



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Special report

Implications of COP26 for the land-use sector in the Asia-Pacific region



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 **Explore**

Implications of COP26 for the land-use sector in the Asia-Pacific region

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Special report

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Introduction

In late 2021, the United Kingdom's city of Glasgow hosted the most significant intergovernmental climate change negotiations since those that produced the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015. Negotiators gathered in Glasgow for the 26th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The event, better known as COP26, attracted global attention.

It was the first formal milestone for assessing progress under the Paris Agreement through a five-yearly renewed submission of national commitments. This is important because the Paris Agreement includes a goal of limiting global heating, ideally to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The danger of failing to achieve this goal was made clear in 2018, in a powerful report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Ahead of COP26, several more strongly worded reports on climate change raised the pressure on negotiators to increase the ambition.

COP26 was more polarized than recent climate change negotiations. The conference was accompanied by large protests in Glasgow and around the world. Civil society groups complained that they had experienced unprecedented exclusion from the intergovernmental talks.

The Glasgow Climate Pact and other outcomes of COP26 have been interpreted

both as a significant success, with hard-won negotiations keeping the hope of achieving the 1.5°C target alive, and as a failure to make the changes required to avert the worst impacts of climate change.

The UK COP26 presidency pointed to progress in four areas: (a) mitigation; (b) adaptation, loss and damage; (c) financing; and (d) collaboration. Highlights in these areas include:

- More than 90 percent of the world economy is now covered by commitments to achieve net-zero carbon emissions.
- 153 countries are submitting new emissions targets for 2030 in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.
- Pledges of record amounts of adaptation finance include commitments to double the 2019 levels by 2025.
- Private financial institutions and central banks have signalled they are diverting trillions of US dollars towards global net zero.
- Completion of the Paris Rulebook includes a new mechanism and standards for international carbon markets and common time frames for emissions reductions targets.

The COP26 also agreed to continue consideration of the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture at the 56th Session of the UNFCCC's subsidiary bodies, in June 2022, with a view to recommending a decision for adoption at COP27 in November 2022. This has raised expectations of substantive progress before COP27 takes place.

To understand the implications of COP26 for the land-use sector in the Asia-Pacific region, a group of organizations working on issues related to forests, land and climate change organized a consultation from 1 to 3 March 2022. The consultation brought together 14 experienced negotiators and leading thinkers from the region to discuss the issues and analyse what the outcomes of COP26 mean for climate change and the land-use sector in the region.

The consultation participants mapped issues and identified entry points for accelerating regional climate action and for contributing to the goals of the Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Climate Pact. By answering 12 questions here, we summarize these experts' views and highlight the COP26 outcomes of particular relevance to the Asia-Pacific region.



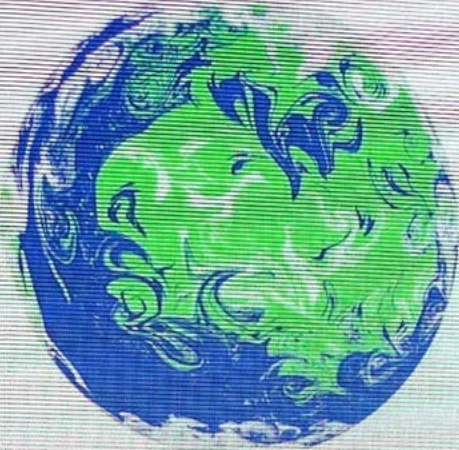
Unlike the forestry and energy sectors, the agriculture negotiators were new to UNFCCC when [the ASEAN Negotiating Group on Agriculture] was formed and the approach was one of trial and error. However, building upon the foundations of the ASEAN Climate Resilience Network, we have been able to build capacities to engage with shaping climate policies.

Imelda Bacudo, Co-Chair of Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture and Coordinator for ASEAN Climate Resilience Network



In forestry, we had more than 100 leaders join the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, covering 80 percent of global forests. The implications of this for the forestry sector and climate change is very powerful."

Nur Masripatin, Senior Advisor to Indonesia's Minister of Environment and Forestry and Chair of the RECOFTC Board of Trustees



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CONFERENCE
UK 2021**

Flickr/COP26

What were the successes at COP26 for the land-use sector?

COP26 was a qualified success for the land-use sector. There were significant developments, but there was also growing realism about the collective insufficiency of the submitted NDCs—both in the Asia-Pacific region and globally. At the same time, awareness of the crucial role of the land-use sector, including forestry and agriculture, in addressing climate change has finally gained momentum.

Key outcomes for the sector include:

- The Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, which places the forest sector in the global spotlight, with 141 countries committing "to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030"
- Corporate pledges to end deforestation linked to the production of agricultural commodities
- Commitments of funds, such as the US\$1.7 billion that governments and philanthropic foundations pledged to Indigenous Peoples and local communities to support their tenure rights and recognize and reward them as guardians of forests and nature
- The Global Methane Pledge, in which 111 countries committed to reduce methane emissions in the agriculture sector, among others, by 30 percent by 2030

Summary

- COP26 was a qualified success for the land-use sector.
- Ambitious and potentially game-changing pledges included the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, corporate commitments on forest-risk commodities, donor pledges of US\$1.7 billion for Indigenous Peoples and local communities and an international commitment to slash global methane emissions.
- A growing push towards integrated, cross-sectoral approaches bodes well for the land-use sector.

