Dominican Republic

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REDD in Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic is a densely populated country in the Caribbean that shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti. The country’s complex and diverse array of habitats supports a high degree of unique and globally significant biodiversity and is consequently recognized as a “Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot” (CI, n.d.). In the 1980s forests that once covered 70 per cent of the country were drastically reduced because of logging and agricultural expansion. The Global Forest Resources Assessment reports that the Dominican Republic had 41 per cent forest cover (over almost 2 million hectares of land) in 2010 (FAO, 2010). However, a more recent national study conducted by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources estimated that the national forest cover in 2011 was 39.7 per cent (Ministerio Ambiente, n.d.)
According to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, the Dominican Republic now has a near zero deforestation rate, reflecting a significant recovery from the high rates of deforestation and degradation that the country experienced in the 1980s (FAO, 2010). However, it has however been noted that the abovementioned deforestation rate does not identify which type of forest has been lost or gained and that much reforestation has been achieved by the creation of plantations where natural forests previously stood (USAID, 2012, p.19). The major drivers of deforestation in the Dominican Republic have been slash and burn agricultural practices, clearing forest for cattle-grazing, the extraction of charcoal, rubber and firewood, forest fires and urban expansion (Ovalles, P., 2011).

The Dominican Republic is the second largest economy in Central America and the Caribbean with in 2011, a GDP of 93 million US dollars and a GDP per capita of US$ 9,600. The country is also one of the fastest growing economies in the Caribbean region. Over the past 20 years, there has been an annual average increase in GDP of 4 per cent, compared to a 1.8 per cent average for Central America and the Caribbean region (IMF, 2003, p.1). This high growth has yet to translate into decreased income disparities with the poorest half of population receiving less than a fifth of GDP, while the richest 10 per cent receive nearly 40 per cent of GDP (CIA Factbook, 2013). Unemployment is 14.7 % according to national statistics, but the Dominican definition of unemployment differs from the international classification and when adjusted for it, is only about 5 % (IMF, 2013, p.7).

There is no national programme or strategy on REDD+ in the Dominican Republic. However, the Dominican Republic has a number of plans, policies and laws that support REDD+ activities. It was the first country in the Caribbean to develop a National Climate Compatible Development Plan (CCDP), currently existing as a draft version which was published in September 2011. The Plan identifies a number of abatement options which, if implemented, would result in a total reduction of annual emissions by up to 65 per cent by 2030 against a 2010 baseline, compared to the business as usual scenario. However, a 2012 law which sets out the country’s National Development Strategy (Law No. 1-12), establishes a more moderate, but legally binding, target for reducing carbon emissions. The target is to reduce emissions by 0.8 metric tonnes of carbon per capita from 3.6 (the 2010 emissions figure) to 2.8 reduction metric tonnes per capita by 2030. This development would transform the Dominican Republic’s forests into net carbon sinks. The unveiling of this Plan and the establishment of the National Council for Climate Change and the Clean Development Mechanism (CNCCMDL), form part of the country’s efforts to mitigate and reduce emissions from climate change.

The Dominican Republic is a REDD+ Partnership partner country but is not a member of the UN-REDD Programme, the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), or the Forest Investment Programme (FIP) of the World Bank. The majority of activities underway in the Dominican Republic are internationally funded small-scale subnational projects, focusing on building capacity in agroforestry techniques and reforestation. At the national level, the largest on-going activities are funded by international governments and managed under the umbrella of larger, regional programmes for Central America. Examples are the Dominican Republic-Central America–United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) Environmental Cooperation Program, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Regional REDD Programme in Central America and the Dominican Republic, funded by the German Organisation for International Cooperation (GIZ).
Institutional arrangements

The main governmental body responsible for environmental issues is the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. The Ministry works with other regional and international actors involved in environmental issues, such as the Central American Environment and Development Commission (CCAD) of the Environmental Agency of the Central American Integration System (SICA) to manage, coordinate and fund environmental and development projects in the country.

Regarding activities revolving around climate change mitigation and adaptation, the National Council for Climate Change and Clean Development Mechanism (CNCCMDL) is responsible for managing projects under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), including reforestation and afforestation projects. With regard to REDD+ specifically, the ministry is responsible for the country’s participation in the Regional REDD Programme in Central America and the Dominican Republic, which is an initiative across eight countries in the region. Other activities related to REDD+ are coordinated by international NGOs and agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the German Organisation for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the French Development Agency (AFD) in collaboration with national authorities and NGOs including Progressio Foundation and the Sur Futuro Foundation.

