020.

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