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# REDD+ MEASUREMENT, REPORTING AND VERIFICATION (MRV) MANUAL VERSION 2.0

FOREST CARBON, MARKETS AND COMMUNITIES  
(FCMC) PROGRAM

DECEMBER 2014

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The US Agency for International Development (USAID) has launched the Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities (FCMC) Program to provide its missions, partner governments, local and international stakeholders with assistance in developing and implementing REDD+ initiatives. FCMC services include analysis, evaluation, tools and guidance for program design support; training materials; and meeting and workshop development and facilitation that support US Government contributions to international REDD+ architecture.

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACR	American Carbon Registry
AD	Activity Data
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use
AGB	Aboveground biomass
BCEFs	Biomass conversion and expansion factors
BRDF	Bi-directional reflectance distribution function
BURs	Biennial Update Reports
CH <sub>4</sub>	Methane
CI	Conservation International
CMP	Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon dioxide
COP	Conference of the Parties
CV	Coefficient of Variation
DBH	Diameter at Breast Height
DEM	Digital Elevation Model
DTs	Decision Trees
EFDB	Emissions Factor Database
EFs	Emissions Factors
EM	Electromagnetic
EOS	Earth Observation System
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAS	Fire Alert System
FCMC	Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities Program
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility

FIRMS	Fire Information and Resource Management System
FREL	Forest Reference Emission Level
FRL	Forest Reference Level
FSI	Forest Survey of India
FUNCATE	Foundation of Space Science, Applications and Technology
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GFIMS	Global Fire Information Management System
GFOI MGD	Global Forest Observation Initiative Methods and Guidance Documentation
GFW	Global Forest Watch
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GHGMI	Greenhouse Gas Management Institute
GIS	Geographic Information System
GLAS	Geoscience Laser Altimeter System
GOFC-GOLD	Global Observation of Forest and Land Cover Dynamics
GPG-LULUCF	Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-use Change and Forestry
GPS	Global Positioning System
IDEAM	Colombian Institute for Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies
ILUA	Integrated Land Use Assessment
INPE	Brazilian National Space Research Institute
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KCA	Key Category Analysis
LDCM	Landsat Data Continuity Mission
LEDS	Low Emission Development Strategies
LiDAR	Light Detection and Ranging
LUC	Land-use Change
MADS	Colombian Ministry for Sustainable Development
MCT	Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation
MMU	Minimum-mapping unit
MRV	Measurement, Reporting and Verification
N <sub>2</sub> O	Nitrogen oxide
NAMA	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Strategies
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Agency

NCs	National Communications
NFMS	National Forest Monitoring System
NGGIP	National Greenhouse Gas Inventories Program
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NNs	Neural Networks
NRT	Near-real Time
PCA	Principal components analysis
PRODES	Projeto De Estimativa De Desflorestamento da Amazoni (Brazilian Amazon deforestation monitoring program)
QA/QC	Quality Assurance and Quality Control
QUICC	Quarterly Indicator of Cover Change
RADAR	Radio Detection and Ranging
REDD+	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, plus the role of conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice
SES	Social and Environmental Soundness
SINA	Colombian National Environmental System
SLR	Side Looking RADAR
SRTM	Shuttle Radar Topography Mission
TACCC	IPCC principles of transparency, accuracy, completeness, comparability, and consistency
TOA	Top-of-atmosphere
UMD	University of Maryland
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USGS	United States Geological Survey
VCS	Verified Carbon Standard
WGs	Working Groups
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WRI	World Resources Institute



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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 PURPOSE, SCOPE AND STRUCTURE

The purpose of this Manual is to provide an overall review of the data, models, techniques and accounting methods that could be part of a Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+). This is in the context of REDD+ as a mechanism within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This Manual is intended to inform policy makers on REDD+, as well as implementers of MRV at the national level.

### 1.1.1 Audience

This Manual is intended for multiple audiences. First, it is intended for those in charge of planning and developing a MRV system within a national or sub-national agency. While these individuals may not conduct specific MRV activities such as field work, data processing, analysis and reporting themselves, there is a need for them to understand what is involved in terms of staff time, funds, expertise, capacity building, accuracy issues, and options for different techniques and methods. It is important that these individuals have a broad understanding of all aspects involved in a MRV system in order to envision a structure within the agency, understand the range of MRV components, and engage in informed discussions on data, techniques and staffing and equipment needs for greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting. They should also have a fundamental knowledge of MRV terminology and concepts to engage with consultants, know what questions to ask, and critically compare the varying advice they may receive.

This Manual is also intended for managers and technicians involved in the design of a sub-component of a MRV system. It is intended to assist these individuals in envisioning such a design, as well as understanding the broader context of their sub-component. For the sub-national jurisdictional case, one can assume that the arrangements and requirements are similar to those at the national level and that coordination with the national government will be very important. Even if the overall MRV process occurs at the level of a sub-national jurisdiction, some aspects of the MRV system may still be conducted nationally to lower overall costs and promote standardization.

Those working on site-level initiatives will also find this Manual relevant to their MRV needs. The Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and the American Carbon Registry (ACR) are examples of programs that serve a supporting role in voluntary carbon markets through registering emission reductions claimed by site-level initiatives. These programs provide approved methodologies for the estimation of REDD+ baselines and MRV, as well as approaches to nested REDD+, where accounting and monitoring at different levels can be coordinated. The technical aspects of these methodologies often defer to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidelines, especially those related to the definition of land-use classes and the estimation of carbon stocks. Other aspects are dependent on similar technologies and methodologies as those at the national level.

## 1.1.2 Scope and structure

The Manual begins with an overview of the program components needed for a national MRV system, including a discussion of national arrangements required by the UNFCCC (Chapter 2). The following three chapters address Measurement processes, i.e., the GHG Inventories (Chapter 3) and their main inputs, Field-Based Inventories (Chapter 4) and Land-Use Change (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 covers Reporting and Verification processes.

In Chapter 7, three thematic reviews are provided for further information. The first (Section 7.1) covers the UNFCCC REDD+ negotiations and the role the IPCC has played in providing MRV guidance. The remaining two sections cover activities that could be part of MRV systems, but are thus far only broadly defined or being tested in various countries: community-based MRV (Section 7.2) and near-real time (NRT) monitoring (Section 7.3). A short glossary is provided at the beginning of the Manual.

The reader will notice that some chapters are less prescriptive than others. This is a reflection of the present state of science and guidance on these topics. For example, the IPCC guidelines provide specific requirements and reporting formats for GHG inventories. They also provide specific guidance on the measurement of carbon stocks, founded on a long history of field methods in forest inventories. Conversely, while the IPCC provides formats for reporting land-use changes, it provides relatively little specific guidance on how these changes should be estimated. In most cases, remote sensing, primarily via the analysis of digital data acquired by satellites, is needed for national monitoring of land-use changes. Remote sensing is an evolving field with new technologies, and entails a variety of approaches and decision factors worthy of consideration. Chapter 5 provides an overview of steps for selecting a system for monitoring land-use change.

This Manual complements other available resources focused on REDD+ MRV. These include the Global Observation of Forest and Land Cover Dynamics (GOFC-GOLD) Sourcebook<sup>1</sup>, and the Global Forest Observation Initiative (GFOI)'s Methods and Guidance Documentation (MGD)<sup>2</sup>. The GOFC-GOLD Sourcebook presents an annually updated review of science, providing in-depth information on evolving technologies and, while heavily conceptual in design, a range of examples. The GFOI MGD presents a step-by-step guide with readily implementable approaches to generate, for example, activity data based on remote sensing, and emission factors based on ground-based inventories. This Manual covers the major components of developing a MRV system. It provides added focus on the topics of institutional arrangements and reporting and verification; providing in-depth chapters on these topics. Readers are encouraged to utilize all available resources. A short glossary is provided at the beginning of the Manual.

Section 3.3, Inventory and Reporting Steps, of the Manual outlines the sequence of steps required for generating a national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory. The step, or steps, covered in each chapter are highlighted in an Inventory and Reporting Steps figure at the beginning of each chapter. As the process requires steps that may be developed i) in sequence, ii) concurrently or iii) some pieces of a step developed before others, topics relevant to a step may be covered in a later chapter, as illustrated below in Figure 1.1.

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<sup>1</sup> The Sourcebook is available at [http://www.gofcgold.wur.nl/redd/sourcebook/GOFC-GOLD\\_Sourcebook.pdf](http://www.gofcgold.wur.nl/redd/sourcebook/GOFC-GOLD_Sourcebook.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The MGD is available at <http://www.gfoi.org/methods-guidance-documentation>

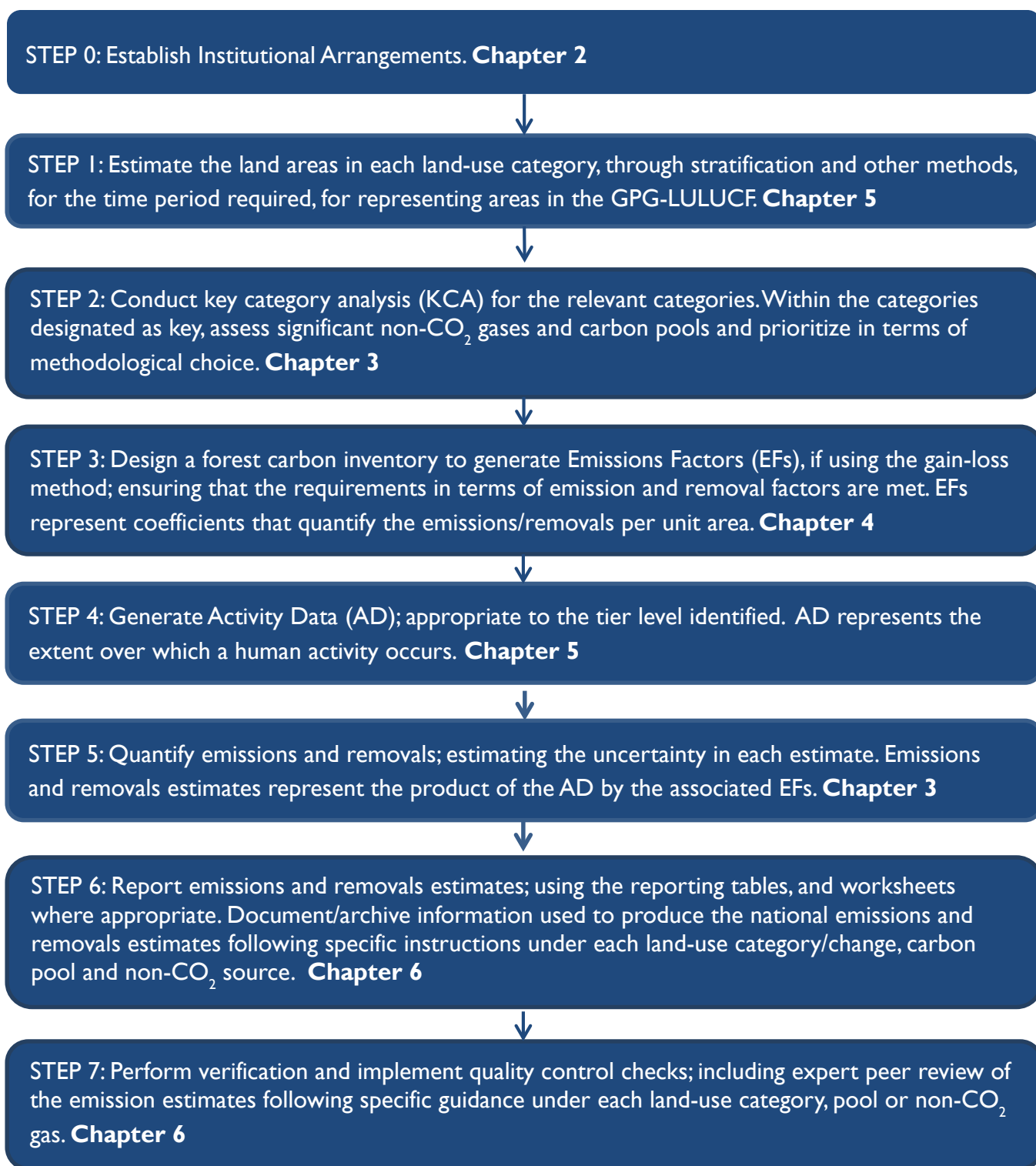


Figure 1.1: Inventory and reporting steps covered by chapter

## 1.2 BACKGROUND

### 1.2.1 Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+)

REDD+ is expected to be implemented mostly in tropical developing countries, where most of the forest-based emissions are occurring among developing countries. The world's tropical forests are rich in natural resources. Tropical forests contain as much as 50 percent of the species on earth in less than 5 percent of the earth's land area (Mittermeier and Robles Gil, 2005). Additionally, these forests provide a wide range of ecosystem services including timber, fuel wood, water purification, and cultural and religious values. These benefits are crucial to the more than 50 million people who live in tropical forests and the many millions of others who are indirectly dependent on these forest services. In addition, the world's tropical forests help regulate the climate by storing over 200 billion metric tons of carbon (Baccini *et al.*, 2012)

The planet, however, is currently losing over seven million hectares of forest per year (Hansen *et al.*, 2014). This rate of deforestation has serious implications for biodiversity, rural communities dependent on forests for food and income, and the effects of GHG emissions on global climate. According to the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (IPCC, 2014), annual net GHG emissions from land use and land-use change activities between 2000 – 2010 accounted for approximately 4.3 – 5.5 billion metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO<sub>2</sub>eq) per year, representing about 12 percent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Although deforestation in the tropics is a major contributor to global emissions, many tropical forested countries lack up-to-date, accurate information on forest cover, carbon content changes occurring in their forests, and drivers of these changes. Countries need this information in order to manage their forests.

Efforts to provide payments for ecosystem services may create incentives for curbing deforestation and, if effective, help address the needs of forest-dependent communities. These include the REDD+ efforts under the UNFCCC. The UNFCCC Bali Action Plan (2007) demonstrated increased willingness for industrialized countries and donors to pay for projects and policies that reduce deforestation in developing countries, which was later reinforced as the “Cancun Agreements.” The willingness for international support is further demonstrated by the launch of programs such as the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), and the United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD), as well as several bilateral efforts. The principle of REDD+ and the availability of funds has generated great interest among developing countries. However, to fulfill the requirements for REDD+ (as described in the following chapters) significant capacity building is needed. To build this necessary capacity in preparation for, and anticipation of, REDD+, donors are supporting readiness programs in many countries where improved technical capacity is needed. A major component for REDD+, and a focus of the different initiatives, is training and development for national MRV systems.

A MRV system must be integrated with the overall development of a REDD+ strategy for a country, as policies must include provisions for ensuring compliance and measuring their impact. This includes coordinating with a country's Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) and associated reporting. Some countries are developing nested REDD+ programs, where REDD+ activities exist at two or more levels, such as site or state levels and national levels. In these cases, MRV must be coordinated across levels to ensure that sub-national MRV systems do not conflict with the national system. Finally, a MRV system should be linked to decision-making and enforcement to better enable adaptive management and policy implementation at the national level.

The UNFCCC has specialized bodies, including the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), one of two permanent subsidiary bodies to the Convention. In relation to REDD+, the SBSTA provides guidance on technical and methodological elements of REDD+ including MRV and reference levels, and advises the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP) and the Conference of the Parties

serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP)<sup>3</sup> via the provision of timely information on scientific and technological matters as they relate to the Convention or the Protocol.

The IPCC *Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry* (GPG-LULUCF), cited in this document, is a key resource and focuses on the overall reporting requirements and detailed criteria for particular aspects of MRV. The IPCC was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) as a United Nations intergovernmental body; 195 countries are current members of the IPCC. The GPG-LULUCF serves a key role in providing reporting requirements within the context of the UNFCCC and methodologies for MRV, and is frequently referenced in this Manual.