Stakeholder engagement and participation

The Government of the Dominican Republic has created a permanent consultation and coordination group for forest-related issues called the Working Group on Forest Dialogue (Mesa de Dialogo sobre Bosques). The working group is composed of representatives of the forestry sector’s main stakeholders, including forestry businesses, government departments, NGOs and academia. The members of the group actively participate in the design and implementation of measures, policy instruments and proposals for public and private sustainable management of all types of forests in the Dominican Republic (CEDAF, n.d.). The members of the group actively participate in the design and implementation of measures, policy instruments and proposals for public and private sustainable management of forests in the Dominican Republic (CEDAF, n.d.). For instance, the Working Group on Forest Dialogue has been participating in the drafting of a new forestry law. This new version of the law which will replace the 1999 Forestry Law will include an MRV methodology to be used in the context of REDD+ (CEDAF, 2008).
Land tenure arrangements and carbon rights

About 70 per cent of forests in the Dominican Republic belong to the state, and most are found within national parks. However, any trees of endemic or endangered species with historic or cultural value also belong to the State, regardless of whose property they are on. Private property is unequally distributed in the Dominican Republic. A relatively recent study has shown that approximately 15 per cent of landowners owned the majority (88 per cent) of agricultural land, whereas 85 per cent of landowners owned less than 5 hectares of land each, comprising a total of 12 per cent of agricultural land (Castro et al, 2005).

In the Dominican Republic, private owners of forest land must ensure that the forest is conserved, or that reforestation of native species takes place on their land. Moreover, all properties - both public and private - containing forests must be registered in the public forest registrar. If the land is not registered, no benefits can be gained from the incentives created for forest conservation. This is important to mention as a pilot project for payment for ecosystem services (PES) is currently taking place in the basin of the river Yaque del Norte and a law regulating PES projects is being developed (July 2013). Also, once registered, landowners can apply to the government and obtain certification that their land is ideal for forest growth, which makes them eligible for funding for reforestation projects.

As of 2012, only about a quarter of the country’s rural land is estimated to be registered but measures to combat this problem are underway. Land registry offices are being set up throughout the country and a cadastre system with digitalised property titles is being developed. These reforms are overseen by the State Lands Titling Commission, formed in 2012, with the aim of titling 150,000 properties by 2017 (USAID, 2012, p.3-12). However, lack of clarity in tenure registration procedures, the high cost of land registration, as well as the presence of a formal, and informal market for land, have been identified as challenges within the current tenure system (Tejada, 2000). In addition to this, land tenure insecurity is a persisting problem due to government land expropriations and weaknesses in governance structures such as the lack of effective enforcement and support to local communities for land invasions and squatting (USAID, 2012). These issues, have been discussed but have not yet been addressed in the nationally implemented Regional REDD Programme in Central America and the Dominican Republic (Diaz, 2008).

Forest management

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources is the government institution responsible for managing, protecting and preserving the Dominican Republic’s natural resources. Within the Ministry, the Department of Forest Management is responsible for ensuring the implementation of regulations governing forestry activities, ensuring compliance with forest protection laws and policies, as well as selecting and managing civil and military forest guards who monitor the protected areas and report illegal activities. Enforcement strategies used by the Dominican Republic include fines and incarceration. For example Law 632, prohibits illegal logging, which is punishable by law with fines of up to RD$10,000 (approximately US$300) and 6 to 12 months of jail. There are also laws that create incentives for forest development and conservation, such as Law 290, which
offers tax exonerations and reductions for people who invest in reforestation, Law 202 on protected areas and the General Environmental Law 64-00, which create the possibility of payments for ecosystem services in the country. A Certification Program for Plantations has also been set up, incentivising landowners who reforest their land with tree crops.

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8/2013

Reference levels

Reference level for REDD+ are under development in the Dominican Republic. In June 2011, the Regional REDD Programme in Central America and the Dominican Republic held a workshop on developing a National Forest Monitoring System (REDD Programme, CCAD & GIZ, 2011). The outcomes of the workshop suggested the creation of a national baseline scenario and developing a methodology for establishing reference levels within a pilot area, which could then be scaled up nationally.