For the Asia-Pacific region specifically, the allocation of dedicated funds reflects recognition of the region's importance in addressing climate change. The United Kingdom, for example, announced £274 million to support climate initiatives in the region.

The focus on the land-use sector to address climate change sharpened significantly

at COP26, including through growing interest and investment in nature-based solutions, such as agroforestry and green infrastructure. However, research and assessment are required to understand the trade-offs and to quantify the climate contributions of nature-based solutions in the land-use sector.



An important outcome is the Forests, Agriculture and Commodity Trade Statement, signed by 27 countries and the European Union and representing 75 percent of trade in forest-risk commodities, with a view to growing sustainable trade and market development and the traceability and transparency of agricultural commodity supply chains.

Chris Dickinson, Ecosystems Management Senior Specialist, Green Climate Fund

There is also growing convergence of interconnected action to address the link between commodity production and deforestation and associated carbon emissions. Governments had previously pledged to reduce deforestation and to restore forests through the New York Declaration on Forests and the Bonn Challenge. Something different now is the coupling of national pledges with corporate commitments to supply chain accountability and regulatory approaches, such as the proposed European Union regulations on deforestation-free products.

Despite these successes, more and faster-paced progress is needed on several fronts. The Nationally Determined Contributions, collectively, are not enough to meet the

Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target. Far greater ambition is required. According to the Emissions Gap Report 2019, additional emissions reductions equivalent to 28 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide are required, when compared to the unconditional Nationally Determined Contributions scenario. Additional reductions equivalent to 25 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide are needed under the conditional Nationally Determined Contributions scenario. The language of climate commitments has grown much stronger, yet these words must now be translated into action.



What we aspire to most is to translate the talk from COP26 into action on the ground, particularly to smallholder farmers, by scaling up climate-smart agricultural practices through enhanced private sector investment, public-private partnerships, climate finance and technology transfer.

Margaret Yoovatana, Senior Policy and Plan Specialist, Department of Agriculture, Thailand

The experts said we have entered a critical phase in which mechanisms to hold states and corporate entities accountable are necessary. This was reinforced by Chris Dickinson from the Green Climate Fund, who said that funding is not the barrier—commitments and actual funds are growing exponentially. Instead, what is needed to expedite climate solutions is political will and changes to economic structures and incentive systems.



How did the Asian and Pacific countries position themselves at COP26?

Asian and Pacific countries have taken on pivotal roles in many of the COP26 interventions. By signing the Leader's Declaration on Forests and Land Use, such countries as Indonesia have provided essential traction. Strategic negotiations around such issues as ending coal use and the inclusion of references to trade under the UNFCCC led to significant changes in the eventual Glasgow Climate Pact.

The experiences of the ASEAN Negotiating Group for Agriculture provide lessons for engagement in global climate discussions. They show that even when a group is initially small and has limited traction, incremental capacity-building and targeted amplification of interventions through consolidated efforts can lead to huge impact.

Looking ahead, countries in the Asia–Pacific region are well positioned to take decisive action on climate change, particularly throughout the land-use sector, which is the source of a significant proportion of the region's emissions. For example, the sector is responsible for 46 percent of emissions in the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Almost all countries in the region are applying measures and targets to reduce

Summary

- The Asian and Pacific countries are well positioned for pivotal roles in global climate action, especially in the land-use sector.
- The best opportunity to integrate climate interventions is through national economic development plans, especially post-COVID-19 recovery plans.



Countries in the Asia–Pacific region are positioned well in terms of contributing to mitigating climate change. The economies showcase a range of policies and plans to promote sustainable forest management. The Glasgow Leaders' Declaration means, to some extent, domestic and international political commitment to sustainable forest management at global scale.

Lu De, Executive Director, Asia–Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation

land degradation and restore degraded forests. In addition to the Nationally Determined Contributions, these include forest cover targets, reforestation targets, land degradation neutrality targets and forest tenure reforms. The more ambitious of these targets, however, are conditional on countries receiving international support.

Developed countries have failed to meet a commitment made under the Paris Agreement to provide developing countries with US\$100 billion of climate finance per year. This has fuelled concerns that funding may not materialize on the scale needed or committed to deliver these targets. The impacts of COVID-19 on national economies and the prioritization of immediate public services cannot be overstated.

This poses a significant challenge but also creates an opportunity for transitions to green economies. The experts said national development plans are urgently need to embed forests, climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable land-use management within their overall economic approaches.





How ambitious are the Asia–Pacific’s Nationally Determined Contributions?

The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) is a document in which each party to the UNFCCC outlines their planned action on climate change. The document is based on the draft Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) that most parties released ahead of COP21 in Paris in 2015. Under the Paris Agreement, parties should update their NDC every five years. COP26 was the first such deadline.