Besides the main technical guidance bodies, SBSTA and the IPCC, other organizations are linked to the UNFCCC process that provide funding and carry out pilot projects or country programs to further develop REDD+ understanding. The Global Environment Facility (GEF), an operating financial entity of the Convention, provides financial assistance to developing countries through its implementing agencies, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNEP, and the World Bank. Some bilateral agreements also provide financial and technical assistance to non-Annex I Parties<sup>4</sup> for preparation of their national communications.

Almost all of these efforts are to support REDD+ as a pay-for-performance mechanism, and thus emphasize the need for high-quality MRV. However, the quality of MRV is not always guaranteed, due to several factors:

- *Lack of information* to evaluate policies and set realistic goals and compensation. Forest and land-use information needs to be continuously updated, systematically archived and made available to decision makers so that they can evaluate them in a timely manner. Country-wide data on forest-cover change is not gathered in a systematic fashion, and methods and systems for detecting forest clearance and degradation are often absent. Information on forest carbon stocks and flows is absent, and countries cannot account systematically for GHG emissions from land-use sectors.
- *Lack of existing models* to generate the information that would help guide policy makers in designing policies and programs. There are few existing examples of comprehensive national MRV systems. Mechanisms for sharing data, methodologies, and experiences are insufficient to encourage replication.

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<sup>3</sup> The COP is the supreme decision-making body of the UNFCCC. All States that are Parties to the Convention are represented at the COP, at which they review the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention, including institutional and administrative arrangements. All States that are Parties to the Kyoto Protocol are represented at the CMP, while States that are not Parties participate as observers. The CMP reviews the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and takes decisions to promote its effective implementation.

<sup>4</sup> The UNFCCC divides countries into two main groups: Annex I Parties and non-Annex I Parties. **Annex I Parties** (named so because they are listed in Annex I to the UNFCCC) include the industrialized countries that were members of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) in 1992, plus countries with economies in transition (the EIT Parties), including the Russian Federation, the Baltic States, and several Central and Eastern European States. **Non-Annex I Parties** are all other countries not listed in Annex I to the UNFCCC and are mostly developing countries. Certain groups of developing countries are recognized by the UNFCCC as being especially vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, including countries with low-lying coastal areas and those prone to desertification and drought. Others (such as countries that rely heavily on income from fossil fuel production and commerce) feel more vulnerable to the potential economic impacts of climate change response measures.

- *Lack of capacity* to gather and utilize information on forest cover and forest carbon. Several countries do not have the needed knowledge or capacity to evaluate the impacts of policy alternatives on forest extent, carbon stocks and the economy.
- *Lack of transparency* from not sharing data on forests and forest carbon mechanisms to facilitate broad-based civil society participation in REDD+ decision-making. There is no independent monitoring system with the capacity to hold the government accountable for policy decisions.

Version 1 of the FCMC MRV Manual was released at COP19 in Warsaw, Poland (November 2013). Version 2 includes revisions and updates throughout the chapters based on user feedback and key REDD+ decisions that have occurred since the publication of Version 1, including the decisions adopted at COP19, known collectively as the “Warsaw Framework for REDD+.” The Decisions are outlined below, and Decisions 10-15/CP.19 are referenced throughout the Manual. Box 1.2 provides an overview of Decision 9/CP.19 as this decision is not readily relevant to the topics covered, and therefore not further referenced, in the Manual.

### **Box 1.1: The Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities (FCMC) Program**

The US Government (USG) pledged \$1 billion in “fast-start financing” for 2010 to 2012 to assist countries to develop and implement REDD+ plans that contribute to sustainable livelihoods, protect biodiversity, and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, women, the poor, and vulnerable populations. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) has been leading the implementation of REDD+ activities, with funding allocated through the sustainable landscapes pillar of its global climate change program. In response to the demand for technical contributions for enhancing the international framework for REDD+ and for technical assistance in implementing projects and programs related to REDD+, USAID launched the Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities (FCMC) program (2011-2015) to provide its missions, partner governments, local and international stakeholders with technical assistance in developing and implementing integrated REDD+ initiatives.

FCMC is building technical capacity by developing tools and training that support USG contributions to the international REDD+ architecture. The technical competencies provided by FCMC present an integrated approach to address social and environmental soundness (SES); finance and carbon markets (FCM); measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV); and low emissions development strategies (LEDS).

The MRV Task within FCMC focuses its efforts on building capacity on protocols linked to REDD+. The FCMC team includes Conservation International (CI), the Greenhouse Gas Management Institute (GHGMI) and the World Resources Institute (WRI), coordinated under the overall FCMC-lead organization, Tetra Tech.

- **Decision 9/CP.19:** Work programme on results-based finance to progress the full implementation of the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70 – see Box 1.2.
- **Decision 10/CP.19:** Coordination of support for the implementation of activities in relation to mitigation actions in the forest sector by developing countries, including institutional arrangements.
- **Decision 11/CP.19:** Modalities for national forest monitoring systems.
- **Decision 12/CP.19:** The timing and the frequency of presentations of the summary of information on how all the safeguards referred to in decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, are being addressed and respected.

- **Decision 13/CP.19:** Guidelines and procedures for the technical assessment of submissions from Parties on proposed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels.
- **Decision 14/CP.19:** Modalities for measuring, reporting and verifying.
- **Decision 15/CP.19:** Addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

Technical modifications have also been made to each of the technical chapters. Finally, a new shorter FCMC REDD+ Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) Manual: Overview (herein “Overview”) is provided in addition to this Manual. The Overview does not have the same level of detail as the technical chapters, but is more comprehensive than the Summary for Policymakers. The Overview provides a synopsis of the MRV components and the process for the development of a sustainable MRV system. It also provides a proposed checklist of steps towards system development that countries can use or adapt to their own circumstances. This can be useful for tracking progress towards such a system within a country.

### **Box 1.2: Work programme on results-based finance to progress the full implementation of REDD+ activities**

With the adoption of Decision 9/CP.19, governments working under the UNFCCC reaffirmed that results-based finance provided to developing countries for the full implementation of REDD+ activities may come from a variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including alternative sources.

They also agreed that developing countries seeking to obtain and receive results-based payments should provide the most recent summary of information on how all safeguards have been addressed and respected before they can receive results-based payments.

The COP encouraged entities financing REDD+ activities, including the Green Climate Fund, to collectively channel adequate and predictable results-based finance in a fair and balanced manner, taking into account different policy approaches. It also decided to establish an information hub on the web platform on the UNFCCC website as a means to publish information on the results of REDD+ activities and corresponding results-based payments.



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# 2.0 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the main elements of a Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+), and the key functions and components of institutional arrangements. It highlights the main steps in establishing national arrangements and describes the key administrative and organizational arrangements, including the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders. Section 3.3, *Inventory and Reporting Steps*, of the Manual outlines the sequence of steps required for generating a national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory. This chapter is relevant to the activities highlighted on the following page.



In accordance with decision 1/CP.16, results-based REDD+ actions, which are to be fully measured, reported and verified, should be implemented using a three-phase approach (see Box 2.1). One of the key actions for Phase 1 is the establishment of institutional arrangements, also sometimes referred to as “national systems,” that ensure the transparent, comparable, coherent, complete and accurate MRV (see Box 2.2) of GHG emissions and removals from REDD+ activities.

### **Box 2.1 Three-phase approach for REDD+**

During **Phase 1** (often referred to as ‘REDD+ readiness’), countries would develop: a national strategy or action plan; a national Forest Reference Emission Level and/or Forest Reference Level; a robust and transparent national forest monitoring system; and a system for providing information on how social, legal, and environmental safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of the REDD+ activities.

**Phase 2** involves the implementation of national policies and measures, and national strategies or action plans, which could involve further capacity-building, technology development and transfer, and results-based demonstration activities.

**Phase 3** involves implementation of results-based actions that should be fully measured, reported and verified.

As countries are at different levels of development and have different capacity needs, implementation of these three phases is taking place on different timeframes. For example, some countries will need to start from scratch and ensure that they go through the first two phases before they are ready to implement REDD+ activities, while others could skip earlier phases if they have already put in place the elements needed under Phase 1 and 2.

## Box 2.2 Definitions of MRV elements

**Measurement** refers to the direct or indirect measurement of emissions or removals from forest areas. Indirect measurement involves estimation of emissions reductions using equations based on data on land areas and specific emission factors or the use of complex models that take into account a number of different parameters that affect the release or sequestration of carbon and other GHGs.

**Reporting** refers to the presentation of measured information in a transparent and (often) standardized manner. Reported information encompasses forest-related data and estimates of GHGs and the methodologies used to derive them, as well as other related issues, such as quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) activities and uncertainty estimation, etc.

**Verification** refers to the assessment (through internal and external checks) of the completeness, consistency and reliability of the reported information through an independent process. Verification provides inputs to improve data (including GHG emissions and removals as well as all measured data or derived parameters) and helps to build confidence in, and improve scientific understanding of, estimates and trends.

In addition to MRV, **monitoring** is another activity of particular importance for REDD+ activities. In general, monitoring can be categorized as a management function that entails reviewing implementation of planned objectives and goals. It brings together multiple objectives and aims to maximize total benefits. Monitoring encompasses MRV, governance aspects and generating information on the effectiveness of policies and forest management practices as part of REDD+ implementation.

Internationally accepted quality criteria are laid out in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Good Practice Guidance and Uncertainty Management for National GHG Inventories (IPCC, 2000), the IPCC Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (GPG-LULUCF) (IPCC, 2003), and the IPCC 2006 Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (IPCC, 2006). According to these guidelines, GHG inventories must be transparent, complete, consistent, comparable, and accurate, as described in Box 2.3.

In the context of this Manual, the term institutional arrangements, also encompassing sub-national arrangements for specific jurisdictions, is defined as the processes and procedures that codify all relevant elements of a fully operational MRV system covering all lands and activities relevant to REDD+, in a manner that adheres to the IPCC principles and relevant United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) or other guidance.

A key benefit to focusing on national arrangements is the development and maintenance of stronger in-country technical capacities and relevant national and regional institutions and organizations. These capacities and institutions are expected to have broader benefits and applications than solely addressing REDD+ issues. High quality forest MRV systems have many obvious benefits for broader environmental monitoring, GHG accounting, sustainable economic development, and natural resource management. In addition, having such arrangements in place will enable countries to participate in future financial mechanisms, environmental markets, and/or voluntary or compliance-based regimes or mechanisms.

### Box 2.3 Quality attributes of GHG inventories

**Transparency:** There is sufficient and clear documentation so that individuals or groups other than the inventory compilers can understand how the inventory was compiled and can confirm the quality of the data;

**Completeness:** Estimates are reported for all relevant activities and gases. Where data are missing, their absence should be clearly documented;

**Consistency:** Estimates for different inventory years, gases and categories are made in such a way that differences in the results between years and activities reflect real differences in emissions. The inventory of annual trends, as far as possible, should be calculated using the same method and data sources for all years and should aim to reflect the real annual fluctuations in emissions and not be subject to changes resulting from methodological differences;

**Comparability:** The GHG inventory is reported in a way that allows it to be compared with GHG inventories from other countries; and

**Accuracy:** The GHG inventory contains neither over nor underestimates, so far as can be judged, and uncertainties have been reduced as much as is practical. This requires undertaking all efforts to remove bias from the inventory estimates.

The objective of this chapter is to provide guidance on the key elements of national arrangements for credible and functional MRV systems for REDD+ activities. The scope of the work is limited to the MRV of GHG emissions and removals as a result of human influence on forest lands.<sup>5</sup> The information builds on, and complies with, requirements of the IPCC, as well as relevant elements developed in the context of the UNFCCC, and, when appropriate, the Kyoto Protocol.

## 2.2 ELEMENTS OF A MRV SYSTEM FOR REDD+

### 2.2.1 Requirements for REDD+ implementation

In accordance with Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71 (UNFCCC, 2009), countries that aim to implement REDD+ activities are to develop: i) a national strategy or action plan; ii) a national forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level (FREL/FRL) – see Box 2.4; iii) a robust and transparent National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS);<sup>6</sup> and iv) a system for providing information on safeguards.

#### Box 2.4 FREL vs. FRL

According to decision 12/CP.17, “forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year are benchmarks for assessing each country’s performance in implementing the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70”.

<sup>5</sup> For more detailed information on the preparation of the GHG inventory, refer to Chapter 3 of this Manual.

<sup>6</sup> Or sub-national (as an interim measure).

Decisions 4/CP.15 and 11/CP.9 specify that a NFMS uses a combination of remote sensing and field-based forest carbon inventory approaches for the estimation of anthropogenic forest-related GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks and forest area changes. A NFMS may also provide relevant information for national systems for the provision of information on how safeguards (see decision 1/CP.16, appendix I) are addressed and respected.

Taking into account national capabilities and capacities, a NFMS should be guided by the GPG-LULUCF and should provide data and information that are transparent, consistent over time, and are suitable for MRV as a result of the implementation of REDD+ activities. Decision 11/CP.19 also stipulates that a NFMS should:

- Build upon existing systems, as appropriate;
- Enable the assessment of different types of forest in the country, including natural forest, as defined by a country;
- Be flexible and allow for improvement;
- Reflect, as appropriate, the phased approach for the implementation of REDD+ activities.

### **2.2.2 Considerations for establishing a National Forest Monitoring System**

While developing a NFMS, countries have the opportunity to: strengthen their forest governance, including law enforcement; consider counter-measures to deforestation and forest degradation; and enhance sustainable forest management. The system to be developed could also take into consideration the multiple functions of forests in climate change (for example by considering both mitigation and adaptation benefits) in order to ensure the integral and sustainable management of forests. In most cases, the development of a NFMS would take into consideration, or be guided by, a number of elements; these are listed in Box 2.5). In general, countries should:

- Secure the cooperation of all stakeholders through the establishment of national arrangements;
- Have a forest inventory and a land-use change analysis (see Box 2.6);
- Be able to apply the Revised 1996 Guidelines as elaborated by the GPG-LULUCF in order to ensure the transparency, completeness, comparability, consistency and accuracy of their emissions and removals estimates;
- Have in place appropriate quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) procedures; and
- Be able to prepare domestically verified national reports.

**Box 2.5: Typical elements to be considered by countries when determining their national context**

Historical development of all REDD+ activities that are relevant for the country, including deforestation, forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks;

Specific geographic or other characteristics that influence the development of REDD+ activities (e.g., mountainous areas with limited or no access, potential need for regional initiatives involving neighboring countries);

Population that is affected (e.g., demographics and employment statistics related to REDD+ activities in the country);

Information related to the current and projected factors contributing to deforestation, including an analysis related to drivers of deforestation and the impact of commodities, such as soy or oil palm in the forestry sector;

Economic information related to factors that will be affected by REDD+ activities, taking into consideration various sectors of the national economy (including energy, transport, industry, mining, tourism, agriculture, fisheries, health and services);

Education, including scientific and technical research institutions focusing on issues relevant to REDD+;

Effects of past efforts to bring about land-use management and land tenure changes in the country (e.g., past investments to reduce deforestation or enhance reforestation and lessons learned);

Potential synergy between activities and policies relating to REDD+ and those relating to other sectors, such as energy and agriculture; and

Linkages with actions undertaken by the country in the context of relevant multilateral agreements, such as the UNFCCC.



### Box 2.6: National forest inventory and land-use change analysis

A **national forest inventory** is the systematic collection of data and forest information for assessment or analysis. An estimate of the value and possible uses of timber is an important part of the broader information required to sustain ecosystems. When undertaking a forest inventory the following items are important to measure and note: species; diameter at breast height; site quality; age; and defects. From the data collected, one can calculate the number of trees per unit of area (e.g., hectare, acre), the basal area, the volume of trees in an area, and the value of the timber. Inventories can be performed for purposes beyond calculating the value of timber, e.g., to provide comprehensive information about the state and dynamics of forests for strategic and management planning.

