

# Sustainable management of forests and REDD+: Negotiations need clear terminology

## INFORMATION NOTE



The scope of a REDD+ instrument is a key issue in the negotiations leading up to UNFCCC's COP15 in Copenhagen in December 2009.

There is still no clear consensus among Parties on what activities should or should not be eligible for incentives under a REDD+ instrument. There are, however, signs that the lack of a common understanding of the terms "sustainable management of forests" and "sustainable forest management (SFM)" is confusing the debate.

### Debate on the scope of REDD+

The Bali Action Plan's wording on REDD+ is: "Policy approaches and positive incentives on issues relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, **sustainable management of forests** and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries".<sup>1</sup>

This list of activities covers measures that reduce the loss of forest carbon stocks (i.e. from deforestation and forest degradation), maintain stocks, and enhance stocks (e.g. through afforestation, reforestation and forest restoration). Conservation maintains carbon stocks in conservation and also protection forests, whereas "sustainable management of forests" in the context of the Bali Action Plan, implies management of other forests – most significant are forests managed for sustained timber production, in such a way that carbon stocks are maintained at least at constant levels on average over time.

Many Parties to UNFCCC are seeking a comprehensive scope for REDD+ in order to maximize potential greenhouse gas emissions reductions and removals from forests, to enable all countries to eventually participate in a REDD+ instrument, and to avoid carbon leakage. A number of Parties, however, seek a restricted scope for REDD+ -- one that exempts forests managed for commercial timber production --, concerned that REDD+ might subsidize industrial-scale timber extraction at the expense of small-scale local enterprise or non-timber forest values, such as biodiversity.

### Inconsistent use of terminology in the REDD+ deliberations

The debate on the scope of REDD+ will continue at least through Copenhagen. In order to minimize confusion in the debate, it is important that Parties have a common understanding of the terminology used.

The most recent negotiation text on REDD+<sup>2</sup>, coming out of the Bangkok meeting and being considered at Barcelona, includes both terms, "sustainable management of forests" and "sustainable forest management", in many places interchangeably. In many places in the negotiation text, "sustainable forest management" is used in a way that is inconsistent with internationally accepted language describing SFM.

Moreover, position papers of stakeholder groups advocating a restricted, conservation oriented REDD instrument, are voicing strong opposition to the inclusion of "sustainable forest management in the scope of REDD", but characterizing SFM in a way that is inconsistent with internationally recognized language on it.

<sup>1</sup> See: [http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop\\_13/application/pdf/cp\\_bali\\_action.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_13/application/pdf/cp_bali_action.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Non-paper No. 18 (by the facilitator) reflecting the discussions at the UNFCCC meeting in Bangkok, October 2009: [http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/ad\\_hoc\\_working\\_groups/lca/application/pdf/mitigation1biiinp18081009.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/ad_hoc_working_groups/lca/application/pdf/mitigation1biiinp18081009.pdf)

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## Internationally accepted language on sustainable forest management

As communicated to UNFCCC by the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)<sup>3</sup>, the UN General Assembly adopted the following description of SFM in 2007,

**“Sustainable forest management as a dynamic and evolving concept aims to maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental value of all types of forests, for the benefit of present and future generations.”<sup>4</sup>**

SFM is an overarching goal for the forestry sector, applicable at international and national levels, and, in many cases, at landscape level. The concept of SFM was articulated in the Forest Principles adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. SFM has since been made operational through actions identified in UNFF and its predecessors, regional processes to develop criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, and a range of guidelines and sound forest management practices (for forests managed for production, conservation, protection or other purposes). Strong links exist with forest certification systems for forests managed for production purposes. In short, SFM represents a broad goal for the forest sector, the achievement of which is facilitated on the ground by the application of best practices for the sustainable management of forests.

It was with this meaning of SFM in mind that the 14 members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (consisting of international organizations and secretariats) recognized that “sustainable forest management provides an effective framework for forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation”.<sup>5</sup> The point emphasized was that, without a comprehensive approach to forests -- recognizing that countries manage their forest estates for multiple socio-economic, productive and environmental functions -- and without sound policy, legislative and governance frameworks, forestry-related climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts on the ground will not be successful.

## Issues regarding inclusion of sustainable management of forests in REDD+

“Sustainable management of forests” in the Bali Action Plan context refers to the application of forest management practices for the primary purpose of sustaining constant levels of carbon stocks over time. Sustainable management of forests in other contexts could mean applying specific management practices to achieve other goals (e.g., biodiversity conservation, poverty alleviation, watershed protection). Implicit in the term sustainable management of forests is that, regardless of the primary objective of management, the other values of the forest should not be disregarded. A key issue is whether REDD+ incentives; measurement, verification and reporting systems; and adequate safeguard measures together could help enable management of production forests so that carbon stocks are maintained, timber is produced and other critical values (*i.a.* local livelihoods, biodiversity, water resources) are not impaired. Another critical question is how a reduced scope of a REDD+ instrument would affect its potential to contribute to climate change mitigation as well as to adaptation.

The substantive debate will continue, hopefully leading to consensus on the scope of REDD/REDD+ in Copenhagen. An effort to clarify and use terminology consistently will help to avoid confusion and to focus on the substantive issues. Consistent use of terminology across conventions will help facilitate communications and enhance synergies between them.

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<sup>3</sup> UNFF Secretariat's submission, on behalf of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, to UNFCCC: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/smsn/igo/057.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> UN Resolution 62/98, establishing the Non-Legally binding instrument on all types of forests: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/469/65/PDF/N0746965.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>5</sup> CPF's "Strategic framework for forests and climate change", CPF 2008. [www.fao.org/forestry/16639-1-0.pdf](http://www.fao.org/forestry/16639-1-0.pdf)