The NDCs that the Asian and Pacific countries have submitted thus far are not sufficiently ambitious. Emissions for Asian and Pacific countries reached a record, equivalent to 36.7 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide in 2019, and are projected, even with the NDCs, to reach 50 gigatonnes by 2060. Although global commitments in the revised NDCs represent a 12 percent decrease in intended emissions, compared to the INDCs, overall emissions continue to rise. With determined actions and policies in the land-use sector, significant reductions could yet be made.

Most, but notably not all, NDCs from the region include agriculture and forestry in their emissions reduction commitments. In the NDC of some countries, such as Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar, land-use and forestry are the most significant sectors.

Summary

- The Asia–Pacific’s NDCs have not been ambitious enough, and there is much potential for improvement in the forestry and agriculture sectors.
- The NDCs increasingly include co-benefits, such as biodiversity, human well-being and resilience, alongside the quantitative emissions reduction goals.

Climate change mitigation objectives in the land-use, agriculture and forestry sectors have generally improved in the region’s updated NDCs. But, in some cases, changes in accounting metrics make it difficult to know if improvements are real. For example, in the new NDCs, some countries have pledged to halve the rate of deforestation by 2030. Yet, it is not clear whether this is a quantitative improvement in countries whose INDCs had instead expressed intentions to increase forest cover to a certain percentage of the land area.

The experts noted a qualitative improvement in regional NDCs. The focus

of these plans is expanding to include a range of co-benefits alongside a degree of increased ambition on emissions reductions. These include increased involvement of and benefits to Indigenous Peoples and local communities as well as biodiversity conservation and other ecological benefits accruing from nature-based solutions and efforts to ensure that COVID-19 recovery trajectories are “green”.

While the land-use sector features prominently in most of the regional NDCs, the key subsectors of forestry and agriculture come with different risks and trade-offs. For example, mitigation approaches in agriculture are sensitive due to acute trade-offs, such as potentially lost livelihoods and food security. This is a pressing concern in those parts of the Asia-Pacific region where land availability is highly constrained and poverty levels are relatively high.



Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have conditional targets, requiring international climate finance to achieve those goals. If funding does not flow to implement NDCs related to forests, agriculture and energy, it will be very difficult to achieve the targets.

Milan Dhungana, Section Head, Emission Inventory Section, Climate Change Management Division, Ministry of Forests and Environment, Nepal



According to our analysis, overall, 95 percent of NDCs have integrated land-use management, including agriculture and forestry in their mitigation or adaptation strategies. This is also the case in the Asia-Pacific region.

Krystal Crumpler, Climate Change Specialist, FAO



Will commitments, such as the Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, have greater success than previous pledges?

High-level pledges relating to forests and land use were among the bright spots of COP26, but they remain overshadowed by concerns about the ability of parties to reach the overarching target of limiting global heating to 1.5°C.

Geopolitical interests and differences in views regarding how commitments and instruments should be interpreted may hinder collective efforts to take action. For example, India objected to the Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use because it links trade to climate change and forest issues. This sticking point promises to follow the negotiations into COP27. Others have questioned whether the Leaders' Declaration truly supports achieving zero deforestation by 2030, or rather, net-zero deforestation. This would represent a risk of "leakage", including the possibility of converting natural forests to plantations.

Critics have also pointed out that the pledge in the Leaders' Declaration is essentially the same as what was made in 2014 in the New York Declaration on Forests: to halve natural forest loss by 2020 and end it by 2030. Overall, however, the Leaders' Declaration differs from previous such pledges because of its scale and the wider context in which it was announced.

Summary

- Despite some reservations, there are indications that high-level pledges made at COP26 are fundamentally different from past commitments.
- Past commitments related to forest landscape restoration have failed to meet expectations, and more robust incentive and enforcement structures are required.

The 141 signatories to the Leaders' Declaration account for more than 90 percent of global tree cover and about 85 percent of the world's primary tropical forests. By contrast, the New York Declaration's 39 signatories account for about 39 percent of both global tree cover and primary tropical forests.

Another significant difference is the in tandem development of actions on both the demand and supply sides of the trade in forest-risk commodities. This includes, on the

demand side, moves by the European Union to regulate forest-risk commodities and, on the supply side, a commitment by 12 of the world's top commodity-trading companies to halt forest loss associated with their supply chains. The companies, which have a combined annual revenue of almost US\$500 billion, outlined this pledge in a statement released at COP26.

The experts said that market-based approaches need to be firmly embedded in national and international regulations. This would allow for a carrot-and-stick approach that ranges from shareholder action to stronger regulations and enforcement of existing regulations around forest-risk commodities and the illegal conversion of forest lands for commodity production.

Such moves should reinforce the deforestation pledges that commodity-producing countries have made. The experts noted, however, that even high-level commitments do not necessarily translate into effective action. Landscape restoration, for example, has made unsatisfactory progress despite multiple pledges, such as in the Bonn Challenge.

As the World Resources Institute points out, in addition to reducing land conversion, the reforestation of land and restoration of coastal wetlands must accelerate threefold by 2030. But restoration raises complex issues, particularly around land use and rights. The experts said that, despite the complexities, governments must urgently transfer clear rights, particularly to local communities, to effectively advance restoration efforts. Community-driven, bottom-up approaches will be essential, said the experts. But also needed are improved accounting and communication around the indirect costs of restoration as well as the direct and indirect benefits.