A historical **land-use change (LUC) analysis** is the analysis of dynamics that have occurred in a given territory. The analysis assesses and quantifies the area change of specific land-use categories (e.g., forest lands, crop land, grass lands, wetlands) for a specific period of time. The information provided by the LUC analysis – together with the information provided by the forest inventory is integrated into the GHG inventory in order to estimate the associated emissions or removals from the different land-use categories and subcategories. Also, the monitoring of LUC through remote sensing is a key tool to identify and implement corrective actions in areas where illegal deforestation and forest degradation is occurring.

An important consideration in MRV is the trade-off between the cost versus the accuracy of monitoring and evaluation systems for REDD+. The identification of cost-effective solutions requires a balanced approach of remote sensing and ground-based measurements. Remote sensing imagery and products, for example, aid in the design of efficient ground sampling schemes, in the assessment of change areas, and in the extrapolation of plot measurements to the regional or national level. Conversely, ground-based measurements are required for generating carbon data and to verify desktop forest mapping from remote sensing imagery. For more information on remote sensing, see Chapter 5.

### 2.2.3 National versus sub-national accounting

One of the critical issues in the UNFCCC negotiations on REDD+ concerns the geographical scale that should be used to account for emissions. Three options have been extensively debated: the national level; the sub-national, including jurisdictional and project-level; and both levels in a “nested approach”. The different points of view expressed by different governments are the result of differing political interests and national circumstances, and because of technical issues in measuring and accounting of emissions.

At the 17th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP17), governments agreed that if the overall performance is measured at the national level, countries could still pursue project-level activities after the adoption of national (and potentially sub-national) reference levels (UNFCCC, 2011). For countries that wish to establish both national and sub-national accounting systems, it is important to ensure that the two systems are compatible in order to safeguard the integrity of the overall accounting process. This can be achieved through:

- Identifying drivers of deforestation and forest degradation at the national and sub-national levels;
- Establishing a clear legal, regulatory and accounting framework regarding the implementation of sub-national or project activities;
- Identifying synergies between national and sub-national REDD+ activities; and
- Ensuring the consistent use of definitions of forest parameters.

For a “nested approach,” it is expected that project-level and/or sub-national programs would be integrated into national-level accounting. This integration can occur in stages (e.g., starting with sub-national accounting and moving up to national) or once the national accounting is in place. National-level accounting provides a complete picture of how projects, policies and measures are contributing to a country’s progress in reducing emissions. It also plays an important role in helping to secure financing by projects that may be contingent on results that are measurable, reportable and verifiable.

## 2.3 KEY FUNCTIONS AND COMPONENTS OF NATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

In general, national arrangements for REDD+ MRV should include all institutional, legal and procedural arrangements made within a country for estimating anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks in all categories and activities included in the monitoring plan, and for reporting and archiving information. National arrangements should be designed to incorporate both general and specific functions, and be operated to ensure the transparency, consistency, comparability, completeness, and accuracy of the data, as well as the quality of data through the planning, preparation and management of inventory activities.

The information on functions of national arrangements in this section is adapted from the Guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part I: UNFCCC Reporting Guidelines on Annual Greenhouse Gas Inventories (Annex I to Decision 15/CP.17) and the guidance provided by the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (CGE). Although Decision 15/CP.17 applies to Annex I Parties, the provisions contained within it on national arrangements would be generally applicable to all countries.

### 2.3.1 General functions

The key general functions of national inventory arrangements are: designating **a single national-level entity<sup>7</sup> with overall responsibility** for the inventory; and establishing and maintaining the institutional, legal and procedural arrangements between the government agencies and other entities involved in the preparation of emission and removal estimates from LULUCF. In doing so, there is a need to ensure sufficient capacity and technical competence of the staff involved in the inventory development process for:

- The timely collection of data needed to estimate anthropogenic GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks; and
- The preparation of GHG inventories in accordance with the relevant UNFCCC reporting guidelines.

### 2.3.2 Specific functions

Specific functions of national inventory arrangements include collecting activity data (AD), selecting appropriate methods and emission factors (EFs), estimating anthropogenic GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks, implementing uncertainty assessments and quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) activities, and carrying out data verification procedures.

### 2.3.3 Implementation phases

Implementation of national arrangements for REDD+ MRV involves three phases: inventory planning, inventory preparation, and inventory management.

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<sup>7</sup> Other terms for this designated body include national entity, national-level lead agency, and focal point

### *Inventory planning*

Inventory planning includes activities that lead up to the implementation of MRV activities. As part of inventory planning, a country will define and allocate specific responsibilities in the inventory development process, including the roles of, and the cooperation between, government agencies and other entities involved in the preparation of the inventory, as well as the institutional, legal and procedural arrangements made to prepare the inventory. Countries should ensure there is sufficient capacity to carry out all activities through training of existing personnel or hiring of experts.

In accordance with the GPG-LULUCF, countries should consider ways to improve the quality of AD, EFs, methods, and other relevant technical elements of the inventory once they have been initially established. This can be achieved by elaborating an inventory QA/QC plan. Information obtained from the implementation of the QA/QC plan, and other verification activities, should be considered in the development and/or revision of GHG data and the quality objectives of the GHG inventory.

As part of inventory planning, processes would need to be established for the official consideration and approval of the inventory, including any recalculations. On the basis of any periodic evaluations of the inventory preparation process (see below), countries would need re-evaluate and adjust, if appropriate, the inventory planning process.

### *Inventory preparation*

Inventory preparation includes all aspects of implementation of the MRV actions, as well as their organization into a reporting format. As part of inventory preparation, a country needs to collect sufficient AD, procedural information, and EFs as necessary to support the methods selected for estimating anthropogenic GHG emissions and removals. The methodological basis for the estimation of GHG emissions and removals is provided in the Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines as have been updated by the GPG-LULUCF.

An area of particular importance is the implementation of general inventory QA/QC procedures in accordance with a QA/QC plan, following the guidance provided by GPG-LULUCF. Countries would be required to apply category-specific QC procedures for key categories (see Box 2.7) and for those individual categories in which significant methodological and/or data revisions have occurred. They would also need to provide for a basic review of the inventory by personnel that have not been involved in the inventory development process, preferably an independent third party, before the submission of the inventory, in accordance with the planned QA procedures. Following the basic review, provisions should be made for an extensive expert review of key categories, as well as for categories where significant changes to methods or data have been made.

#### **Box 2.7: Key categories**

According to the IPCC, a key category is one that is prioritized within the national inventory system because its estimate has a significant influence on a country's total inventory of GHGs in terms of the absolute level, the trend, or the uncertainty in emissions and removals. Whenever the term key category is used, it includes both source and sink categories as well as specific GHGs. In terms of absolute level, key categories are all inventory activities that account for 95 percent of the total GHG emissions.

For more information, see Chapter 3 of the Manual, and section 5.4 of the IPCC GPG-LULUCF (IPCC, 2003).

### *Inventory management*

Inventory management refers to the handling of the inventory report and its relevant source information once an inventory cycle is complete. As part of inventory management, a country would archive all relevant inventory information for the reported time series, including all disaggregated EFs and AD together with explanations of the rationale for selecting these factors and data, as well as how they have been generated and aggregated for the preparation of the inventory. Other information to be archived includes:

- A description of the methods used for the identification of key categories;
- Explanation of how QA/QC procedures have been implemented; and
- Findings of external and internal reviews and descriptions of planned inventory improvements as a result of these reviews.

Another part of inventory management is ensuring that the country has the capacity to respond in a timely manner to requests for clarifying information on the national inventory. Many countries have well-established systems for the collection and processing of non-GHG related information. Such systems involve database management processes for archiving data and information. Experience in the use of such systems would be extremely valuable for application to GHG inventory development and/or strengthening of procedures to archive, store, and retrieve information. Countries should look at their experience in other areas for guidance and resources on this issue. The length of the inventory cycle depends on national circumstances and reporting requirements. An example of an inventory cycle is shown in the diagram in Figure 2.1. Such a cycle can be applied to annual, biennial, or longer-term periods.<sup>8</sup>

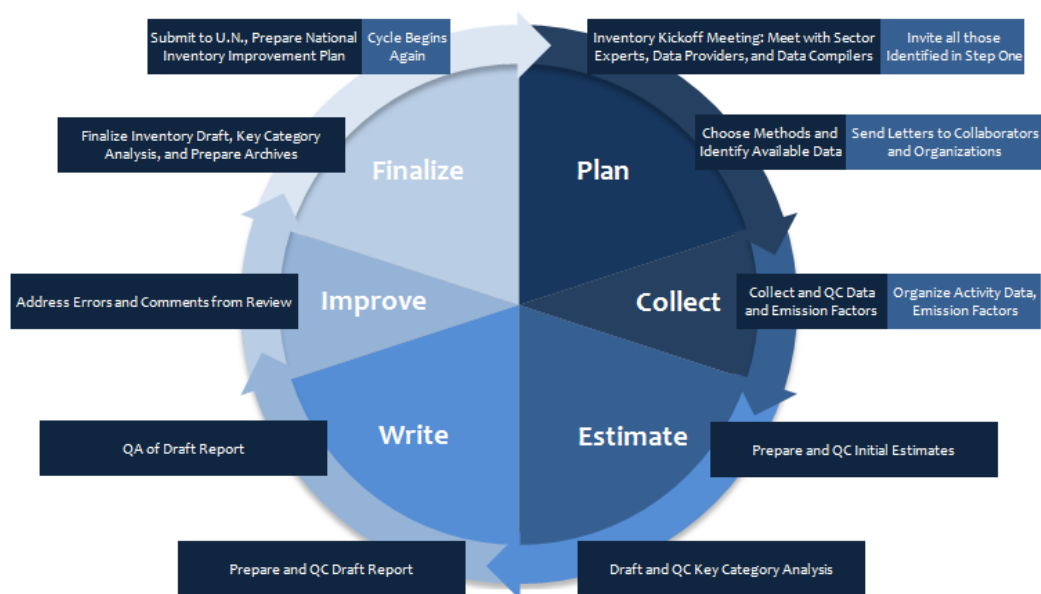


Figure 2.1: A typical cycle for an inventory process (source: EPA National System Template). For more information see section 2.6

## 2.4 STEPS IN ESTABLISHING INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Decision 10/CP.19, states that countries could “designate, in accordance with national circumstances and the principles of sovereignty, a national entity or focal point to serve as a liaison with the secretariat and the relevant bodies under the Convention, as appropriate, on the coordination of support for the full implementation of activities and elements referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraphs 70, 71 and 73, including different policy approaches, such as joint mitigation and adaptation, and to inform the secretariat

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that national forest inventory data would not be available annually, but every few years (typically between three to ten years).

accordingly.” The same decision further stipulates that such entities “may, in accordance with national circumstances and the principles of sovereignty, nominate their entities to obtain and receive results-based payments, consistent with any specific operational modalities of the financing entities providing them with support for the full implementation of the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70.”

Based on the experience of other similar processes under the UNFCCC (such as the national communications of developing countries), implementation of REDD+ activities involves many national actors and stakeholders supporting the work of a national-level entity or focal point. Given the interdisciplinary nature of REDD+, institutional arrangements can strengthen the national policymaking process by enhancing coordination of all relevant stakeholders, raising awareness among various private and public institutions and facilitating consultations and establishing relationships among stakeholders.

Establishing institutional arrangements includes a number of specific activities, which depend on the MRV goals that have been identified by a country, including, but not limited to: preparation of national reports and communications to meet international commitments; seeking funding for REDD+ projects; and implementation of national or regional REDD+ initiatives.

In establishing national arrangements, countries would need to identify specific actions consistent with MRV goals and develop a plan for their completion, including securing the resources and commitment of all relevant stakeholders in the country. This may include setting up working groups and task forces to undertake specific tasks, as well as establishing specific procedures and systems, for the collection and archiving of information, for example. To ensure timely completion, it is necessary to identify existing national capacities and allocate necessary funds, as well as human and other resources.

Once the specific actions are identified, a country would need to implement the necessary administrative and organizational arrangements. Every country will likely have its own approach on how to put in place these arrangements for REDD+. Some typical approaches include:

- Completely out-sourcing the inventory preparation process to an outside organization, such as a consulting company, a university, or a research institute;
- A small team of government employees overseeing the preparation of the inventory by a number of consultants and researchers;
- Forming an advisory or oversight board composed of representatives from multiple agencies and ministries, and possibly other organizations such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, or others in the private sector, that make decisions and oversee the inventory preparation process;
- Preparation of the inventory almost entirely by government employees within a single agency; and
- Preparation of the inventory delegated to the country’s provinces or states. The separate provincial inventory information is then aggregated at the national level.

Many other situations, including combinations of the above, are possible and there is no absolutely correct approach. Each approach is associated with relative pros and cons and has financial and staffing implications. Whatever approach is used, it should function in such a way that the quality of the inventory is maintained and improved over time and that decisions can be made in an effective and timely manner.

Whatever approach is taken, in terms of administrative and organizational arrangements, the process necessitates the development of clear roles and responsibilities. The national-level lead agency or institute should be charged with overall responsibility, possibly mandated by national legislation, to deal with a REDD+ MRV system, perhaps as a subset of a more comprehensive GHG inventory. It is important that the appropriate body be identified at an early stage of the process, to facilitate the appointment of personnel,

and for specific roles and responsibilities to be allocated. The appointment should be transparent to all stakeholders in the process so that there is no ambiguity of which institution leads the process.

In general terms, this institutional body will be required to manage the work of the other institutions and organizations and will have overall responsibility for coordinating administrative and technical arrangements and the overall quality of reported estimates. The management system that a country uses will be determined by national circumstances. Some common patterns include:

- **Centralized vs. decentralized:** The country's lead agency may maintain a large degree of control and decision-making authority over the inventory preparation process. A centralized approach will likely include few other institutions. A decentralized approach, in contrast, may include many different teams and/or institutions that each work on different parts of the inventory and make their own decisions regarding methodologies and other issues. Countries with a large administration and various institutions with expertise in certain areas of the inventory often use the centralized approach. In such cases, the lead agency usually has more of a coordinating role and less power over decisions on methodological issues.
- **In-sourced vs. out-sourced:** Government agencies and employees may prepare most, or all, of the inventory, thus “in-sourcing” the process. Alternatively, the government may “out-source” the work of preparing the inventory to private consultants, research institutions, academic institutions, or other NGOs, for example. The decision on out-sourcing depends on whether the administration has developed sufficient capacity and capability to do all or most of the technical work itself through the involvement of experts and agencies. Often smaller countries resort to extensive use of external assistance due to lack of expertise and the length of time necessary to build capacity within the specific timeframe for the preparation of a GHG inventory.
- **Single agency vs. multi-agency:** The lead agency may be housed within a single government agency, or the country's lead body may be composed of a multi-agency working group, committee, or other structure. Such a multi-agency structure requires a very clear delineation of roles and responsibilities to ensure that there is a clear line of reporting and decision-making on GHG inventory issues. Although the multi-agency approach may have some relative advantages in regard to plurality in the decision-making process, in practice one agency will often have the overall coordinating role to avoid conflicts.
- **Integrated vs. separate:** The country's GHG inventory work may be integrated with other related efforts (e.g., reducing threats to biodiversity, water management, avoiding soil erosion) to ensure the best use of resources and utilize available expertise.

While developing a MRV system for REDD+ activities, a country has the opportunity to identify those national and regional development priorities and objectives that would serve as the basis for addressing REDD+ and climate change. Such information would provide the background to help a country better understand, *inter alia*, its own specific conditions, existing national capacities and available options for addressing GHG emissions and removals from REDD+ within the broader context of sustainable development.

