

# The Land Sector in a new International Climate Agreement

## Principles for Friends of the Earth Norway and the Rainforest Foundation Norway

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The Paris meeting in December 2015 plans to reach a deal on a new international climate change agreement that will apply to all countries and which will come into effect from 2020. An important issue in these negotiations will be how forests, agriculture and other land use will fit into the international work on climate.

Friends of the Earth Norway and Rainforest Foundation Norway believe the following principles must form the basis for dealing with the land sector in the new agreement on climate change for the period following 2020:

*Both globally and nationally two ambitious, separate and independent goals must be in place; one for the land sector and one for emissions from fossil fuels and the industrial sector. In the land sector, emission reductions must be complemented by comprehensive land-use planning and the full inclusion of affected peoples, which can be secured by a rights-based approach. As in other sectors, rich countries must assume a double obligation through 1) setting ambitious national targets and 2) committing to contribute financially to climate efforts in developing countries.*

### What is the "land sector"?

The land sector includes forests and other land areas, whether they are used for agriculture/forestry or not. Emissions from the land sector also include those emissions from agriculture that are not linked to fossil energy use, for instance methane emissions from livestock. We use the term "land sector" as being synonymous with how the IPCC uses the term "Agriculture, Forests, and Other Land Use" (AFOLU).

When this document refers to the fossil or industrial sectors, we consider all other sectors of society that create greenhouse gas emissions - transport, industry, energy production, waste management and so on.

### 1. The land sector must aim for high ambitions

The Fifth Assessment Report from the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) shows that in order to avoid very dangerous climate change, total human greenhouse gas emissions must probably be reduced to zero in the course of this century, at the same time as uptake of CO<sub>2</sub> must be increased in order to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. This means that the large emissions from deforestation and forest degradation must be stopped as soon as possible. At the same time we must preserve the ability of the ecosystems to store carbon and facilitate an increased uptake where this is feasible.

Mitigation of climate change within the land sector will not in itself amount to sufficiently large emission reductions to avoid dangerous climate change. A full halt in fossil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is essential. A new climate agreement must therefore ensure that climate actions in the land sector do not postpone or reduce ambitions to cut greenhouse gas emissions from fossil sources.

The land sector differs from other sectors in several important ways. The sector is not just a source of emissions, it also acts as a greenhouse gas sink and carbon storage. At the same time there are large natural variations in emissions and uptake, and often it may be difficult to differentiate between anthropogenic and natural effects. Measures to reduce emissions or store carbon are not permanent in themselves, i.e. constant over thousands of years, as are emissions from fossil sources. Besides, estimates of greenhouse gas emissions from the land sector are much less reliable than those of fossil emission sources. All in all these differences make it impossible to compare mitigation efforts in the land sector with those in other sectors.

To ensure the highest possible level of ambition for climate action both in the land sector and in the reduction of fossil greenhouse gas emissions, Friends of the Earth Norway and Rainforest Foundation Norway believe that specific goals and commitments for both sectors must be established, and that these goals must be enshrined independently in the new climate agreement. Since it is not possible to compare emissions from fossil fuels and measures in the land sector directly, measures in the land sector cannot be included in emissions trading with fossil fuel emissions.

Also at the global level clear and ambitious goals for each individual sector must be set separately. Instead of a global goal of "net zero" anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, a twofold global vision is needed which aims at

- Full decarbonisation – i.e. virtually no emissions from fossil fuels as quickly as possible, and at the latest by 2050
- Full stop in deforestation worldwide as quickly as possible, with a minimum halving by 2020 as set out by the Aichi targets

## 2. Forestry and agriculture are more than emission reductions

Mitigation of climate change in the land sector will have a major impact on other environmental considerations, such as protection of biological diversity, and on crucial social factors such as food production and livelihoods. All mitigation measures in the land sector must be rights-based and help strengthen food security, food sovereignty and important environmental objectives in areas such as biological diversity and ecosystem services, in addition to the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The land sector also affects the climate in other ways than through its contribution to the carbon cycle. For instance through regulation of rainfall and local temperatures many forest areas have major climate impacts both regionally and over large distances. Measures within the land sector should contribute to necessary climate adaptation, and be designed to ensure the sector's resilience as a carbon sink in the face of unavoidable climate change. Therefore, forestry and land areas cannot be managed solely on the basis of emissions and uptake of greenhouse gases. The sector needs to be managed through comprehensive land-use planning, with conservation of biological diversity and landscape ecosystem services as key goals.