As long as inadequate money is provided to developing countries, it is highly unlikely there will be greater mobilization resulting from the Leaders' Declaration. For example, the world has been talking about forest landscape restoration a lot, but the real progress on the ground has been insufficient.

Promode Kant, Adjunct Professor,
Advanced Institute of Wildlife
Conservation, and Director, Institute of
Green Economy, India



Has COP26 changed prospects for REDD+ in the region?

REDD+ is an initiative designed to compensate countries for the carbon stored in their forests through payments for reducing deforestation and forest degradation and increasing forest cover. Although COP26 did not fundamentally change the prospects for REDD+, it had positive effects in areas needed for it to succeed. Pledges of climate financing from states and the private sector bode well for the initiative, as do the commitments that countries have made in their Nationally Determined Contributions to reduce emissions in the land-use sector.

Declarations and launches on the periphery of the COP26 negotiations served to bolster the momentum behind REDD+. These include the Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, the US\$1.7 billion funding commitment to Indigenous Peoples and local communities, the earmarking of climate finance specific to the region from countries such as the United Kingdom and events related to the LEAF Coalition and the Peoples Forests Partnership, among others.

Necessary and much anticipated progress also took place within the COP26 negotiations. At long last, parties finalized the Paris Rulebook and largely resolved the outstanding issues under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

Summary

- Agreement at COP26 on the Paris Rulebook for Article 6 of the Paris Agreement has clarified the way forward for compliance and voluntary carbon markets.
- REDD+ will be able to support the development of future offsets under Article 6, but activities will need to meet the requirements set out under the agreed Paris Rulebook.
- In parallel, countries in the region have growing interest in developing domestic carbon markets.

The agreed text under Article 6 established a market mechanism for carbon trading under the UNFCCC. This is positive in the context of REDD+ in that it advances shared goals. REDD+ has so far made limited progress in reducing deforestation. The experts said that this is because it has not been sufficiently implemented—rather than because of intrinsic shortcomings. It is notable that annual transactions in the voluntary carbon market exceeded US\$1 billion for the first time in 2021.

This shows there is increasing confidence that carbon credits, including from the land-use sector, will have an important role in tackling the global climate crisis.



“

There is an increase in expectations regarding REDD+ coming out of COP26. The reason behind this is that the completion of the Paris Rulebook, and Article 6 in particular, can incentivize the implementation of REDD+.

Suchitra Changtragoon, independent expert on nature conservation, Thailand

The success of REDD+ will depend on several factors. For example, how keen are the forest countries to make the policy and regulatory changes that are needed to provide the enabling environment that REDD+ requires to be effective? In addition to having the global architecture in place in the Paris Rulebook, there is still significant work to do at the national level. The effectiveness of REDD+ in underpinning future offsets will be a function of how quickly countries can have a national system in place.

Another trend that the experts see as positive is that some countries in the region, such as Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam, are exploring domestic carbon markets. They said that countries should prioritize meeting their own emissions reduction targets, including through domestic markets, and that domestic demand for carbon credits could become an important future source of funding for emissions reductions in the land-use sector.

Finally, early movers able to quickly ready themselves for Article 6 will be positioned to gain advantages in the long term. The experts cited examples of countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region reacting quickly to opportunities under the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism and being able to seize available interest in compliance offsets.

“

COP26 overcame many questions surrounding prospects for REDD+ to make emissions reduction contributions and signalled growing trust in the initiative among countries. The inclusion of REDD+ in Article 6 itself is a very big outcome. Whether it really makes a big difference is still to be seen.

Till Neeff, Carbon Finance Specialist, REDD+, FAO



What has COP26 meant for agriculture and land use in the Asia–Pacific region?

COP26 was a significant step forward for the agriculture sector. The topic had been peripheral in the intergovernmental climate change negotiations until 2017, when parties launched the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture to address agriculture-related issues. At COP26, governments agreed to continue the Koronivia process, with a view to adopting a decision at COP27 in 2022.

Agriculture is also implicated in the COP26 pledge by more than 100 countries to reduce global methane emissions by 30 percent by 2030. In this context, the Koronivia negotiators are well positioned to have important roles in catalysing action and bringing other sectors on board.

Many countries in the Asia–Pacific region, including China, India and Indonesia, will be unable to meet their NDC targets without major shifts in their agriculture sector. Despite positive signals, agriculture has not yet undergone the needed large-scale transition from ecologically destructive commercial monocropping to systems that enhance the health and resilience of the ecosystem, including elements such as soil, water and biodiversity.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has repeatedly highlighted the importance of agriculture in the context

Summary

- Agriculture has been peripheral in COPs to date, but its importance was clear at COP26.
- The agriculture sector has more acute trade-offs than other sectors because of its relationship with food security.
- A major infusion of funds is required to support the transitions that must take place in the sector



We are quite happy with the recognition of priority areas in agriculture and progress in the discussions and are hopeful the end decision on the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture at COP27 will lead to concrete action.