At every step of the process it is imperative that countries keep track of the specific roles and responsibilities of all relevant organizations, as well as changes in the arrangements as refinements and/or new stakeholders are involved. One way to do this in a systematic way is through the use of the National System Templates from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – see section 2.6 below. Although these templates have been developed to address the national arrangements of a national GHG inventory covering all economic sectors, it is possible to modify them for the purposes of a GHG inventory on LULUCF. A brief description of the templates and an example of how they could be modified are provided in Appendix 2.

## 2.5 EXAMPLES

In this section we present examples of institutional arrangements for Brazil, Colombia, and India for the preparation of GHG inventories for the LULUCF sector. The information in this section is based on the WRI Measurement and Performance Tracking Project National GHG Inventory Case Study Series.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.5.1 Brazil

The Foundation of Space Science, Applications and Technology (FUNCATE) was the sole institution in charge of compiling the Brazilian LULUCF inventory, in coordination with the General Coordination on Global Climate Change under the Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCT). FUNCATE had a clear mandate established through a contract or cooperation agreement that set individual terms of reference, timetables, costs, and responsibilities. FUNCATE engaged other agencies, associations, and academic and research institutions, but did not subcontract any components of the LULUCF inventory.

Forty-five personnel were engaged in the work at different stages of the inventory development (22 image interpreters, one general coordinator, seven administrators, five validation and data analysis staff, one information technology expert, three system development staff, three auditors, one database development expert, one database management expert, and one documentation specialist). The experience gained from the first national inventory and the new demands from application of the GPG-LULUCF helped to identify the initial level of human resources needed. However, as the work progressed, FUNCATE identified the need to enlarge the team, which varied in size according to the stage of development of the project. For instance, a large number of image interpreters were needed at the beginning of the project but were later allocated to other work within FUNCATE or dismissed. The number of personnel engaged was driven by the product delivery time schedule and budget. With each new staff hire by FUNCATE, training was carried out to ensure consistency in image classification among the different image interpreters and thus minimize classification uncertainty.

Inventory coordination at FUNCATE was carried out by one person with experience in remote sensing whose role was to oversee the development of the inventory at all phases (including the compilation of the GHG data for the LULUCF inventory), ensure that the budget expenditure and the agreed timetable evolved according to the contract and cooperation agreement with MCT, perform additional QC procedures, and prepare the partial and final reports. This person had overall knowledge of the inventory's development and actively participated at all phases.

No external people were engaged directly in the preparation of the inventory, besides those from FUNCATE, MCT, and Brazil's National Space Research Institute (INPE). During project development (e.g., image classification), personnel worked full-time until completion of that activity. Other people, such as those involved in system development, worked simultaneously for other projects at FUNCATE. Most of the staff was engaged full time in the project.

The LULUCF inventory was the most expensive among all sectors reported in the national GHG inventory. The second inventory, in particular, had an added cost due to the new methodological requirements from the GPG-LULUCF. Part of this added cost was caused by the decision to create a spatially explicit database and the wall-to-wall character of the territorial coverage required to include other land-use categories previously not considered (e.g., selective logging). The idea was to create a database that would facilitate the updating and recalculation of previous inventory estimates, if necessary. This required national wall-to-wall coverage with remotely sensed data of adequate resolution. The total cost of the second national inventory was approximately \$1.1 million distributed among a cooperation agreement and a contract. The cost included

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<sup>9</sup> Full reports are available at: <https://sites.google.com/site/maptpartnerresearch/national-ghg-inventory-case-study-series/producing-a-national-ghg-inventory-for-the-land-use-land-use-change-and-forestry-lulucf-sector>.



salaries and labor benefits, equipment, consumables, travel expenses, database construction, and part of the development of a software tool to manage large datasets. The budget did not contemplate the acquisition of data other than those planned under the legal instruments. All costs for each phase of the project were detailed by FUNCATE and helped MCT to prioritize the activities, eliminate those considered not relevant for the final product, and agree on the final allocation of the full budget for LULUCF.

Major funding came from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and from MCT. A small portion of the budget was ensured by the Ministry of the Environment. No consultants were hired for the project.

## 2.5.2 Colombia

Colombia has prepared two national communications under the UNFCCC. Although the working method to prepare these communications has been effective, the process, familiarization of guidelines, and acquisition of data starts from scratch for each new GHG inventory, as there is no centralized technical platform to share and exchange information with other LULUCF-related institutions in a permanent, timely, and efficient manner. The only national system in place, the National Environmental System (SINA), comprises a set of overarching principles that focus on environmental principles to foster management of the country's natural resources. The lack of a system to share data also prevents the implementation of comprehensive QC procedures nationwide. One option being considered is for both the national and regional institutions responsible for the collection, compilation, analysis, and systematization of forestry information to develop the revision mechanisms controlling the flow of information; this should improve the quality, frequency, and availability of the reported data. It would also be necessary to identify priority data at the national, regional, and local level that are needed as a basic input for research and to comply with international commitments. Additional details, regarding the overall system in place, are provided below.

The institute responsible for conducting the GHG inventory is the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM), a public institution that is part of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS). IDEAM is responsible for selecting public and private institutions that are actively participating in the inventory-related sectors (e.g., energy, transportation, waste, industry, agriculture, and LULUCF) to form sectoral working groups. The working groups' ultimate objectives are to define needs and priorities for each sector and to select EFs and methods for calculating the uncertainty associated with each module.

IDEAM also provides technical and scientific support to the agencies that constitute SINA. SINA is a set of norms, regulations, activities, resources, programs, and institutions that fosters compliance with the environmental principles embedded in the constitution of Colombia. SINA comprises several institutions at the local, regional, and national level that collectively generate information, carry out scientific research, and build technological capacities for their own purposes. However, SINA does not have any technical platform to share information online. Therefore, each one of the institutions involved compiles and archives the data on its own portal site.

The institutional arrangements are based on voluntary agreements among the following organizations: MADS, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Corporation for Forestry Research and Development, the Association of Regional Autonomous Corporations and Sustainable Development, Regional Autonomous Corporations, universities, private entities (e.g., Pizano S. A., Carton de Colombia, etc.), the Amazon Institute for Scientific Research, the Geographic Institute Agustín Codazzi, Bogota's Botanical Garden José Celestino Mutis, the Environmental Research Institute of the Pacific, the Special Administrative Unit of the National Parks System, and the Integrated Monitoring System for Illicit Crops. Currently, the development of the GHG inventory encompasses the steps illustrated in Figure 2.2.



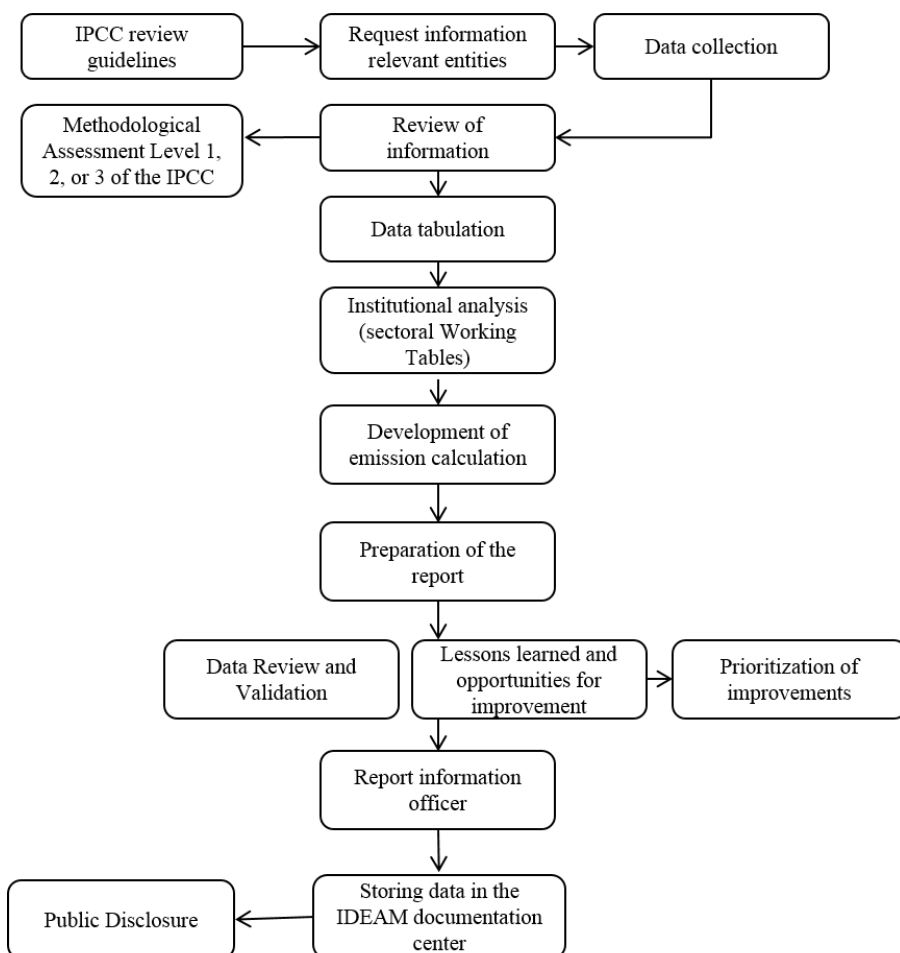
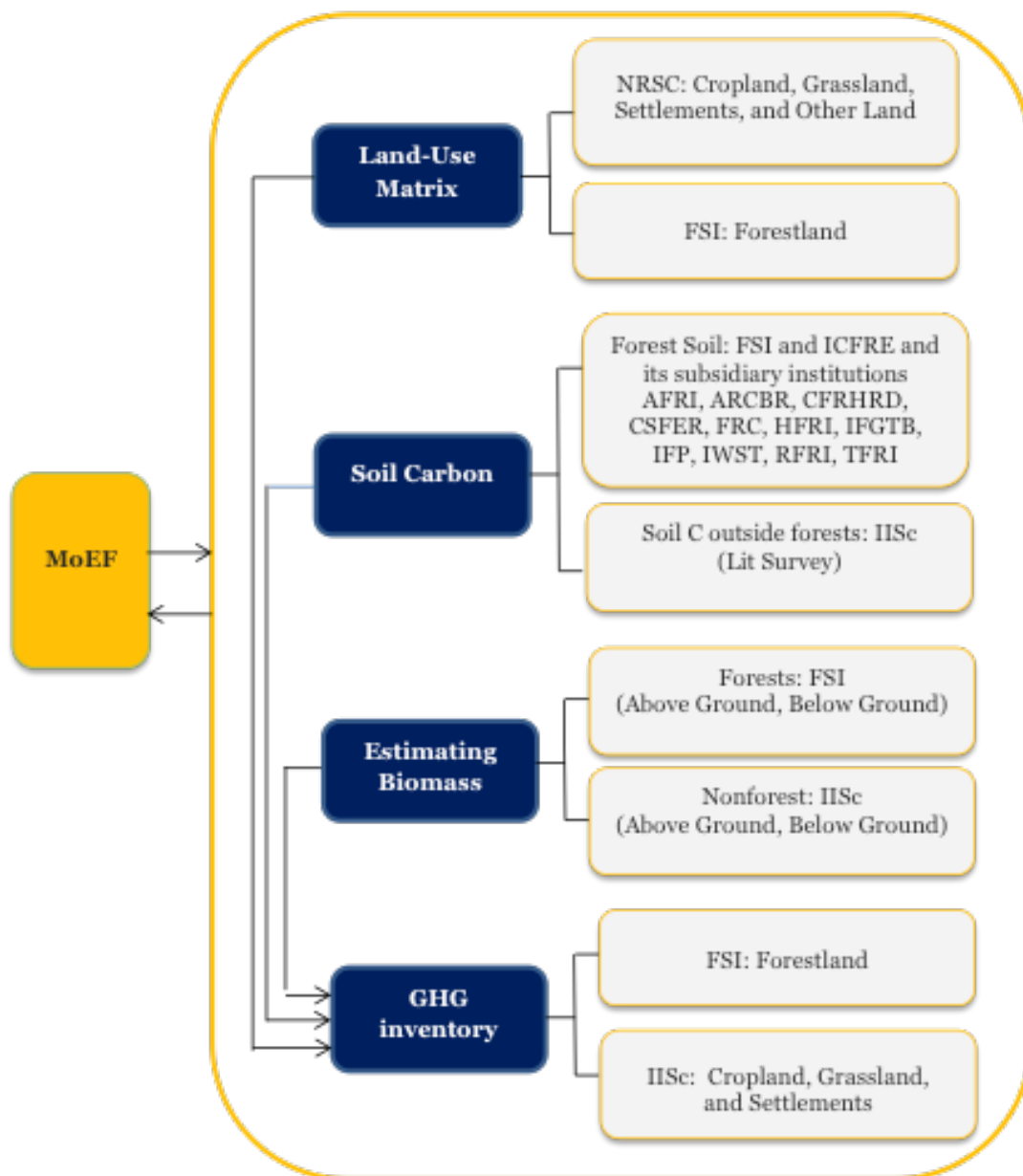


Figure 2.2: Key steps for national inventory preparation in Colombia

### 2.5.3 India

India's overall institutional arrangement structure for the preparation of GHG estimation for the LULUCF sector is shown in Figure 2.3. The Ministry of Environment and Forests is responsible for the overall coordination of the process. Various other institutions involved in the LULUCF sector provide technical assistance and expertise to ensure that all methodological processes are followed in order to develop a comprehensive and accurate inventory to the extent that capacities permit.

The coordination process has evolved over the years. Initially, the Indian Institute of Science took a leading role as it was the institution involved in the IPCC process for developing the GHG emissions inventory for the LULUCF sector. The current approach involves cooperation with other organizations, such as the Forest Survey of India (FSI), the National Remote Sensing Centre, and the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, which meet on a regular basis to decide on the respective roles and establishment of these roles, and to ensure that all activities are implemented in a timely fashion.



Here IFGTB: Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding, Coimbatore; IWST: Institute of Wood Science and Technology, Bangalore; TFRI: Tropical Forest Research Institute, Jabalpur; RFRI: Rain Forest Research Institute, Jorhat; AFRI: Arid Forest Research Institute, Jodhpur; HFRI: Himalayan Forest Research Institute, Shimla; IFP: Institute of Forest Productivity, Ranchi; CSFER: Centre for Social Forestry and Eco-Rehabilitation, Allahabad; CFRHRD: Centre for Forestry: Research and Human Resource Development, Chhindwar; FRC: Forest Research Centre, Hyderabad; ARCBR: Advanced Research Centre for Bamboo and Rattans, Aizawl, IISc: Indian Institute of Science; FSI: Forest Survey of India; NRSC: National remote Sensing Centre.

Figure 2.3: Work allocation and implementation arrangements for developing the GHG emissions inventory by sources and removal by sinks for the LULUCF sector in India

Funding for all activities is part of the Indian Geosphere Biosphere Programme of the Indian Space Research Organisation. For example, the Natural Resource Management Division, which covers land-use mapping, has been granted a budget of 537.4 million Rupees (or \$9.95 million) for 2012-13 (Union Budget, 2012-13),

compared to the 68.75 million Rupees (or \$1.27 million) that was allocated in the budget for preparation of the entire GHG emissions inventory for the second national communication, spread over four years.

Similarly, preparing the GHG emissions inventory is part of the FSI mandate and has been funded through the forestry and wildlife budget of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, the parent organization of FSI. The budget outlay of its Forestry and Wildlife Division is 9,066.8 million Rupees (or \$167 million) for 2012-2013 (Union Budget 2012-13). The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) was also funded through the second national communication, and several other sources, including governmental, bilateral, and multilateral funds.