The land sector is also crucial for habitats and food production. Indigenous, forest-dependent peoples and small farmers are marginalized in many countries' political systems. Mitigation of climate change in the land sector will be effective in the long term only if the peoples who are directly affected are fully included and heard and their rights safeguarded. Experience from conservation of tropical rainforests shows that the forest is usually better preserved if those who live in it receive formal recognition of the collective rights to their traditional territories.

A rights-based approach must build on the fundamental human rights of indigenous and local communities, as embodied for instance in the ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). To strengthen these groups' rights, including the right

to land and the right to free, prior, informed consent, governance of the land sector must be strengthened. The future climate agreement must also ensure that measures in the land sector do not compromise food security and the right to food.

These principles for comprehensive land use planning in the land sector must be enshrined at the highest level in the new climate agreement, and must apply to all countries. More specific requirements for compliance with the principles (so-called safeguards) must be the basis for all international funding for mitigation in the land sector.

#### **International commitments relevant to the land sector**

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) commits all member states to preserve their biological diversity. The so-called Aichi targets, which are negotiated under this Convention, commit the Member States to at least halve the loss of natural habitats (including forests) by 2020 amongst other things. In addition, member states are committed to managing the areas used for agriculture, aquaculture and forestry sustainably to ensure the conservation of biological diversity. Indigenous and local communities shall be ensured real participation, and their knowledge and traditions must be respected and valued.

ILO Convention no. 169 commits all member states to respect the cultural and spiritual significance which countries and territories have for indigenous peoples; indigenous peoples' right to the lands which they are traditionally allocated; and indigenous peoples' right to participation in the use, control and preservation of resources in their territory.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) states that indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources they have traditionally owned or inhabited and that they have the right to own and have control over territories and resources they possess as a result of traditional ownership. In addition UNDRIP stipulates that States shall in good faith consult and cooperate with indigenous peoples through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to any permission being granted to projects affecting their lands and other resources.

### 3. Rich countries still bear the main responsibility

The new climate agreement for the period after 2020 will include targets and commitments - so-called "Intended Nationally Determined Contribution" (INDCs) - both for developed and developing countries. This development of international climate cooperation makes it more important than ever to ensure that rich countries, with their historic responsibility and their financial capacity, fulfill their obligation under the UNFCCC to *take the lead* in efforts to avoid dangerous climate change.

In the land sector, as in other sectors, rich countries must therefore undertake a double commitment: they must set out clear targets for mitigation measures in their own land sector, and simultaneously commit to concrete contributions to climate change mitigation in the land sector in poorer countries. Developing countries must be allowed to set targets for the land sector that reflect their capacity and which are most effective for contributing to a long-term restructuring of land management in a sustainable direction. This is not necessarily limited to quantitative targets for carbon emissions or sequestration, but can also involve qualitative goals, Policies and Measures (PAMs), or targets based on proxy indicators such as forest cover.

Until now, developing countries' climate mitigation measures in the land sector have largely taken place under the heading of "REDD +". In a new climate agreement objectives and actions under this heading should be included in developing countries' INDCs for the land sector. Rich

countries must continue to contribute to (and increase their financing for) such efforts, in order to reach the target of halting deforestation globally.

Measures financed in this way will then be counted as part of developing countries' goal achievement for greenhouse gas emission reductions, and as part of rich countries' achievement of their separate financing obligations. For all climate change mitigation efforts in developing countries' land sector financed by industrialized countries, the safeguard mechanisms established for REDD+ must be respected. The safeguards must be strengthened in line with the overarching principles for comprehensive and sustainable land use planning, and must also form the basis for any funding mechanisms established, for example, through the Green Climate Fund.

### **Summary: What is required in a new international climate agreement?**

- A dual global target designed to ensure full decarbonisation (i.e. virtually zero emissions from fossil sources) at the latest by 2050, and a full halt in deforestation worldwide, at a minimum halved by 2020
- Ambitious dual goals for national emissions reductions, so that one target for the land sector and one goal for other (fossil) sectors are enshrined separately for as many countries as possible in the new agreement
- No emissions trading between the land sector and the fossil sectors
- Clear, unambiguous principles for integrated, sustainable land management must form the basis for all climate mitigation actions in the land sector. This implies for instance that measures must underpin biological diversity and ecosystem services, be rights-based and contribute to food security, the right to food, and food sovereignty
- Rich countries must commit themselves to considerable increases in their financing of climate mitigation measures in developing countries. Such actions will be part of developing countries' goal achievements in a new agreement, but the financing will be included in rich countries' separate commitments for financing of climate mitigation measures in developing countries
- Measures in the land sector that are financed internationally must comply with a strengthened set of safeguards which secure the principles for comprehensive, sustainable land-use planning - including biological diversity and human rights