Mohammad Hariz Bin Abdul Rahman,
Malaysian Agricultural Research and
Development Institute

of climate change, not least because of the critical link with food security. Some countries in the region, such as India, are increasing in importance as a global source for food due to the conflict and climate change impacts in the food-producing regions that have traditionally supplied the global markets.

While there have been recent increases in crop yields around the world, the World Resources Institute estimates that such increases must occur 1.9 times faster over the next decade to meet current and future demand. This relationship with food security means that, in terms of reducing emissions, the agriculture sector has more acute trade-offs than other sectors.

As with forests, most countries view agriculture as having strong mitigation and adaptation elements that must be balanced in their NDCs alongside national economic development. An inherent challenge is that, while adaptation is a higher priority at the local level, mitigation projects are more easily understandable with a single metric. This makes mitigation projects more appealing to funders.



Agriculture and forestry should be better connected, and the effort should be on working together—not competing with one another. In that sense, REDD+ and the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture need to be working under a common approach.

Martial Bernoux, Senior Natural Resources Officer, FAO

While overall climate financing for the agriculture and land-use sectors is increasing, it is decreasing as a percentage of total climate finance. This needs to be corrected. The Asia-Pacific region needs a significant infusion of funds to climate-proof agriculture, and it is essential that the private sector take up a strong part of this. The experts said that the Koronivia

Joint Work on Agriculture can support this connection.

Initiatives in agriculture are often highly integrated with other sectors. This is also true for the forestry sector, underscoring the need for cross-sectoral learning and coordination. The experts discussed opportunities to align sectoral frameworks, such as REDD+ and the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, to maximize the climate benefits from the land-use sector as a whole. Potential examples of this could include cross-sectoral collaboration on using low-productivity agricultural land for forestry. Dialogue between the two main land-use sectors, through regional events and through such bodies as ASEAN, could promote such synergies.



What will the emphasis on supply chain accountability mean for commodity-dependent countries in the region?

Deforestation to produce commodities such as palm oil, soy and timber is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and thus is a driver of climate change. This has led to growing attention to the production and trade of forest-risk commodities.

Because all countries depend on the flow of commodities, a fair and equitable trade environment is needed. This will require a much greater focus on improving transparency and accountability in commodity supply chains. The experts offered varying views on the best way forward.

The Asia-Pacific region is vitally important in this respect. It is both the largest consumer of forest-risk commodities and a major producer of commodities linked to high rates of deforestation, such as palm oil, rubber and coffee. The region has the potential to have real impact through increased consumer awareness, along with corporate accountability and improved traceability in supply chains. Taken together, the national commitments to reduce deforestation and corporate pledges to tackle deforestation risk in commodity supply chains make the situation fundamentally different from previous global efforts to address forest loss.

Summary

- Regulation and enforcement underpin the sustainability of supply chains.
- The Asia-Pacific region has high rates of deforestation linked to commodity production and is also the biggest commodity consumer—so changes in the region can have significant global impacts.
- Certification can be part of the solution, but monitoring sustainability at the jurisdictional or landscape level might have greater impact.



There are gaps in supply chain accountability in the region, and the solution is that governments need to enhance legal systems and regulations to improve their governance in the land-use sector. Accountability can only be achieved through strengthening the enabling legal environment.

Lu De, Executive Director, Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation

All countries face the challenge of balancing climate action with economic development. One way that Indonesia is seeking this balance is by piloting district-level monitoring of the sustainability of commodity production under what is called the Terpercaya Initiative. This approach uses a nationally developed framework of 22 indicators that include recognition of customary rights and adherence to the principle of free, prior and informed consent for communities affected by commodity production. This model seeks to ensure strong governance and may be of value to other countries in the region.

Another tool available to countries and to individual consumers is certification of deforestation-free products. Certification has focused on timber products but can be equally applied to high-risk agricultural commodities. However, the cost of certification can be high, and there are limits to the approach's effectiveness and widespread applicability. The experts argued that if the cost of certification was borne by parties other than producers and consumers, such as governments or third parties, the potential for success might be higher.



The key area of work for countries in the Asia–Pacific region is to prepare accessible policy infrastructure, landscape management systems and tools for verification and certification that will ensure deforestation-free supply chains.

Akiko Inoguchi, Forestry Officer, FAO, and Lead for the UN-REDD Sustainable Forest Trade in the Lower Mekong Region Initiative

There is also potential to use a national system for verifying timber legality as a model for verifying that commodity supply chains are free of deforestation. Some countries in the region have implemented or are developing such a system for timber through a voluntary partnership agreement with the European Union, as part of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan. One advantage is that this system is compulsory and nationwide, unlike certification, which is voluntary and applies to individual farms of supply chains.

Finally, monitoring sustainability at the scale of jurisdictions, such as provinces or districts, can be an alternative or complementary approach to regulation or certification. Such jurisdictional approaches address the potentially limited extent of certification while allowing for greater precision than national requirements. This could be used to ensure the sustainability of timber and forest-risk commodities by monitoring a range of criteria related to land use.



Evidence of ensuring supply chain accountability at jurisdictional levels exists within the region [such as Indonesia]. If one country or jurisdiction can do it, then others also can and will find it easier to replicate.