## 2.6 EPA NATIONAL SYSTEM TEMPLATES

EPA's National System Templates can be used as a set of building blocks by countries to construct a national inventory management system<sup>10</sup>. The advantages of the templates are that they:

- Focus on documenting essential information in a concise format and avoid unnecessarily long written reports;
- Standardize tasks, allowing countries within regions to compare and contrast results;
- Ensure roles and responsibilities are understood;
- Accommodate varying levels of national capacity;
- Provide an objective and efficient system for identifying priorities for future improvements;
- Serve as instruction Manuals and a starting point for future inventory teams; and
- Create transparency in a country's national system and improve quality over time.

The six templates (briefly described below) can be compiled into a single National Inventory System Report, typically less than 50 pages, providing comprehensive documentation of each of the critical national system building blocks. The Key Category Analysis (KCA) Tool can be used to determine key categories in a GHG inventory.

### *Template 1: Institutional Arrangements for National Inventory System*

This template assists inventory teams in assessing and documenting the strengths and weaknesses of existing institutional arrangements for inventory development. This ensures continuity and integrity of the inventory, promotes institutionalization of the inventory process, and facilitates prioritization of future improvements.

### *Template 2: Methods and Data Documentation*

This assists inventory teams in documenting and reporting the origin of methodologies, activity datasets, and EFs used to estimate emissions or removals. Future inventory teams can refer to the completed template for each source and sink category to determine what information was collected, how the data was obtained, and what methods were used.

### *Template 3: Description of QA/QC Procedures*

This guides countries through the establishment of a cost-effective QA/QC program to improve transparency, consistency, comparability, completeness, and confidence in national GHG inventories. Supplemental checklists with recommended QA/QC procedures have been developed for the Inventory Coordinator and QA/QC Coordinator.

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/EPAactivities/internationalpartnerships/capacity-building.html#National> for more details and for how to download the templates

#### *Template 4: Description of Archiving System*

An archive system is an inexpensive yet critical step in the sustainability of the National Inventory System. An archive system allows estimates to be easily reproduced, safeguards against data and information loss, and allows reproducibility of the estimates.

#### *Template 5: Key Category Analysis (KCA)*

KCA provides information, according to IPCC criteria, on which sources or sinks are the most important and should be the focus of improvement efforts. The KCA Tool enables a country to determine key categories from a GHG inventory.

#### *Template 6: National Inventory Improvement Plan*

Synthesizes findings and describes specific priorities for future capacity building projects based on the needs identified in the first five templates and facilitates continual inventory improvements.

#### *Example of modifying Template 1 for the purposes of REDD+*

##### **Step 1:**

List the lead agency and describe the arrangements or relationship between the REDD+ Inventory Agency/Organization and the UNFCCC National Focal Point Agency<sup>11</sup>, if different (Table 2.1).

##### **Step 2:**

List additional information, specific to the contacts/experts for inventory development, for sectored+. Use Table 2.2 to document existing arrangements for obtaining, compiling and reviewing inventory data. Identify the role, organization, and contact information for those providing relevant data for estimating emissions. Example roles are provided in Table 2.2.

##### **Step 3:**

Identify where well-established institutional arrangements needed to prepare the inventory exist, where data have been collected and managed adequately and, thus, where strengthening is not needed. List this information in column “Strengths in Management Structure of the REDD+ Inventory System” of Table 2.3.

Given the key category analysis and existing institutional arrangements within each sector, identify what improvements are needed to enhance the institutional arrangements for each sector and list these in column “Potential Improvements in Management Structure of the REDD+ Inventory System” of Table 2.3. In preparing this section, consider whether any important tasks for inventory preparation have not been assigned or delegated, and determine whether they could be assigned.

In the “Comments” column of Table 2.3, provide information on the status of the institutional arrangements or any additional information not included elsewhere within the table. Explain in detail how the arrangements were established. For example, indicate which data provider listed in Table 2.2 provides the statistics that will be used in the inventory. Describe the strategies that were used to collect the necessary inventory data from an organization. In this description, address the following questions and add additional comments as necessary:

- Is there a formal legal contract between the organizations?

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<sup>11</sup> “National-level entity” is used throughout the Manual and refers to the designated single national-level entity with overall responsibility for the inventory and for establishing and maintaining the institutional, legal, and procedural arrangements among the government agencies and other entities involved in the preparation of emission and removal estimates from LULUCF. Other terms for this designated body include national entity, national-level lead agency, and focal point.

- Was there a meeting with the experts, data providers, and other key contributors explaining the background and purpose of the inventory?
- Is it an informal arrangement (e.g., written or verbal communication with staff)?
- How was the request for data made?
- At what level of management was the request made?
- How was the organization motivated to share its data and information with the inventory agency?

Designated National-level Entity for REDD+ Inventory Preparation	UNFCCC National Focal Point (Name) and UNFCCC Focal Point Agency	Describe the arrangements or relationship between REDD+ Inventory Agency/Organization and UNFCCC National Focal Point Agency, if different.

**Table 2.1: Designated inventory agency; identifies the inventory management team members. The status of the institutional arrangements can be noted in the "Comments" column**

Role	Name	Organization	Contact Information	Comments
Inventory Director/Coordinator				
LULUCF Sector Lead				
Archive (Data and Document) Manager/Coordinator				
QA/QC coordinator				
Uncertainty Analysis coordinator				
Other: e.g., GHG Policy Specialist who tracks capacity building efforts and IPCC processes				

Table 2.2: National inventory management team

REDD+ activity	Strengths in Management Structure of the REDD+ Inventory System	Potential Improvements in Management Structure of the REDD+ Inventory System	Comments
LULUCF (general)			
Deforestation			
Forest degradation			
Conservation of forest carbon stocks			
Sustainable management of forests			
Enhancement of forest carbon stocks			

Table 2.3: Strengths and potential improvements in the management structure of the REDD+ inventory system

## 2.7 REFERENCES

CGE: Training material and methodological documents provided by the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention.

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UNFCCC. 2011. Report of the Conference of the Parties on its seventeenth session, held in Durban from 28 November to 11 December 2011 Addendum Part Two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its seventeenth session <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2011/cop17/eng/09a01.pdf#page=4>

UNFCCC. 2013. Report of the Conference of the Parties on its nineteenth session, held in Warsaw from 11 to 23 November 2013 Addendum Part Two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its nineteenth session <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2013/cop19/eng/10a01.pdf>

# 3.0 ESTIMATING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND REMOVALS

*Authors: Angel Parra and Stelios Pesmajoglou*

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief description of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry* (GPG-LULUCF), including a brief overview of IPCC guidance evolution; the main steps for estimating emissions and removals for activities to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, plus the role of conservation, sustainable forest management, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+); the main carbon pools; and land-use types. It also provides an overview of the methodologies for estimating emissions and removals, including a discussion on the activity data (AD) and emission factors (EFs) needed. More detailed and technical information on the collection of data for input onto greenhouse gas (GHG) estimation is provided in Chapters 4 and 5. Section 3.3, *Inventory and Reporting Steps*, of this Manual outlines the sequence of steps required for generating a national GHG inventory. This chapter is relevant to the activities highlighted on the following page.





According to the GPG-LULUCF, the fundamental basis for the GHG inventory methodology for land use and land-use change in forests, including REDD+, rests upon two linked assumptions:

- The flux of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) to/from the atmosphere is equal to changes in carbon stocks in the existing biomass and soils; and
- Changes in carbon stocks can be estimated by first establishing the rates of change in land use, the practice used to convert the land to a different use (e.g., burning, clear-cutting, selective cutting, change in silviculture or management practice), and the carbon stocks before and after the change. This requires estimating:
  - The land use in the inventory year;
  - The conversion of forest to a different land use; and
  - The stocks of carbon in the land-use categories (both those that are subjected to change and those that are not).

To estimate GHG emissions and removals, it is important to consider the inventory scope, estimation methodologies and data needs.

In the context of REDD+, a national GHG inventory should cover all anthropogenic emissions and removals within the national boundaries and over a specific time period (i.e., a calendar year or a multi-year time period). Anthropogenic emissions and removals are defined as those occurring on managed lands. The term managed lands is defined fairly broadly and although it is not strictly the same as anthropogenic activities it is most commonly used as the best approximation available on a global basis (see Box 3.1).

### Box 3.1: Managed and unmanaged lands

Countries can use their own definitions of managed and unmanaged lands, which may refer to internationally accepted definitions, such as those by FAO, Ramsar, etc. For that reason, no definitions are given here beyond broad descriptions.

**Managed land** may be distinguished from **unmanaged land** by fulfilling not only the production but also ecological and social functions. The detailed definitions and the national approach to distinguishing between unmanaged and managed land should be described in a transparent manner in the inventory report (IPCC GPG 2003), available at [http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpglulucf/gpglulucf\\_files/Chp2/Chp2\\_Land\\_Areas.pdf](http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpglulucf/gpglulucf_files/Chp2/Chp2_Land_Areas.pdf).

The minimum requirement for a country to participate in a mitigation mechanism connected to a financial process (e.g., REDD+) is to have the capacity and capability to compile a GHG inventory with estimates of carbon stock changes with a known uncertainty. For the purposes of this Manual, the estimation methodologies described are those from the GPG-LULUCF, which are consistent with those in the *2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories* (2006 IPCC Guidelines) (IPCC, 2006). To meet this condition, a country needs to have: i) country-specific estimates of EFs by using, for example, a National Forest Inventory, for those changes associated with forest lands; ii) multi-temporal inventory data; and iii) uncertainty estimates associated with any data reported.

## 3.2 IPCC GUIDANCE

### 3.2.1 The Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry

The IPCC developed the GPG-LULUCF in 2003 (IPCC, 2003) as a supplement to the *Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories* (Revised 1996 Guidelines) (IPCC, 1996). For more details, refer to Section 7.1 of this Manual. Its main objectives are:

- To assist countries in producing national GHG inventories for the LULUCF sector that are transparent, consistent, complete, comparable and accurate; and
- To provide good practice guidance on the choice of estimation methodology and improvements of the methods, as well as advice on cross-cutting issues, including estimation of uncertainties, time series consistency, quality assurance, and quality control.

The GPG-LULUCF provides guidance on specific features related to the LULUCF sector including:

- Consistent representation of land areas;
- Sampling for area estimates and for estimating emissions and removals;
- Verification; and
- Guidance on how to complement the Convention reporting for the LULUCF sector to meet the supplementary requirements under the Kyoto Protocol.

Other advances of the GPG-LULUCF are the inclusion of:

- A key source/sink category analysis, enabling the dedication of limited inventory resources to important source/sink categories, CO<sub>2</sub> pools, and non-CO<sub>2</sub> gases;
- All five carbon pools (aboveground biomass, belowground biomass, deadwood, litter, and soil organic carbon);
- CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and removals estimates for all carbon pools; and
- The following non-CO<sub>2</sub> gas estimates:
  - Nitrogen dioxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) and methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) from forest fires;
  - N<sub>2</sub>O and CH<sub>4</sub> from managed wetlands;
  - N<sub>2</sub>O from managed forests (fertilized forests);
  - N<sub>2</sub>O from drainage of forest soils; and
  - N<sub>2</sub>O from land-use conversion.

Inventories can be organized according to six broad land-use categories: forest land; cropland; grassland; wetlands; settlements; and other land. These land-use categories can be further sub-divided into lands remaining in the same land use (e.g., Forest Land Remaining Forest Land) during the period covered by the inventory, and lands converted into another land-use category (e.g., Forest Land Converted to Cropland) during the inventory period.

Table 3.1 summarizes the differences between the Revised 1996 Guidelines, the GPG-LULUCF 2003, and the 2006 IPCC Guidelines (Volume 4: Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use).

Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines	GPG-LULUCF	2006 IPCC Guidelines AFOLU Sector
<p>Approach for reporting based on four categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Changes in forest and other woody biomass stocks</li> <li>➤ Forest and grassland conversion</li> <li>➤ Abandonment of croplands, pastures, or other <i>managed</i> lands</li> <li>➤ CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and removals from soils</li> </ul> <p>Some land categories not included, such as coffee, tea, coconut. Lack of clarity on agroforestry.</p>	<p>Approach for reporting based on six land categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Forest land</li> <li>➤ Cropland</li> <li>➤ Grassland</li> <li>➤ Wetlands</li> <li>➤ Settlements</li> <li>➤ Other land</li> </ul>	<p>Agricultural sector is merged with LULUCF in order to ensure consistency and avoid double counting. The reporting for land categories remains similar to the GPG-LULUCF.</p>
<p>Forests and Grassland categories subdivided according to the four reporting categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Changes in management</li> <li>➤ Conversion</li> <li>➤ Abandonment</li> <li>➤ Cultivation</li> </ul>	<p>The six land categories are further subdivided into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Land remaining in the same use category</li> <li>➤ Land converted into another use category</li> </ul>	<p>Similar</p>
<p>Methods provided mainly for aboveground biomass and soil organic carbon. Default assumption: changes in dead organic matter and belowground biomass are zero (i.e., inputs equal losses).</p>	<p>Methods given for measurement and estimation of all five carbon pools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Aboveground biomass</li> <li>➤ Belowground biomass</li> <li>➤ Dead organic matter</li> <li>➤ Litter</li> <li>➤ Soil organic carbon</li> </ul> <p>Methods given for all non-CO<sub>2</sub> gases.</p>	<p>Incorporation of methods for non-CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from <i>managed</i> lands, soils and biomass burning, and livestock population characterization and manure management systems from agriculture. Incorporation of methods to estimate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from flooded land, with methods for CH<sub>4</sub> emissions contained in an appendix, reflecting the limited availability of scientific information. Description of alternative methods to estimate and report carbon stock changes</p>

		associated with harvested wood products.
Key source/sink category analysis not provided.	Key source/sink category analysis provided for the selection of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Land categories</li> <li>➤ Land sub-categories</li> <li>➤ Carbon pools</li> <li>➤ CO<sub>2</sub> and non-CO<sub>2</sub> gases</li> </ul>	Similar
Key AD required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Area of plantations/forest</li> <li>➤ Forest area converted</li> <li>➤ Average area converted (10-year average)</li> <li>➤ Area abandoned and regenerating to forest: 20 years before year-t (year of the inventory) and 20-100 years before year-t</li> <li>➤ Area under different land use/management systems and soil type: during year-t and 20 years before year-t</li> <li>➤ Area under managed organic soils</li> </ul>	Key AD required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Area of forest land remaining forest land and area of other land category converted into forest land, disaggregated by: climatic region, vegetation type, species, management system, etc.</li> <li>➤ Forest area affected by disturbances</li> <li>➤ Forest area affected by fire</li> <li>➤ Land afforested derived from cropland/grassland</li> <li>➤ Land converted to forest through plantation or natural regeneration</li> </ul>	Similar
Key Emission Factors required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Annual biomass transferred into deadwood</li> <li>➤ Annual biomass transferred out of deadwood</li> <li>➤ Litter stock under different management systems</li> <li>➤ Soil organic carbon in different management systems</li> <li>➤ Amount of biomass fuel present in an area subjected to burning</li> </ul>	Key Emission Factors required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Average annual net increment in volume suitable for industrial processing.</li> <li>➤ Biomass Expansion Factor (BEF) for conversion of annual net increment (including bark) to aboveground tree biomass increment</li> <li>➤ Root: shoot ratio appropriate to increment</li> </ul>	Improvements of default emissions and stock change factors, as well as development of the IPCC Emission Factor Database (EFDB) that is a supplementary tool to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines, providing alternative emission factors with associated documentation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ BEF to convert volume of extracted roundwood to total aboveground biomass (including bark)</li> <li>➤ Mortality rate in natural and artificially regenerated forests</li> </ul>	
Three tier structure approach presented, but application for the selection of methods; AD and Emission Factors not provided.	Three tier structure for the choice of methods, AD and Emission Factors explicitly described.	Similar
Changes in carbon stock in biomass and soil carbon in a given vegetation, or forest type, not linked.	Biomass and soil carbon pools linked.	Similar

Table 3.1: Differences between 1996 IPCC Guidelines, GPG-LULUCF, and 2006 Guidelines for the AFOLU sector

### 3.2.2 2006 IPCC Guidelines

The 2006 IPCC Guidelines represent an evolutionary development in the methodologies for GHG inventories (IPCC, 2006). The most significant change introduced was the consolidation of the LULUCF sector and the Agriculture sector into a single sector referred to as Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU). Figure 3-1 provides an overview of the evolution of the LULUCF sector in the IPCC Guidelines.

