Informal Meeting of Experts on Methodological Issues relating to Reducing Emissions from Forest Degradation in Developing Countries

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An exploration by the EU

Orientation

Degradation:

- Is logically part of the issue addressed by the REDD agenda item
- May be harder to detect than deforestation using remote sensing
- May be as easy to detect on the ground
- Entails persistent decline of carbon stocks, can in principle be monitored using IPCC GPG methods
- Does not entail fluctuations in carbon stocks that inevitably occur in the landscape under sustainable forest management practices – and which will tend to average out at the national level
- Degradation may be linked to other social and ecosystem values, which are sometimes correlated with carbon stocks

Logical Linkages

- Pressures leading to deforestation may also lead to degradation => leakage potential
- Our task (in terms of Art 2 of Convention) actually to reduce Σ(deforestation and degradation emissions), globally
- Sustainable management of forests is within the same framework (since don't want increased pressures on these forests to start deforestation or degradation processes

Definitions and methodologies

- Including X years, Y% and time T in IPCC 2003 proto-definition was probably a mistake – could take ages to define.
- Idea of *persistent decline* much better
- IPCC GPG and 2006 Guideline methods are in principle able to detect persistent decline
- Also able to detect fluctuations under sustainable management, though these will tend to average out over time
- Stratification, e.g. by proximity to infrastructure may be useful in applying IPCC methods. Remote sensing may be useful to do this
- Ground based information will be needed, e.g. to establish ecosystem carbon densities (including degraded ecosystem carbon densities) associated with the strata.

Relationship to removals

- Areas of aggregation and degradation will almost always often co-exist within the national boundary

- Could either:

  A) define reference level over the entire landscape, or

  B) count aggregation as zero in the national reference level and monitoring, and focus on strata with evidence for degradation.

- B) May be more efficient statistically, and perhaps easier to interpret

Relationship to changes in forest ecosystem

- Human intervention could change forest ecosystems, e.g. from old-growth to plantation
- The transition would count as degradation if persistent decline of carbon stocks entailed.
- Subsequent management of transformed ecosystem would not be further degradation is there was no further persistent decline
- A persistent decline is a one-off reduction that will be maintained indefinitely without recovering the previous level of stocks, or a downward trend in stocks

Relationship to other ecosystem values

- Not directly part of carbon accounting since no agreed interconversion factor
- There is possible indirect relevance since (for example) diverse ecosystems may be more resilient to climate change, and reduce risk of stock reduction
- Useful to monitor because of relevance to commitments under other Conventions (e.g. CBD) and because may be the basis for value added.

In conclusion…

3 slides follow with relevant insights from REDD COMIFAC Workshop, Paris, March 2008…

Conclusions on degradation from March 2008 REDD COMIFAC Workshop

1) Deforestation and degradation are historically low in Congo Basin countries.
2) Sustainable Forest Management does not lead to long-term degradation of the forest but contributes, along with conservation, the fight against deforestation.
3) Forest degradation in Congo Basin countries is more related to agriculture activities, bushfires, mining, firewood and charcoal collection.
4) The IPCC guidelines propose methodologies for measuring and accounting emissions / removals of carbon in degraded forest. Those methods are sufficiently developed to detect persistent decline, though much more experience is needed in application.

More conclusions…

6) Need to capitalize existing eforts on degradation monitoring in Congo Basin Countries.
7) Improving the synergy between actors around the forest degradation thematic.
8) Improve the capacity of Congo Basin countries to receive regular satellite data.
9) Cross remote sensing data with regular field data.
10) If logging is a major activity in the country, considered a Tier 2 or 3 for this category. Need to collect data on specific national and logging.
11) Factors of degradation are poorly documented: agricultural activities, bushfires, mining, collection of firewood and timber product. Need to develop a detailed inventory of the factors of degradation and an assessment of their scale in each country.

And finally…

12) Few allometric equations specific to the region available are available.
13) Collection of carbon parameters (soil, deadwood) that are not directly collected during management planning inventories.
14) Define emission and removal factors, specific for each countries, to assess the flow of carbon in forest in degradation.