

Peatland loss fuels climate change

A problem as large as forest degradation calls for a solution with equal priority.

How can we address wetland degradation and restoration, in particular for peatlands, within climate negotiations? Policy options to address this:

LULUCF:

1. Mandatory accounting of emissions from wetland loss and degradation, in particular peatlands
2. Wetland management for gaining credits, in particular peatland management

SECTORAL APPROACH

Include LULUCF including wetlands, in particular peatlands within sectoral approach.

REDD:

REDD methodologies should account for all significant sources of emissions from deforestation and from wetland loss and degradation, in particular from the soils of peatlands.

CDM:

Add wetland restoration, in particular peatlands, as a CDM activity to reduce emissions in developing countries.

NOTE: peatlands are either forested, deforested or non-forested. Addressing them under *forest carbon stocks* addresses *forested peatlands*, but still excludes deforested peatlands (causing major CO₂ emissions each year), and *non-forested* peatlands.

Peatlands, carbon & CO₂

- Peatlands cover only 3% of earth's land area but store 528,000 Megatonnes Carbon = as much as all terrestrial biomass, or twice as much as all global forest biomass, about the same as in the atmosphere. Peat stores carbon not only in the possible forest cover, but primarily in their peat soils.
- 3,000 million tonnes of CO₂, equal to 10% of fossil fuel emissions are emitted by degraded peatlands each year as a result of peatland drainage, fires and exploitation. Degrading activities include peat extraction for fuel use, for horticultural use, conversion to other land uses (forest land, cropland, grazing land) and fires for clearing purposes.
- Peatland emissions are additional to deforestation emissions; they are not included in LULUCF figures. Peat emissions deserve equal priority as they represent almost half of LULUCF emissions.
- Almost two-third of tropical peat swamp forests in South-east Asia are degraded; causing 2,000 tonnes CO₂ each year, equal to 8% of fossil fuel emissions. Over 90% origins from Indonesia and occur only on 0,1% of the earth's land area.
- Although most emissions are concentrated in South-east Asia, most of the world's peatlands are located in Annex I countries.
- Peatland emissions are different from emissions from deforestation. Once the hydrology is restored, they stop emitting carbon and maintain a carbon store. Restoring one degraded peatland is generally not linked to increased peatland degradation elsewhere. There is therefore no leakage problem which makes a project approach rather than a wall-to-wall approach applicable.
- Restoring degraded peatlands is a very cost-efficient way to reduce CO₂ emissions. In terms of feasibility of reducing LULUCF emissions, peatlands should get priority; they are **THE** low-hanging fruit.

There is a very urgent need for conservation, restoration and wise use of peatlands for long-term climate change mitigation. Peat emissions continue unless you stop them.