Other changes for the AFOLU sector include:

- Adopting the six land-use categories used in the GPG-LULUCF (forest land, cropland, grassland, wetlands, settlements, and other land). These land categories are further sub-divided into land remaining in the same category and land converted from one category to another. The land-use categories are designed to enable inclusion of all managed land area within a country;
- Reporting on all emissions by sources and removals by sinks from managed lands, which are considered to be anthropogenic, while emissions and removals for unmanaged lands are not reported;
- Generic methods for accounting of biomass, dead organic matter and soil carbon stock changes in all land-use categories and generic methods for GHG emissions from biomass burning that can be applied in all land-use categories;
- Incorporating methods for non-CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from managed soils and biomass burning, and livestock population characterization and manure management systems from agriculture;
- Adopting three hierarchical tiers of methods that range from default emission factors and simple equations to the use of country-specific data and models to accommodate national circumstances;
- Describing alternative methods to estimate and report carbon stock changes associated with harvested wood products;
- Incorporating a KCA for land-use categories, carbon pools, CO<sub>2</sub> and non-CO<sub>2</sub> GHG emissions;

- Adhering to principles of mass balance in computing carbon stock changes;
- Greater consistency in land area classification for selecting appropriate emission and stock change factors and AD;
- Improving default emissions and stock change factors, as well as development of the IPCC EFDB that is a supplementary tool to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines, providing alternative emission factors with associated documentation; and
- Incorporating methods to estimate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from flooded land with methods for CH<sub>4</sub> emissions contained in an appendix, reflecting the limited availability of scientific information.

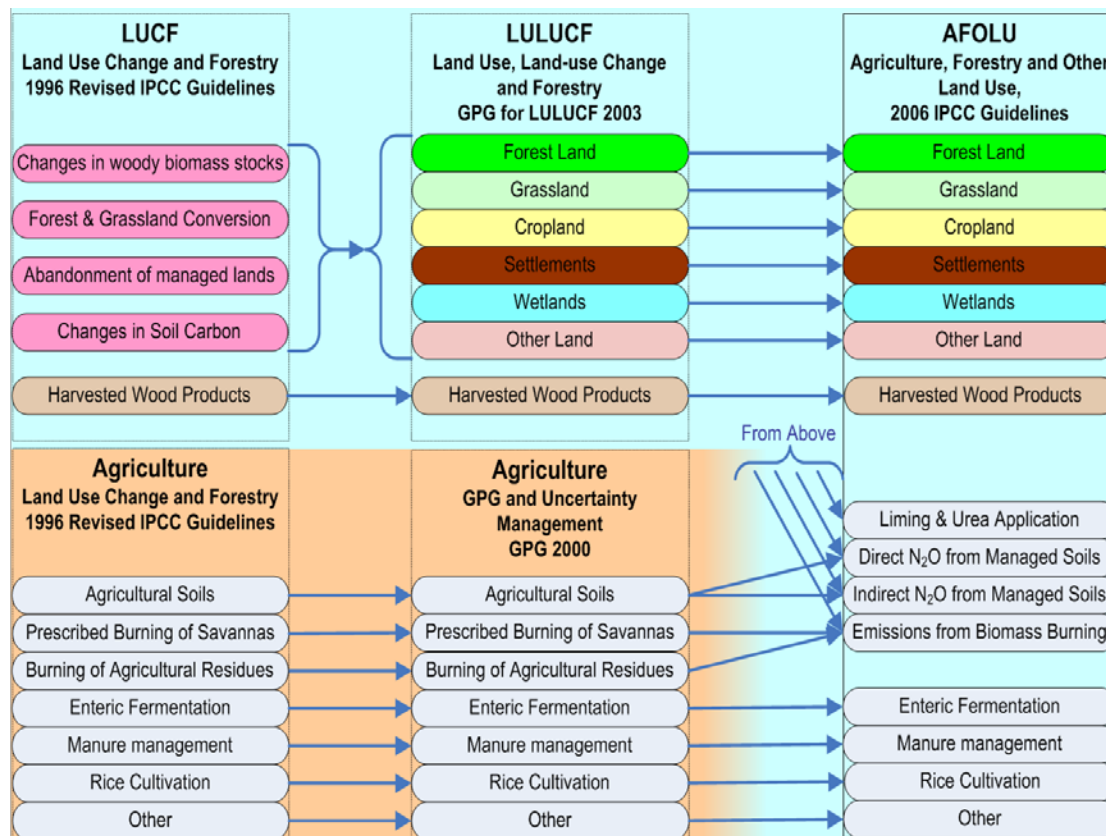


Figure 3.1: Evolution of the LULUCF sector in the IPCC guidelines. From the Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories Presentation at UNFCCC Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) Workshop on Methodological Issues, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008 ([http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/presentation/NGGIP\\_AWG\\_KP.pdf](http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/presentation/NGGIP_AWG_KP.pdf))

### 3.3 INVENTORY AND REPORTING STEPS

The sequence of steps for inventorying emissions and removals for the national inventory report is outlined below:

- 1) Estimate the land areas in each land-use category for the time period required, drawing on the three approaches, described below, for representing areas in the GPG-LULUCF.

- 2) Identify key categories (see Box 3.2). Within the categories designated as key, assess which non-CO<sub>2</sub> gases and carbon pools are significant and prioritize such pools in terms of methodological choice.
- 3) Ensure that the requirements in terms of emission and removal factors and AD appropriate to the tier level are being met; tier levels are described below.
- 4) Quantify emissions and removals and estimate the uncertainty in each estimate.
- 5) Use the reporting tables to report emissions and removals estimates. Utilize the worksheets where appropriate. Document and archive all information used to produce the national emissions and removals estimates following specific instructions under each land-use category, carbon pool, non-CO<sub>2</sub> source, and land-use change (more information on reporting is provided in Chapter 6).
- 6) Implement quality control checks, verification, and expert peer review of the emission estimates following specific guidance under each land-use category, pool or non-CO<sub>2</sub> gas (more information on verification is provided in Chapter 6).



### Box 3.2: Key categories and a key category analysis

Key categories refer to specific elements within a GHG inventory, which are important, in terms of their contribution, to the total emissions/removals, or to the total uncertainty, or to the trends of emissions/removals for the years covered by the inventory. They represent a central element of the IPCC Guidelines, helping countries identify the most appropriate methodologies for specific activities. Methodological choice for individual source and sink categories is important in managing overall inventory uncertainty. Generally, inventory uncertainty is lower when emissions and removals are estimated using the most rigorous methods provided for each category or subcategory in the sectoral volumes of these Guidelines. However, these methods generally require more extensive resources for data collection, so it may not be feasible to use more rigorous methods for every category of emissions and removals. It is therefore good practice to identify those categories that have the greatest contribution to overall inventory uncertainty in order to make the most efficient use of available resources. By identifying these key categories in the national inventory, inventory compilers can prioritize their efforts and improve their overall estimates.

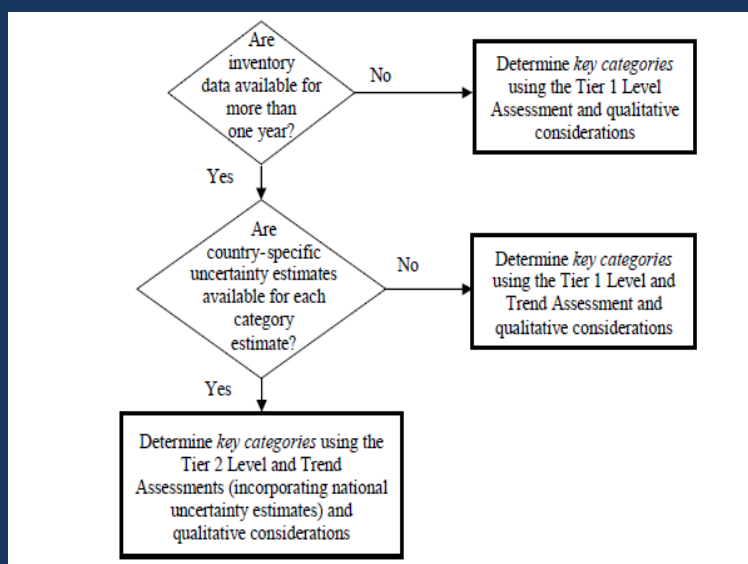
It is good practice for each country to identify its national key categories in a systematic and objective manner. Consequently, it is good practice to use results of a **key category analysis (KCA)** as a basis for methodological choice. Such a process will lead to improved inventory quality, as well as greater confidence in the estimates that are developed.

Section 5.4 of the GPG-LULUCF provides guidance on quantitative approaches for performing a KCA with the aim of meeting three objectives, including:

1. Enabling continued assessment of key source categories without LULUCF;
2. Assessing the relative importance of LULUCF categories by integrating them into the overall key category analysis; and
3. Achieving consistency with guidance and decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, regarding the identification of key categories.

The GPG-LULUCF also recommends performing the KCA twice. As a first step, the KCA should identify key categories for all sectors excluding LULUCF. The KCA should then be performed with the LULUCF included.

The figure below, from the GPG-LULUCF, provides an overview of the decision process involved in a KCA.



## 3.4 DEFINITIONS OF CARBON POOLS AND LAND USES

### 3.4.1 Carbon pools

The GPG-LULUCF provides the following definitions for the five carbon pools: aboveground biomass, belowground biomass, dead wood, litter, and soils (see Box 3.3). These definitions provide a generic representation of these pools occurring in a terrestrial ecosystem. Additional information, specific to forests, is included in Chapter 4.

#### Box 3.3: Five carbon pools

##### Living Biomass:

- **Aboveground biomass:** All living biomass above the soil, including stem, stump, branches, bark, seeds, and foliage. Dead branches still attached to a living plant are included as part of the aboveground live tree biomass pool, but typically do not make up a significant fraction of the pool. In cases where forest understory is a relatively small component of the aboveground biomass carbon pool, it is acceptable for the methodologies and associated data used in some tiers to exclude it – provided the tiers are used in a consistent manner throughout the forest inventory time series (as specified in Chapter 4).
- **Belowground biomass:** All living biomass of live roots. Fine roots of less than (suggested) 2mm diameter are often excluded, or measured as part of the soil carbon pool, because it is impractical to try to remove very fine roots and root hairs from the soil.

##### Dead Organic Matter:

- **Dead wood:** Includes all non-living woody biomass not contained in the litter, either standing, lying on the ground, or in the soil. Dead wood includes wood lying on the surface, dead roots, and stumps larger than or equal to 10 cm in diameter or any other diameter used by the country. Typically, standing dead trees must be large enough to meet the definition of “tree” that is used for live trees by the country. Carbon stocks in lying dead wood are also called coarse woody debris.
- **Litter:** Includes all non-living biomass with a diameter less than a minimum diameter chosen by the country for dead wood (for example 10 cm, and possibly also a minimum length), lying dead, in various states of decomposition above the mineral or organic soil. This includes the litter, fomic, and humic layers. Live fine roots (of less than the suggested diameter limit for belowground biomass) are included in litter where they cannot be empirically distinguished.

##### Soils:

- **Soil organic matter:** Includes organic carbon in mineral and organic soils, (including peat) to a specified depth chosen by the country and applied consistently through the time series. Live fine roots (of less than the suggested diameter limit for belowground biomass) are included with soil organic matter where they cannot be distinguished from it empirically.

National circumstances may require slight modifications to the pool definitions used here. Where modified definitions are used, it is good practice to clearly report them. This ensures that modified definitions are used consistently over time and demonstrates that pools are neither omitted nor double counted.

### 3.4.2 Land-use categories

While this Manual focuses on MRV system requirements for forest land, all six top-level land categories defined by the GPG-LULUCF and AFOLU are briefly presented below:

### *Forest land*

Forest land includes all land with woody vegetation consistent with thresholds used to define forest land in the national GHG inventory, sub-divided into *managed* and *unmanaged*, and also by ecosystem type. It also includes systems with vegetation that currently fall below, but are expected to exceed, the threshold of the forest land category.

### *Cropland*

Cropland includes arable and tillage land, and agro-forestry systems with vegetation below thresholds used for the national definition of forest land.

### *Grassland*

Grassland includes rangelands and pasture land that is not considered as cropland. It also includes systems with vegetation that fall below the threshold used in the forest land category and are not expected to exceed, without human intervention, the threshold used in the forest land category. The category also includes all grassland from wild natural grasslands, such as páramo, to recreational areas, as well as agricultural and silvipastoral systems, subdivided into *managed* and *unmanaged* consistent with national definitions.

### *Wetlands*

Wetlands include land that is covered or saturated by water for all or part of the year (e.g., peatland) and does not fall into the forest land, cropland, grassland or settlements categories. Wetlands can be subdivided into *managed* and *unmanaged* according to national definitions.

### *Settlements*

Settlements include all developed land, including transportation infrastructure and human settlements of any size, unless they are already included under other categories. This should be consistent with the selection of national definitions.

### *Other land*

Other land includes bare soil, rock, ice, and all *unmanaged* land areas that do not fall into any of the other five categories. It allows the total identified land areas to match the national area, where data are available.

## **3.5 METHODOLOGIES FOR ESTIMATING EMISSIONS AND REMOVALS**

As it is not possible to measure all emissions and removals, estimates can be made based on surrogate parameters that are associated with emission rates, such as the changes in carbon stocks before and after a change in land use. The generic form of the methodologies provided in all IPCC Inventory guidelines including the GPG-LULUCF is shown in Figure 3.2. Emissions estimates are equal to the product of all AD considered and their associated EFs. AD are changes in the area of land use, while EFs are the average amounts of emissions per unit-area of each type of activity.

The GPG-LULUCF (and the 2006 IPCC Guidelines) allow for inventories with different levels of complexity, called “tiers.” In general, inventories using higher tiers have improved accuracy and reduced uncertainty (Figure 3.3). There is a trade-off, however, as the complexity and resources required for conducting inventories also increase for higher tiers. A combination of tiers can be used (e.g., Tier 2 for biomass and Tier 1 for soil carbon), depending on data availability and the magnitude of expected changes in the pool. An explanation of tiers is provided in Box 3.4.

As key categories have the most significant impact on total emissions, key categories should be addressed by at least Tier 2 methods, if possible, in order to improve the accuracy of the estimates (Figure 3.4). Other reasons for using a higher tier approach may be the need for improved detail in a particular sector; for example, the need to understand the abatement effect of a mitigation project.

