
Myth No. 14: Including plantations in the climate-related mechanism REDD (Reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation) will help address climate change

This lie has its roots in the failure of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to differentiate between forests and plantations. "Forest" according to UNFCCC is an area larger than 500 square metres, at least 10 per cent of which covered in trees that can grow to more than two metres high. To UNFCCC, then, there is no difference between a monoculture eucalyptus plantation, a severely degraded forest and an intact old-growth native forest.

Forests become almost indestructible under the UN definition. A forest, or a plantation, can be clearcut and remain a forest. Clearcuts are "areas normally forming part of the forest area which are temporarily unstocked as a result of human intervention." With only three months to go until December's UN climate negotiations in Copenhagen UNFCCC has not yet agreed on a definition of forest degradation.

This is not just a theoretical issue. Asia Pulp and Paper, to choose a particularly egregious example, has destroyed vast areas of forest in Sumatra. Yet under the UN definition of "forests" it has not caused any deforestation. APP could even benefit from REDD payments, rather than being held accountable for the damage it has already caused.

The answer to this lie is simple: Plantations are not forests and can in no way help address climate change

Chris Lang, www.redd-monitor.org