

4.1 Introduction to REDD+

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries (REDD) is an international mechanism framed by the international climate change negotiations. It provides incentives for developing countries to reduce deforestation and forest degradation and protect their forests.

Approximately 13 million hectares of forest are lost every year to deforestation, an area approximately four times the size of Belgium. It is estimated that degradation and loss of tropical forests account for 15–20% of all greenhouse gas emissions, more than those caused by the global transport system. Therefore, conserving the carbon stored in existing forests, reducing the rate of deforestation and forest degradation and improving the management of forests can contribute significantly to climate change mitigation.

In 2007, during the 13th Conference of the Parties (COP 13), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) launched negotiations on REDD. The concept was later broadened and now also includes activities such as conservation, sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks (such as through reforestation). This is referred to as REDD+ (“REDD plus”). International negotiations on both the concept of REDD+ itself and the design of the international REDD+ framework are still ongoing.

The principle underpinning REDD+ is that payments from developed countries will be made available to developing countries that manage to reduce forest-based emissions at the national level. In addition to delivering significant climate change mitigation benefits, the ambition is to design an international framework that also promotes other benefits:

- biodiversity protection;
- poverty reduction;
- food and water security; and
- improved livelihoods of forest-dependent communities, including through clarifying land tenure and strengthening governance.

These are referred to as the non-carbon benefits of REDD+.

Most developing countries engaged in REDD+ are currently undertaking early actions geared at building institutional and technical capacity; these are known as REDD+ readiness activities. A few are already engaging in result-based REDD+ mechanisms, which provide payments for verified emission reduction. These include Brazil, Indonesia and Guyana, working through bilateral agreements with Norway.

Many countries, international organizations and private-sector and civil society organizations are currently joining forces to prepare the ground and build capacities for REDD+. Relevant global initiatives include the REDD+ Partnership and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and Forest Investment Programme, both managed by the World Bank; the UN-REDD Programme; and Norway's International Climate and Forests Initiative. The Voluntary REDD+ Database (www.reddplusdatabase.com) provides an overview of ongoing activities and initiatives.