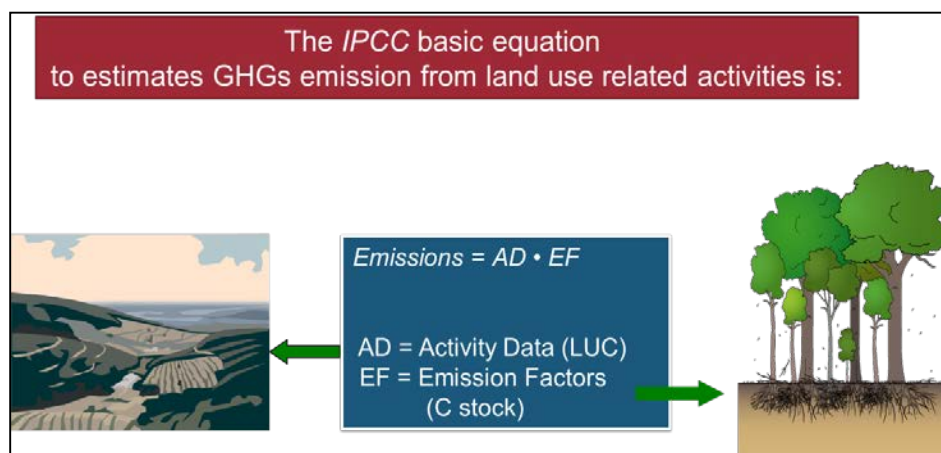


Figure 3.2: The IPCC basic equation for the estimation of emissions/removals

Tiers (C pool change)	Certainty	REDD+	Cost
1. IPCC default values: ➤ <b>biomass in forest types by region and ecol. stratification, carbon fraction etc.</b>	Red. Em.	Simple & conservative starting point	
2. Country specific data: <b>Inventories (date, focus)</b> <b>Ecological monitoring plots</b> <b>Project studies/field samples</b>	Red. Em.	Motivation to improve monitoring system over time	
3. Full inventory of C stocks: ➤ <b>Comprehensive assessment</b> ➤ <b>Consider different carbon pools and assessment for all associated changes</b>	Red. Em.	Accurate & established emissions monitoring	

Figure 3.3: Key implications of using different tiers; note "Red. Em." stands for reduced emissions (adapted from GOFC GOLD, 2011)

### Box 3.4: Tiers

**Tier 1** methods are designed to be simple to use. The GPG-LULUCF and the 2006 IPCC Guidelines provide equations and default parameter values (e.g., emission and stock change factors) so the inventory compiler does not need specific data for these equation parameters. Country-specific land-use and management data are needed, but for Tier 1 there are often globally available sources for these estimates (e.g., deforestation rates, agricultural production statistics, global land cover maps, fertilizer use, livestock population data). The Tier 1 method alone, however, is unlikely to be sufficient for crediting under REDD+.

**Tier 2** uses the same methodological approach as Tier 1, but the emission and stock change factors are based on country or region-specific data. Country defined emission factors are more appropriate for the climatic regions and land-use systems in the country or region. Higher temporal and spatial resolution and more disaggregated land-use and management categories are used in Tier 2 to correspond with country-defined coefficients for specific regions and specialized land-use categories.

**Tier 3** uses higher order methods, including models and inventory measurement systems tailored to address unique national circumstances. Assessments are repeated over time and employ high-resolution land-use and management data, which are generally disaggregated at the subnational level. These inventories use advanced measurements and/or modeling systems to improve the estimation of GHG emissions and removals beyond Tier 1 or 2 approaches. (Angelsen, 2008)

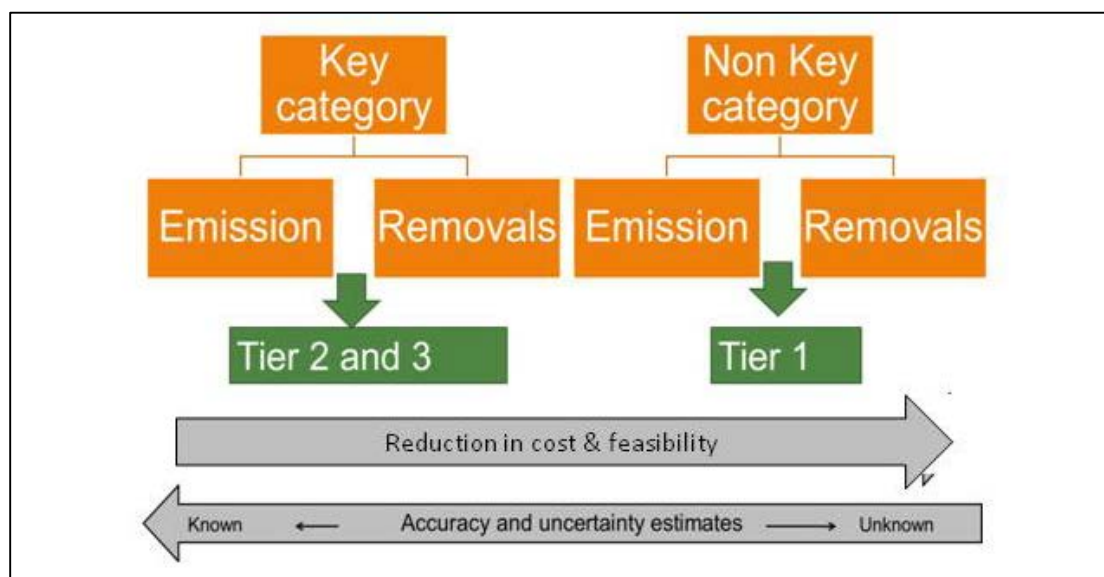


Figure 3.4: Choice of estimation tier according to KCA process (adapted from Maniatis and Mollicone, 2010)

### 3.5.1 Activity data

The IPCC Guidelines describe three different *approaches* for representing AD, or the change in area of different land categories (Figure 3.5). Note that approaches are specific to representing AD and should not be confused with the three inventory tiers discussed above. The three approaches include:

- Approach 1 identifies the total area for each land category. This information is usually provided by non-spatial country statistics and does not provide information on the nature and area of conversions

between land uses (i.e., it only provides “net” area changes), for example deforestation minus forestation, and thus is not suitable for REDD+.

- Approach 2 involves tracking of land conversions between categories, resulting in a non-spatially explicit land-use conversion matrix.
- Approach 3 extends Approach 2 by using spatially explicit land conversion information, derived from sampling or wall-to-wall remote sensing mapping techniques.

It is likely that land-use changes under a REDD+ mechanism will be required to be both identifiable and traceable in the future. Therefore, it is likely that only Approach 3, or Approach 2 with additional information (e.g. land cover change maps) will be useful for land tracking, and thus, REDD+ implementation.

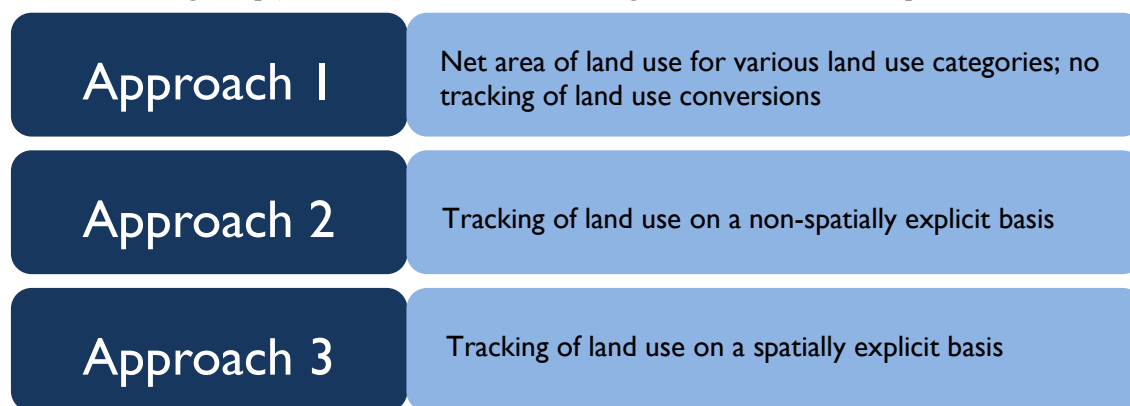


Figure 3.5: Different approaches for obtaining activity data (adapted from IPCC GPG 2003)

### 3.5.2 Emission factors

The first methodological requirement to be met for the national inventory report is the generation of country-specific estimates of the EFs for each key sub-category, i.e., different forest types or conversion of one forest type to a different category. To obtain such estimates, and to comply with the UNFCCC completeness reporting principle, it is primarily necessary to develop a national forest inventory for REDD+, or adapt an existing inventory, to provide estimates for the five IPCC forest carbon pools (aboveground biomass, belowground biomass, litter, deadwood and soil organic carbon). The carbon stock change estimates that a country will have to submit through its GHG inventory will also have to consider all the possible transfers between pools (Figure 3.6).

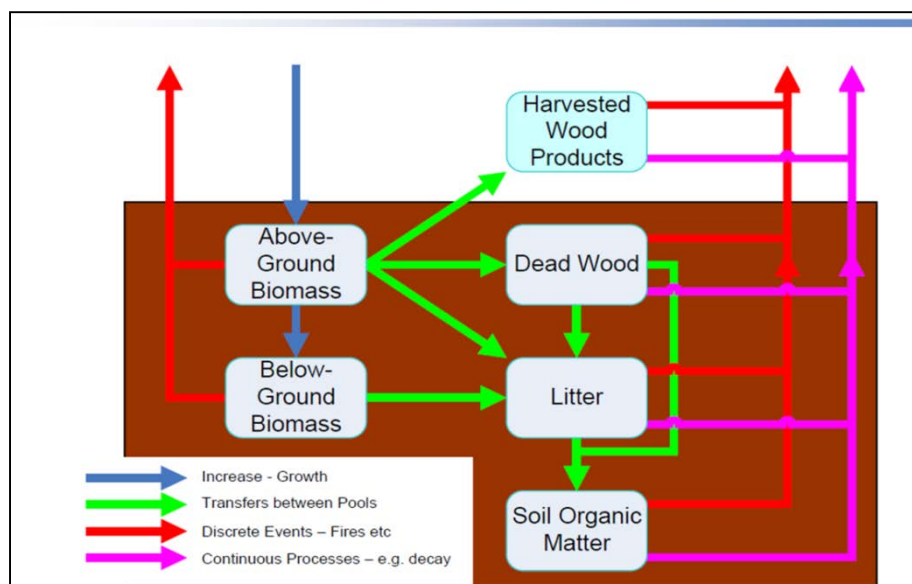


Figure 3.6: Carbon transfer among pools in a forest ecosystem

### 3.5.3 Methods to estimate emissions and removals

For land use, the IPCC recognizes two methods to estimate carbon emissions: the Stock-Change method<sup>12</sup> and the Gain-Loss method (IPCC, 2003). The Stock-Change method estimates emissions by identifying the changes in carbon stocks at the beginning and end of the period over an entire monitoring area. The Gain-Loss method estimates emissions by identifying the area of change from one cover type to another and the difference in stocks between those two types per unit area (Figure 3.7). Both of these simple calculation approaches assume that emissions to and removals from the atmosphere are equal to the total stock changes.

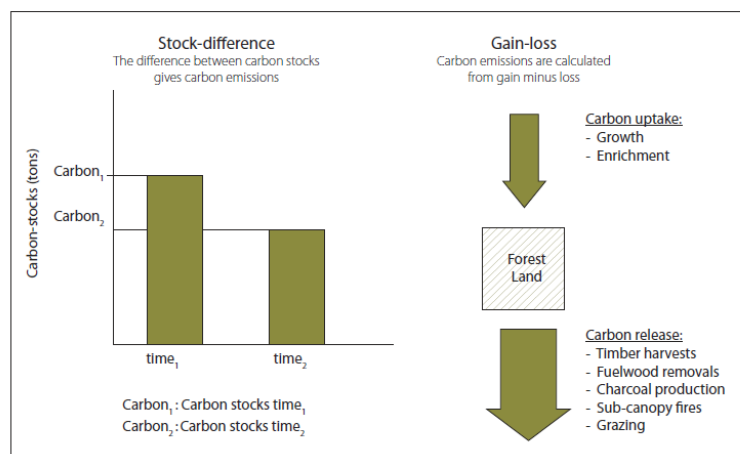


Figure 3.7: Two IPCC-recognized methods for estimating carbon emissions: i) stock-difference; and ii) gain-loss (Angelsen 2008).

<sup>12</sup> The GPG-LULUCF (IPCC, 2003) uses the term Stock-Change, while the Guidance from 2006 uses Stock-Difference (IPCC, 2006). There has been no decision for non-Annex I Parties regarding use of the 2006 Guidelines, and thus in this Manual we use the former term throughout, even though the 2006 Guidelines are more up-to-date and use the latter.



The design of the field-inventory and land cover mapping strategies differs depending on which of the two methods is used. For the Stock-Change method, land-cover mapping is used to stratify the monitoring area to assist field sampling and to extrapolate field-based estimates. The entire forest area is then sampled in the field at one time period and revisited at a later time period. The difference in stocks between the two time periods is then estimated for each stratum. Sampling must be designed to capture losses from deforestation and forest degradation that occurred between the two time periods. For forest degradation, this means estimating what is a modest reduction in stock per area spread over large areas. For deforestation, this means ensuring that the sampling design captures the impact of a relatively small variable, i.e. patches of deforestation, each of which has a relatively large emissions impact.

For the Gain-Loss method, the field inventory is conducted to obtain an estimate of mean stock-per-unit-area for each cover class. These per-area estimates can then be assumed to be constant, and land use is monitored to estimate the areas of change between pairs of classes. In this case, the data on the difference in stocks associated with a change between two classes over time are called Emission Factors (EFs), and the areas of change are called Activity Data. These are multiplied to estimate the emissions associated with each type of land-use change.

The EFDB, described in Box 3.5, represents one source of EF data information. Additional sources of emission estimates include: 1) measured emissions and 2) complex calculations. Measured emission estimates are increasingly available due to the emission trading scheme requirements in some countries. However, using these estimates requires careful consideration, and compatibility with the unmeasured part of the inventory must be ensured, otherwise inconsistencies may arise.

### **Box 3.5: IPCC Emission Factor Database**

One source of EFs is the IPCC Emission Factor Database (EFDB). The EFDB is a continuously revised web-based information exchange forum for EFs and other parameters relevant to the estimation of emissions or removals of GHGs at the national level. Internet queries of the database can be performed via the home pages of the IPCC, IPCC-NGGIP, or directly at <http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/EFDB/main.php>.

The EFDB is designed as a platform for experts and researchers to communicate new EFs or other parameters to a worldwide audience of potential end-users. It is intended to become a recognized library where users can find EFs and other parameters with background documentation or technical references. While experts and researchers from all over the world are invited to populate the EFDB with their data, the criteria for inclusion of new EFs and other parameters will be assessed by the editorial board of the EFDB. These procedures enable the user to judge the applicability of the EF, or other parameter, for use in their inventory; however, the responsibility of using this information appropriately remains with the user.

Emissions estimates may also come from complex models that the country has developed (Tier 3 method). The complex calculations include many parameters, (e.g., carbon density per species in a country). Some emissions occur over a period of years after the actual action, such as those from harvested wood products. However a country needs to ensure that the complex models are compatible with the IPCC Guidelines.

Lastly, data needs should be addressed. Particularly for land use, there is a range of data necessary for calculation. Various EFs and parameters are required, such as conversion factors for carbon content of wood, above ground biomass to total biomass, and growth rates. To alleviate the lack of data, the guidelines provide default values for different regions and ecosystems. Nonetheless, it should be noted that some country-specific data tend not to change annually. Therefore, countries are encouraged to invest in finding country-specific data that are better suited to local circumstances. Such data may also be suitable for regional circumstances where a group of countries share similar ecosystems. Collaboration within the region for data could be a cost-effective alternative.



Land uses can change on an annual basis, and therefore, AD on land areas can change on an annual basis. Thus, regular monitoring is required. The collection of AD should be conducted with the aim of generating representative, reliable, and consistent data over time, and could be accomplished through ground surveys, forest inventories, or using satellite data (GOFC GOLD, 2011). Table 3.2 summarizes the key elements to consider when estimating emissions and removals from the land-use change and forestry sector: i) forest carbon pools (EFs from forest ecosystems); ii) changes in land use (AD); and iii) the carbon stock estimation methods.

