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The Potential of Voluntary Sustainability Initiatives to Reduce Emissions

Resource
July 2015

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The Potential of Voluntary Sustainability Initiatives to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

PDF



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Summary

The overall objective of this study is to assess the potential of Voluntary Sustainability Initiatives (VSIs) to contribute to reductions in emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries based on their substantive and procedural requirements.

Rising global demand for food, fuel and fiber has led to a rapid increase in deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. A recent study estimates that the conversion of forests to agriculture alone accounts for approximately 80% of tropical deforestation. To address these concerns, VSIs have emerged as one tool among many to ensure that the production of agricultural and timber commodities for global markets does not result in forest loss.

VSIs are voluntary standards that specify requirements for producers, traders, manufacturers, retailers or service providers to demonstrate sustainability in terms of human rights, worker health and safety, the environmental impacts of production, community relations, land use planning and others. Many companies, platforms of companies and members of commodity roundtables rely on VSIs as a framework to implement sustainable production and sourcing policies and attain market recognition.

VSIs are a common component of public and private sector commitments to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, with many companies aiming to achieve zero deforestation by 2020. However, the potential effectiveness of VSIs in achieving forest-related goals remains uncertain.

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