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REDD+ may cut both ways - Potential trade-offs between climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation require well thought out measures

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October 2012

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REDD+ May Cut Both Ways - Potential Trade-offs Between Climate Change Mitigation and Biodiversity Conservation Require Well Thought Out Measures

At the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) meeting in Hyderabad, India, scientists present key findings on the relationship between biodiversity, forest management and potential REDD+ activities.

Ongoing conversion of forests to agriculture is still a major cause of global biodiversity loss on Earth. Furthermore, deforestation is the second largest source of carbon dioxide emissions induced by humans, after fossil fuel emissions. The UN initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries (REDD+) can bring positive impacts for both biodiversity and carbon, as it seeks actions aiming at reducing deforestation and forest degradation, including conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of carbon stocks. However, there are trade-offs between carbon and biodiversity outcomes that can occur locally and at wider spatial scales. "These trade-offs must be carefully considered in any decision made relative to REDD+ implementation", say scientists. A discussion on emerging key findings will be presented in the framework of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity meeting from 8 to 19 October 2012 in Hyderabad.

The new assessment is being carried out by a Global Forest Expert Panel (GFEPE), coordinated by the Vienna-based International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO). With input of more than 50 leading scientists from around the world, it will constitute the first comprehensive analysis to date of the relationship between biodiversity, forest management and REDD+. It seeks to provide decision-makers with most up-to-date scientific information on how these complex relationships may be affected by management activities implemented to achieve REDD+ objectives.

Forests provide essential ecosystem services to people, such as food, fuel, fibre, and the regulation of climate and water. "Biodiversity is a key determinant of forests' ability to effectively provide these ecosystem services, notably carbon sequestration, and to remain resilient in the face of disturbances such as climate change", says John Parrott, Chair of the Global Forest Expert Panel on Biodiversity, Forest Management, and REDD+. Crossing ecological thresholds in forests leads to the loss of these ecosystem services. REDD+ management activities should therefore stay within a defined "safe operating space" to ensure the sustainable provision of ecosystem services.



Returning from the fields after plantation with job done, animal holder and his wife, Nipangar National Park, Namibia (John Parrott)

Considering social implications is crucial for successfully pursuing REDD+ implementation. "For example, poor recognition of tenure rights includes disadvantaged groups in rural areas from decision making, and denies them access to potential economic benefits arising from REDD+ interventions", says Christoph Willsburg, Coordinator of the Global Forest Expert Panels. "Evidence suggests that pursuing social objectives such as securing tenure rights and local engagement alongside REDD+ will not only

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Summary

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