

Publications

Realising REDD+: National strategy and policy options edited by A. Angelsen with M. Brockhaus, M. Kanninen, E. Sills, W.D. Sunderlin & S. Wertz-Kanounnikoff (2009), xxiv + 362 pp., CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia. ISBN 9786028693035 (pbk), also available from http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/publications/pdf_files/Books/BAngelsen0902.pdf

REDD+ is widely perceived as the next best thing in forest conservation. Linking the finances from carbon trading with sustainable forest management and with a recognition of biodiversity and livelihoods provides a seemingly perfect scenario. REDD+ has emerged as global initiative but a global system for implementation has not yet been fully finalized. Discussions are taking place through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and are likely to continue for the next few years. This book provides a valuable reference on the realities of REDD+, outlining what it currently is and what it could become.

In this book REDD+ is used as an umbrella term for local, national and global actions that reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and enhance carbon stocks in developing countries. The plus symbol signifies an enhancement of carbon stock through positive measures of forest regeneration and rehabilitation, negative degradation, negative emissions, carbon uptake and carbon removals. The purpose of the book is to inform the development of national strategies, policies and demonstration activities for implementation of REDD+ as well as providing a reality check for those designing the global REDD+ architecture. Given the potential importance of the initiative, all involved in biodiversity conservation and its funding are likely to find this publication of interest. There is a lot to digest in the multi-authored chapters and as an analytical overview and source book it serves its purposes very well. The national case studies provide a reality check against the background analyses of causes of deforestation and discussions of policies and institutions.

At present, mechanisms for incorporation of REDD+ into a post-2012 climate regime consist of three mechanisms at national level. In the first preparatory or readiness phase, countries prepare a national strategy based on consultation with interested parties, start building capacity in monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) of changes in forest carbon stocks

and begin demonstration activities. Building capacity in MRV is considered in itself to be very challenging for the majority of tropical forest countries that stand to benefit from REDD+. Building capacity and fostering dialogue are currently the main components of the official UNFCCC process.

At the same time actual REDD+ projects are planned in a number of countries. As noted in this publication CIFOR has identified about 60 potential first generation REDD+ projects. Looking at the three countries with the largest existing forest carbon stock, Indonesia has 35 projects planned with one already operating, Brazil has 20, with two projects operational, and the Democratic Republic of Congo has four planned. DRC's projects include support for community managed reserves in the eastern part of the country. In Indonesia pilot projects have been developed, for example in protected areas in Central and East Kalimantan, with the involvement of the central and provincial governments. Challenges in the Indonesian projects include the need to build capacity, and deal with rights and responsibilities of local communities, land tenure insecurity faced by smallholders and forest rent enjoyed by large landholders.

So will REDD+ work when previous attempts to tackle deforestation have fundamentally failed? Sunderlin & Atmadja in chapter 4 suggest that the substantial levels of new funding, up to USD 10 billion annually in initial phases, gives 'forests a chance to survive against the profits of further conversion (opportunity costs) that have been the bane of forest protection worldwide'. They suggest that three elements for success are necessary: learn from past failures in forest conversion and management, consider political will and, because of the possible paralysis of political will, mobilize popular support with new alliances across all sectors calling for an end to deforestation. A revival of 1980s rainforest campaigning? The difference this time seems to be that the different bodies are working together—tropical forest governments, bilateral aid agencies, NGOs and investment banks working to a common agenda rather than in outright opposition! The FFI-Macquarie taskforce is noted as a partnership between an international environmental NGO and a financial institution.

And there is now money on the table. At the Oslo Climate and Forest Conference on 27 May 2010, for example, Germany, France, Norway, the USA, Britain, Australia

and Japan pledged USD 4 billion to finance REDD+ through 2012, and Denmark and Sweden pledged a further USD 73 million more to the effort. A new monitoring agency will be established in Cancun to monitor implementation.

As noted in the book, for many involved in forest conservation REDD+ is not a new concept, but rather a new funding source to finance pre-existing goals. So the challenges are still immense, but overall the tone of the book is cautiously optimistic and given the scale of the world's environmental problems perhaps that is all we can hope for.

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Nature's Matrix: Linking Agriculture, Conservation and Food Sovereignty

by Ivette Perfecto, John Vandermeer and Angus Wright (2009), x + 242 pp., Earthscan, London, UK. ISBN 9781844077816 (hbk), GBP 85.00; ISBN 9781844077823 (pbk), GBP 24.95.

The readers of this journal will already be well aware of the parlous state of biodiversity. *Nature's Matrix* makes a very reasonable argument that the biodiversity crisis cannot be separated from the production of food and the political unrest that characterizes much of the tropical world that is richest in biodiversity. It highlights the ignorance of fundamental ecosystem processes and the role that humans play in determining their productivity, and argues that accepting the current dominant political ideologies as universal and sacrosanct is highly arrogant and hardly supported by the evidence. The authors' solution: recognize the small farmers as the most powerful allies in the effort to conserve biodiversity. They draw on evidence, mostly from Latin America, in support of this argument, drawing on the familiar examples of shade coffee in Central America, cacao in Brazil, and rice cultivation in parts of Asia to make the point that it is far better to manage agro-ecosystems to prevent problems from arising than depend on agronomists to solve problems after they have appeared. 'Agronomists seek to solve problems, agro-ecologists seek to prevent them,' a point the authors—agro-ecologists all—seek to demonstrate with this book.