Promode Kant, Adjunct Professor, Advanced Institute of Wildlife Conservation, and Director, Institute of Green Economy, India

The discussions on jurisdictional sustainability are still developing, but the experts agreed the approach has much potential for aligning well with landscape-based approaches.



How is the resolution of the Paris Rulebook and Article 6 a significant development for the land-use sector?

Although the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015, some of its details remained unresolved. These included Article 6, which governs trade in emissions reductions between countries. Article 6 and other rules covering implementation of the Paris Agreement have collectively been termed the “Paris Rulebook”. After years of negotiations, parties to the UNFCCC finalized the outstanding elements at COP26.

The experts had mixed views on the importance of Article 6, despite its high profile ahead of COP26. In general, the consensus was that the resolution of Article 6 and the Paris Rulebook were indeed important steps forward.

The carbon trading mechanism under Article 6 is important for the confidence it provides to the private sector, said the experts. But it is not expected to lead to major flows of funding between countries. This is because much work must be done at the national levels to build up the policy and regulatory systems needed for the international trading of carbon, as allowed under Article 6.

Summary

- The resolution of Article 6 provides important signals, but it will not necessarily lead to large transfers of finance between countries.
- Enabling institutional environments connecting national greenhouse gas inventories to the global registry are still required.



Yes, the Paris Rule Book and Article 6 are significant developments. One of their implications is ensuring a wide scope for all emissions reductions and removals, including REDD+, and making REDD+ subject to Article 6 rules.

Martial Bernoux, Senior Natural Resources Officer, FAO

Capacity-building and technology transfer, particularly in the land-use sector, are crucial for ensuring that countries can respond to the fast-evolving international architecture for carbon trading. One gap identified by the experts is that the COP discussions have so far focused on methodologies rather than on promoting implementation through stakeholders, such as the private sector and local communities.

Article 6 provides for various forms of market-based and non-market-based approaches for reducing emissions. In the ongoing negotiations on the design of the new market mechanisms under Article 6.2, some parties are calling for land use, land-use change and forestry to be a future focus area. The experts said that requirements for land use, land-use change and forestry are burdensome for developing countries and that existing mechanisms are not very effective.

A 5 percent levy on the proceeds of carbon trading under Article 6.4 will be paid into the Adaptation Fund to support projects in developing countries. Some of the experts noted, however, that this 5 percent contribution does not make sense as a mandatory payment for countries that are highly climate-vulnerable and in need of support.

Article 6 is clearly applicable in the context of forestry and REDD+ because of the trade in carbon credits generated through afforestation or reforestation projects. But it is also relevant to the agriculture sector. The experts discussed lessons and methodologies that can be transferred to that sector from forestry and replicated. Enabling institutional and policy environments are required, however. This will involve the establishment of mechanisms connecting national greenhouse gas inventories to the global registry to avoid double-counting.

Perennial questions remain. Does the emissions reduction really only exist because of the activity in question (termed “additionality”)? Will the emissions reduction

lead to increased emissions elsewhere (“leakage”)? Is there a risk that emissions reduction can be reversed, as when a forest plantation burns down (“non-permanence”)? In this sense, there is still much work ahead.

Article 6 also provides for a framework, in Article 6.8, for cooperation between countries in situations that do not involve trade, such as when governments provide development aid.



In particular, Article 6.8 is good for integrated land use in that it provides a framework for collaboration and synergies through capacity-building and technology transfer in the sector for mitigation and adaptation.

Suchitra Changtragoon, independent expert on nature conservation, Thailand



What will the expanding emphasis on engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local communities mean for the region?

COP26 added momentum to some important shifts in the engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and a focus on their rights. Momentum has been building since 2016, when the International Union for Conservation of Nature made the landmark move of creating a new category of membership for Indigenous Peoples' organizations.

Representatives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities were prominent in a range of COP26 events, notably in discussions in which these groups have typically had limited involvement, such as on finance and land use. The discourse about Indigenous Peoples and local communities is shifting within COP negotiations and more broadly in climate and conservation discussions. Having long been treated as vulnerable stakeholders, Indigenous Peoples and local communities are increasingly seen as crucial agents of change and potent allies of efforts to protect forests.

Reflecting this trend, a group of countries and private foundations committed at COP26 to provide US\$1.7 billion to support Indigenous Peoples and local communities and strengthen their forest tenure rights. Another initiative launched at COP26 is the Peoples Forests Partnership. By 2030, it aims to

Summary

- Indigenous Peoples and local communities are growing in prominence and are increasingly seen as important agents of change rather than just as vulnerable groups.
- It is necessary to reconcile moves towards jurisdictional approaches to sustainability with the desire to ensure that benefits flow directly to Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

channel US\$20 billion of private finance a year to Indigenous Peoples and local communities for forest conservation and restoration.

The experts noted a growing emphasis on Indigenous Peoples and local communities in REDD+ projects in terms of their participation, sharing in benefits and seeking their free, prior and informed consent. At the same time, however, there is a move towards jurisdictional-level accounting of emissions reductions.