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MRV

Discussions began during the national implementation of the Regional REDD Programme regarding the creation of a multilevel monitoring system, which would take into account national, subnational and project level information related to REDD+. As part of the REDD Programme, the German Organisation for International Cooperation (GIZ) is planned to provide technical training and assistance for the development of the methodology for the measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of emissions reductions (REDD Regional Programme, 2010). In June 2011, a national forest monitoring system workshop was held which proposed the establishment of forest cover maps at the regional, national, subnational and project level. This is to be done by using satellite imagery, the quantification of biomass and forest carbon and the merging of existing data sets, and the inclusion of the measurements of all major carbon pools in a planned national forest inventory (REDD Programme, CCAD & GIZ, 2011).

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Safeguards

There is no formal system for addressing safeguards for REDD+ at the national level in the Dominican Republic. As a member of the Central American Environment and Development Commission (CCAD) - which is the Central American Integration System’s (SICA) environmental body promoting sustainable development and strengthening regional environmental management - the country is likely to affirm the position of the CCAD which states that ‘REDD policies should recognise rights and conservation practices, uses and sustainable management from indigenous people and local communities’ (CCAD and SICA, 2010). Under the Regional REDD Programme in Central America and the Dominican Republic, representatives from the Ministry for environment and natural resources and forest managers have participated in a number workshop on safeguards. The
The latest meeting in May, 2013 established a regional work plan for the group and assessed the current state of work on safeguards in the participating countries (CCAD & GIZ, 2013).

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**Gender Equality**

The Dominican Republic’s 2014 R-PP plans to take into account gender equality when identifying stakeholders for their engagement in the REDD+ process (Sections 1a and 1b). It aims to support women in development processes, natural resource allocation and environmental protection (Section 1b.3), and calls for a gender perspective to be taken in all REDD+ projects. It underlines the existence of several institutions dealing with gender specific issues, such as the Equity, Gender and Development Office and Gender Focal Teams in all provincial directorates. The R-PP also acknowledges the importance of the Strategy for Gender Mainstreaming in Environmental Management, the Gender Awareness Guide for Natural Resource Management, and Gender and Climate Change forums (Ibid). It recognises the need to specifically utilise these plans, and involve these institutions in the design and implementation of REDD+ in order to ensure for example that female forest stakeholders benefit from balanced consultations, training, development of skills, adequate access to information and equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms (Ibid).

According to the R-PP, there are several women’s organisations that deal specifically with women’s issues related to REDD+ including Centro de la Mujer y Participación (CEDEMUR) and Promoción de la Mujer del Sur (PROMUS). The REDD-CCAD-GIZ programme aims to adopt a gender-based approach when carrying out its activities.

The legal framework offers a relatively weak foundation for gender-related considerations. References to gender equality in the Constitution are limited to the need for balanced participation by women and men in all government agencies and judicial bodies (Article 39). Likewise, the National Development Strategy (Law No 01-12) states that public policy shall promote social participation in decision-making which should facilitate, inter alia, gender equality. Men are the main beneficiaries of agrarian reforms with women owning only 30% of all land (CEDAW, 2011). On the other hand, the number of women that have been granted loans has almost reached parity with men, and the majority of microcredits awarded in the Dominican Republic go to women (SIGI 2014).

**References**


CENTRO PARA EL DESROLLO AGROPECUARIO Y FORESTAL (CEDAF). No Date. La Mesa De Dialogo Sobre Bosques. [Online]. Available here [23]. Accessed June 2013


SIGI. 2014. “Dominican Republic Country Index, Restricted Resources and Assets”. Available here [34].

TEJADA A. 2000. Mercados de Tierras Rurales en la República Dominicana, CEPAL.

Related initiatives

- Plan Sierra Reforestation Programme [38]
- Regional REDD Program in Central America and the Dominican Republic [39]
- Demonstrating Sustainable Land Management in Upper Watersheds of the Sabana Yegua Dam [40]
- Revegetation and Trans-boundary Natural Resources Management (Frontera Verde) [41]

Related news

- World Bank Group : Funding boost for forests and climate protection [42]

Recommended reading

- A Journey to Sustainable Growth The Draft Climate-Compatible Development Plan of the Dominican Republic [43]
- Programa REDD CCAD-GIZ Insumos para el diseño e implementación de un Sistema Nacional de Monitoreo de Bosques en el contexto de REDD: República Dominicana, [44]
- USAID/Dominican Republic Strategic Plan FY 2002 through FY 2007 [45]
- Land Tenure and Agro-Forestry in the Dominican Republic [46]
- Evaluación De Los Recursos Forestales Mundiales 2010 Informe Nacional República Dominicana [47]

External Links

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- Forest Dialogue Working Group | Page [23]

Related encyclopaedia articles

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