This is a logical process because embedding REDD+ efforts at jurisdictional scales within national greenhouse gas inventories allows for the systematic accounting of emissions reductions against targets in a Nationally Determined Contribution. But this shift raises questions about the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.



At COP26, for the first time, we elders and leaders of indigenous communities were able to show to the whole world how Indigenous Peoples, with our customary institutions, governance systems, cultural practices, knowledge and values, are contributing to climate change resilience and sustainable management of resources and biodiversity. I consider this a key outcome of COP26.

Pasang Dolma Sherpa, Executive Director,
Center for Indigenous Peoples' Research
and Development, Nepal

In the context of jurisdictional REDD+ initiatives, such as the LEAF Coalition, there is an ongoing discussion about whether subnational governments are interested and able to meet the high expectations and safeguards relating to Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The experts said there is a need for more strategic thinking and greater detail at the international level on how to harmonize practical yet robust accounting mechanisms in the land-use sector while still ensuring the maximum necessary safeguards.

Further research is needed to demonstrate that strong and clear tenure rights for Indigenous Peoples and local communities can deliver multiple benefits in the region, hopefully addressing barriers to their receiving earmarked funds.



When talking about engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, we should not look at it from the perspective of monetary benefits only but rather that their traditional stewardship can be supported through non-market-based approaches and adoption of human rights-based approaches promoting their social, cultural skills and knowledge.

Pasang Dolma Sherpa, Center for
Indigenous Peoples' Research and
Development, Nepal



What are the opportunities for integrated approaches to climate change, such as nature-based solutions and biodiversity conservation?

The term “nature-based solutions” refers to the use of natural ecosystems to address societal challenges. There is growing interest in nature-based solutions, particularly those that help to address climate change and its impacts while also conserving biodiversity and supporting sustainable livelihoods. But the term also has its detractors, and although it appeared in an early draft of the Glasgow Climate Pact, it was absent from the final text.

Protecting natural forests is an obvious example of a nature-based solution. It is one of the best strategies for conserving biodiversity and securing ecosystem services, including those that mitigate climate change and increase people’s resilience to climate impacts. Compared to reforestation, the protection of natural forests is clearly optimal. This is because of the vast amounts of carbon that natural forests store and because of the long time required for degraded land, once it has been reforested, to store equivalent amounts. But recent research shows that even degraded forests can offer significant ecosystem services.

Summary

- Forests are an obvious and cost-effective focus for nature-based solutions, but existing policies often undermine natural capital.
- Perverse incentives and conflicting policies must be dismantled.

For land used for agriculture, well-established approaches for improving resilience and sustainability include crop diversification, soil management and tree-planting on farms. But national policies and incentive structures are often at odds with such improved management practices. An example is higher taxation rates for lands not under productive economic use, which tends to lead to monoculture cultivation. Cross-sectoral efforts are therefore needed to harmonize policies, taxation and incentives and to ensure that they support climate-resilient and sustainable land management.



There are many good practices around, including in Chanthaburi, Thailand, where farmers intercrop trees with agricultural crops as a strategy to withstand drought. We need to promote such practices. To do so, we need to identify best practices on the ground, distil lessons learned and conduct research to demonstrate that nature-based solutions really are a viable approaches to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing adaptability.

Suchitra Changtragoon, independent expert on nature conservation, Thailand

One of the experts from Thailand noted that the country's Nationally Determined Contribution, its National Adaptation Plan and its National Development Strategy all reinforce a central role for nature-based solutions in response to climate change. There are also nationally developed approaches, such as Thailand's sufficiency economy philosophy, that parallel and reinforce the principles of nature-based solutions, giving the concept a locally appropriate flavour.

Thailand's long-term strategy on emissions reduction is moving towards carbon neutrality and net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. The government has appointed a National Committee on Climate Change Policy, with subcommittees that focus on carbon sequestration and domestic carbon credit trading platforms. The country is also undergoing a process to identify areas suitable for restoration through the planting of native tree species.

Some issues in the land-use sector, such as reduction of methane emissions, remain a challenge. Developed countries can access and afford methane-capture technologies, such as low-cost technco2, but these remain out of reach for many countries in the region.

The experts said that realizing the full potential of nature-based solutions in the region would require countries to take truly integrated approaches to their land-use sector. Food security, especially where poverty levels are high, is a critical issue, and the decoupling of food production from greenhouse gas emissions, an element of climate-smart agriculture, is essential. Biodiversity conservation and protection also need to be central, alongside the key economic land uses of agriculture and forestry. But for these important shifts to occur, funding will need to increase threefold by 2030, according to the World Resources Institute.

Several emerging areas of integrated land management warrant research, development and investment to become operational nature-based solutions. One such area is the multidisciplinary One Health approach to ecosystem management, which aims to sustainably ensure the well-being of people, animals and the environment. Another is the role of green infrastructure as an alternative to traditional grey infrastructure—for instance, through the use of mangrove forests in place of concrete sea walls for coastal defence.



Evidence indicates that the reduction of poverty and hunger is correlated with improved disaster risk management and adaptive capacities. So, through this lens, nature-based solutions need to be gender-responsive and designed alongside indigenous and local communities, farmers, fishers and herders who are on the front-line of climate and nature loss vulnerability and, paradoxically, are the stewards of our natural capital.

Manar Abdelmagied, Climate Change Specialist: Nature-based Solutions and UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, FAO



Do commitments for adaptation in the region meet national needs and expectations?

Adaptation to the impacts of climate change has received far less attention in the UNFCCC and its COPs than mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. This reflects a marginalization of the most vulnerable, least polluting countries and their needs.

In the Glasgow Climate Pact agreed at COP26, adaptation was symbolically mentioned ahead of mitigation. But developing countries, including those in the Asia-Pacific region, remain disappointed by the unsatisfactory delivery of adaptation funding commitments. For example, in 2015, developed countries pledged to provide US\$100 billion annually for adaptation and mitigation by 2020, but they have so far delivered only about 80 percent of this, according to the most recent data.

At COP26, parties agreed that the proportion of the US\$100 billion allocated for adaptation would double by 2025 to around US\$40 billion. Governments also pledged a record US\$356 million to the UNFCCC's Adaptation Fund, which was created in 2001 under the Kyoto Protocol. While this sum was three times greater than that of the previous funding round, it is far from what is needed. The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that, by 2030, developing countries will need US\$140 billion to US\$300 billion each year to cover adaptation costs.

Summary

- While adaptation finance has grown exponentially, it has not kept pace with financing in mitigation and other sectors.
- Adaptation pilot projects exist, but they urgently need to be scaled up nationally.



Funding bodies have lots of requirements and procedures in order to access adaptation funding, which takes a long time, almost two to three years to reach the actual beneficiaries. And lots of opportunities are lost in between. I think many countries, especially the least developed countries, have experienced that.

Jigme Tenzin, Principal Agriculture Officer,
Department of Agriculture, Ministry of
Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan

The experts discussed how adaptation is more of a financial challenge than a technical one. Various technologies for adaptation are now available, and countries are willing to share them. Governments have increasingly put enabling policy structures in place, but funding is the bottleneck hampering real progress.

The experts said that adaptation financing structures need to be different from those for mitigation finance or even traditional development aid. This is because, although adaptation needs are embedded in national adaptation plans, they are often local in nature. Financing mechanisms may need to be designed in a more sophisticated way, with connected yet discrete levels—from local to subnational, national, regional and global.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment Report, in 2021, reiterated the case for rapidly increasing adaptation funding and programmes, particularly in the context of forests and rural communities.

Although adaptation pilot projects exist, the experts had yet to see the widespread scaling up at the programmatic and national levels that is required to climate-proof landscapes and address the threats facing vulnerable people and ecosystems.



Very little is done on adaptation in forestry and agriculture. Too much time has been spent on pilot [initiatives] that offer no tangible solutions. This is partially because it is easy to get funding for pilots but not for large projects.

Promode Kant, Adjunct Professor, Advanced Institute of Wildlife Conservation, and Director, Institute of Green Economy, India



What will be the main topics and focus of COP27 in Egypt, and what are the prospects for success?

COP27 will take place in Egypt in November 2022. The Egyptian COP presidency will prioritize adaptation, finance and mitigation and will push countries to set more ambitious emissions reduction targets for 2030. Many countries have set 2050 targets for reducing emissions or reaching net zero, but at COP27, they will be expected to bring forward their target deadlines.

Ahead of COP27, diplomatic efforts will focus on encouraging faster emissions reductions this decade from countries whose pathways are compatible with limiting global heating to 1.5° Celsius. In the Asia–Pacific region, this includes China and India.

National geopolitical interests are clear even in the build-up to COP27. India's interest in keeping language around trade out of the climate change negotiations is just one example. The experts spoke of the need for bilateral negotiations and other backroom positioning ahead of COP27 to address what are often fundamentally political and economic issues.

Summary

- Geopolitical interests will continue to shape the UNFCCC negotiations and will need to be resolved ahead of COP27.
- Agriculture will continue to grow in prominence along with a focus on food security.
- Cross-sectoral approaches at landscape scale will be vital.



Small concrete actions are more important than talk, and I am hopeful that at COP27 we will have concrete action from countries making progress on delivering pledges that support forestry and agriculture initiatives in the Asia–Pacific region.

Chris Dickinson, Land Use, Forests and Ecosystems Senior Specialist, Green Climate Fund

The experts expect agriculture to be a key part of the COP27 agenda, with a likely COP decision emerging from the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture. The Koronivia process was scheduled to end at COP26, but agriculture sector targets, including on food security, were not achieved. This can be attributed in part to logistical challenges, including COVID-19 restrictions. As a result, too few Koronivia workshops were organized to develop the agreements required. Parties are looking much more optimistically at COP27 to secure these advances.

As countries revise their long-term strategies for emissions reductions, it will be essential to enhance food security without increasing land conversion or emissions from the land-use sector.

Solutions exist. A common vision and approach among sectors is needed, one that recognizes the links between forestry and agriculture, and in particular, the forest-risk commodities.



The experts

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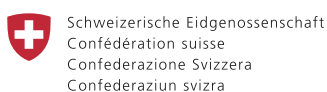
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