IPCC elements	Options	Implications
1. Forest carbon pools (Emission Factors)	1. Tier 1	➤ High uncertainty but less expensive
	2. Tier 2	➤ Requires national data including a national forest inventory
	3. Tier 3	➤ Most accurate but more expensive and time consuming
2. Land representation (Activity Data)	1. Approach 1	➤ Not suitable for REDD+ due to the lack of accuracy
	2. Approach 2	➤ Not readily suitable for REDD+ because it is not spatially explicit
	3. Approach 3	➤ Suitable for REDD+, but requires rigorous analysis process and ground truthing
3. Carbon stock estimation method	1. Stock change	➤ 2 series of forest inventories required
	2. Gain - loss	➤ 1 forest inventory with carbon stock fluxes estimation

Table 3.2: Key elements for the estimation of emissions and removals for the LULUCF sector

## 3.6 REFERENCES

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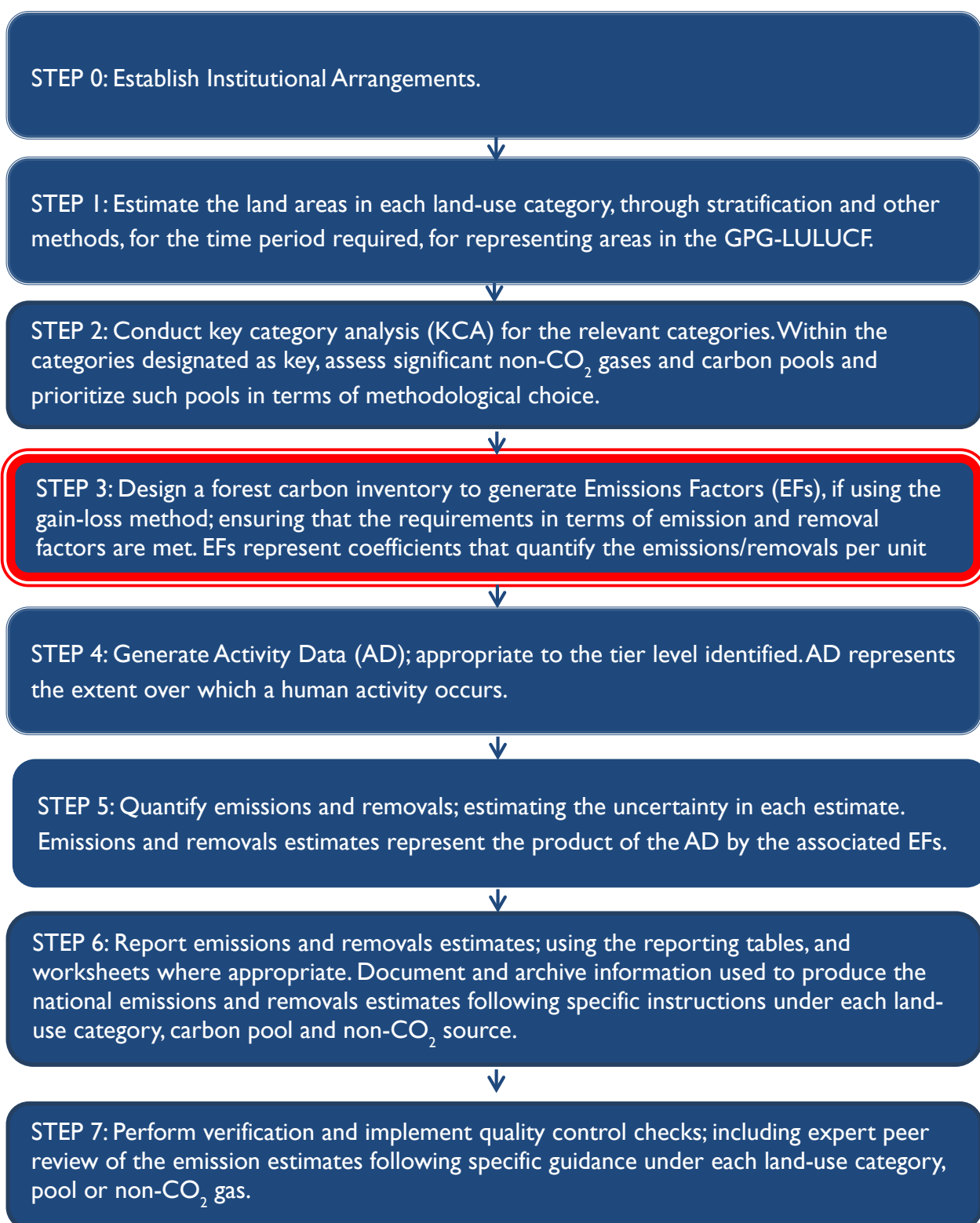
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# 4.0 FIELD-BASED INVENTORIES

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Section 3.3, *Inventory and Reporting Steps*, of this Manual outlines the sequence of steps required for generating a national GHG inventory. This chapter is relevant to the activities highlighted on the following page.



According to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) guidance for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, plus the role of conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+), countries will have to establish National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS) that quantify changes in land cover and terrestrial carbon stocks using a combination of ground-based forest carbon inventory approaches for estimating, as appropriate, anthropogenic forest-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks and forest-area changes. Countries will need to perform these processes according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) principles of transparency, accuracy, completeness, comparability, and consistency (TACCC).

A field-based forest carbon inventory has multiple purposes, including providing accurate input into a national GHG inventory, facilitating national communication of carbon emissions and removals from land use, and supporting the generation of GHG offset credits or national programs to mitigate emissions. When a forest carbon inventory can serve multiple needs, it will likely be easier to obtain resources to prepare the inventory and maintain support for continued work over time. Box 4.1 provides an illustrative inventory design and implementation work plan.

#### **Box 4.1: Illustrative inventory design and implementation work plan**

- Establish Institutional Conduct: a capacity and needs assessment through a consultative process engaging a wide range of potential users of data (beyond REDD+ MRV end uses)
  1. Define objective, specifying end uses and desired outputs. Consider scale/resolution desired and whether focus is on estimation of stocks or stock change.
  2. Select desired precision /allowable uncertainty
  3. Define budget and personnel and capacity building needs
- Design inventory
  1. Define forest carbon pools (informed by KCA analysis) and other environmental parameters to measure
  2. Select and validate allometric equations and define required measurements
  3. Develop sample design
    - a. Collect data to develop sample design (e.g. pilot plot data from existing inventories, maps and relevant GIS coverages, aerial photographs and remote sensing data)
    - b. Define population/forest area
    - c. Select sampling approach (e.g. simple random, systematic, stratified, two-stage)
    - d. Define sample unit (e.g. fixed area, nested fixed area, variable radius, cluster, permanent or temporary) and sampling intensity, the latter with consideration to budget constraints, desired precision, desired scale/resolution, forest heterogeneity and plot size
    - e. Allocate samples and produce maps for inventory implementation
    - f. Document design and rationale
- Prepare for inventory implementation
  1. Define inventory organization/administration
  2. Select and acquire measurement technologies/equipment
  3. Develop field measurement and data management protocols
  4. Set up inventory database
  5. Organize and train field and administrative personnel
  6. Produce tactical plans to guide deployment of field teams
- Implement inventory
  1. Collect field measurement data and enter to database
  2. Conduct periodic internal audits (via plot re-measurements) through implementation to confirm adherence to protocols and identify and correct any measurement errors
- Analysis and reporting
  1. Data checking/quality control
  2. Analyze data and calculate estimates and uncertainty
  3. Produce reports and summary results
  4. Submit results to external technical expert verification (as part of larger UNFCCC REDD+ verification process)

Forest carbon inventory data have substantial overlap with timber inventory data, and can serve other land management, wildlife, and land-use management needs. It may be possible to extend the use of collected data, or extend the geographic range of a forest carbon inventory and thereby jointly serve carbon inventory and other resource management needs. This type of data sharing can make the inventory more cost effective and ensure financing from more sources, since multiple information users can advocate for its continued funding. For example, the Mexican National Forest and Soil Inventory carried out an effective consultation process to identify the information that various users of the inventory would require. The national forest inventories supported by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) National Forest Monitoring and Assessment

program provide another example. Besides the collection of information regarding timber species and volume, these inventories collect data on carbon stock, non-timber forest products and socio-economic indicators<sup>13</sup>. REDD+ activities may encompass vast areas of land, and may eventually encompass an entire country, and Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) should be at a corresponding scale. There are economies of scale in forest carbon inventories, meaning that inventories covering more area become less expensive when the cost is calculated on a per-hectare basis.

Field-based measurements are critical elements in both traditional probability-based sampling and in model-based estimation approaches involving interpretation of remote sensing imagery. For perspective, forest inventory is most accurately conceived of as a collection of procedures and technologies that encompass a system. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing approaches (see Chapter 5) are part of this system, and facilitate mapping, stratification, and implementation of sampling schemes. In this context, new model-based approaches in development, relating biomass to remote sensing data (see Chapter 5, emerging technologies), hold promise to complement, but not replace, “traditional” field-based measurement practices and probability-based approaches.

This chapter also focuses on the derivation of country or region-specific data that could be used with a *Tier 2* or *Tier 3* method; *Tier 1* methods rely on the use of default values.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the IPCC recognizes two methods to estimate carbon changes: the gain-loss method and the stock change method<sup>14</sup> and establishes hierarchical *Tiers* of data specificity (IPCC, 2006). This chapter focuses on implementation of the stock change method. The gain-loss method, which focuses on identifying and measuring fluxes, is discussed in Section 4.9 below. A further discussion of gain-loss and stock change methods is included in section 2.1 of the Global Forest Observation Initiative (GFOI) Methods and Guidance Document (GFOI 2013). Sampling and measurement guidance presented in this chapter is relevant to both the stock change and gain-loss methods. Repeated measure from sample plots can be used to estimate stocks at two points in time, or to estimate gains (e.g. diameter increment) and losses (e.g. mortality). In the latter case, gain-loss, measurements are used to produce emission factors associated with specified transitions in forest structure (e.g., intact to degraded forest), which is then expanded using activity data, derived by delineating the area of those transitions. In contrast, the stock change method does not produce emission factors and activity data, but instead produces overall estimates of stocks for the entire area under MRV (held constant) for two points in time and estimates emissions as the difference between the two estimates. In comparison, the stock change method is less targeted than the gain-loss method, and best suited for landscapes where the area of forest undergoing transitions in structure is either difficult to delineate or relatively evenly distributed across large areas.

## 4.2 CARBON POOLS AND THEIR MEASUREMENT

REDD+ forest carbon inventories should quantify stocks of carbon in pools that might change significantly under the REDD+ mechanism or under the REDD+ reference level. Other resource management goals may be addressed by having teams collect some additional types of data while doing their carbon inventory work. While the different carbon pools are described in Chapter 3, the information below highlights considerations specific to forest inventories.

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<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.fao.org/forestry/nfma/47655/en/>

<sup>14</sup> The GPG–LULUCF (IPCC, 2003) uses the term stock change, while the Guidance from 2006 uses stock difference (IPCC, 2006). There has been no decision for non-Annex I Parties regarding use of the 2006 Guidelines, and thus in this Manual we use the former term throughout, even though the 2006 Guidelines are more up-to-date and use the latter.

All inventories should measure live trees above a modest size because aboveground biomass (described in Section 4.2.1) is typically the largest biotic carbon pool in a forest that would be lost via deforestation. If forest land is converted to agricultural use or developed use, substantial amounts of soil carbon (described in 4.2.5) may be lost, and thus monitoring of soil organic carbon stocks may be warranted. If there is substantial disturbance of forests via degradation, it may be important to measure dead wood carbon stocks (described in 4.2.3).

#### **4.2.1 Aboveground biomass**

In a forest, aboveground biomass typically emits the most carbon upon conversion to non-forest. However, in some systems, e.g. peat swamp forests, soil carbon loss resulting from conversion of forest to agricultural cropland can be greater than emissions from aboveground biomass.

An example of a default set of size categories is one where the tree category has a diameter at breast height (DBH) of at least 10 cm, and the shrub/small tree category includes woody plants at least 10 cm, 50 cm or 1 m tall. Typically, smaller woody plants and non-woody plants are excluded or are measured separately from larger woody plants. To increase sampling efficiency, there may be sub-categories such as small trees that are 10-40 cm DBH and large trees that are greater than 40 cm DBH. To accurately estimate the forest carbon stock of live biomass, the inventory should include all tree species, tallying trees with diameters of at least 10 cm. Forest inventories limited to commercial species or trees in commercial (e.g., over 30 cm DBH) diameter classes often exclude important components of total aboveground biomass and consequently offer limited reliability in estimation of carbon stocks and stock changes.

#### **4.2.2 Belowground biomass**

Belowground biomass is an important carbon pool that may equal 25 percent or more of the aboveground biomass in many forests. As discussed in Chapter 3, fine roots are often excluded, or measured as part of the soil carbon pool due to the difficulties in Manually separating them from soil. The boundary between fine and coarse roots depends on the method used to estimate the belowground biomass. The IPCC recommends 2 mm diameter, but measuring root biomass is time consuming and expensive. Therefore, REDD+ inventory developers may choose to apply a Tier 1 approach for belowground biomass which uses the default root-to-shoot ratios provided in Table 4.4 of the IPCC 2006 Guidelines. To obtain the belowground biomass, multiply the aboveground biomass by 1 + root-to-shoot ratio.

#### **4.2.3 Dead wood**

Dead wood, a sub-component of dead organic matter, includes standing and lying deadwood. Standing dead wood is typically measured along with living tree biomass (see aboveground biomass) and recorded as deadwood because its density often differs from live trees. By convention, dead woody stems where the long axis of the stem is within 45 degrees of vertical are classified as standing dead and stems where the long axis is more than 45 degrees off vertical are classified as lying dead wood. A typical minimum piece size for coarse woody debris is 10 cm in diameter and sometimes there is also a minimum length requirement that pieces be at least 1 m long. Pieces that are not large enough to be classified as coarse debris are classed as fine debris. A common minimum size of fine debris pieces is 1 cm, with smaller pieces being classified as litter. If litter is measured, the boundary definition must correspond to the smallest piece of woody debris, so that any piece of material fits in exactly one category, and is neither double-counted nor excluded.



#### 4.2.4 Litter

Litter, better described as the “forest floor,” includes fine woody debris, foliage and twigs that are on the ground and not attached to a plant stem, as well as live fine roots that are above the mineral or organic soil. A humic layer of organic soil is the decomposed remnants of vegetative material and is typically not included in the litter pool. It is typically included in the soil pool, but if this pool occurs infrequently it may be included in the litter pool. Fine woody debris is small pieces of dead wood. By convention, material less than 1 cm in diameter are defined as litter. However, the litter pool may be defined as including fine woody debris up to 10 cm in diameter, particularly if there is no fine woody debris pool. Whatever boundary is chosen, the same boundary must be used for the maximum size of pieces in the litter pool and the minimum size of pieces in the woody debris pool.

For some forest types, litter tends to decompose easily, and as a result, may not be worth measuring since the pool is not typically large. However, if decomposition is slowed by factors such as cold temperatures, moisture saturation, low pH, or nutrient limitation, an organic layer may form. Examples of this include peat and muck soils; peat is a buildup of minimally decomposed plant material, while muck is black, decomposed organic material. If a significant decomposed organic layer is present between the litter and the mineral soil, it should be measured separately from the litter and the mineral soil carbon pools.

#### 4.2.5 Soil organic matter

As discussed in Chapter 3, this category includes all organic carbon in mineral and organic soils to a specified depth. Typically, there is no inorganic carbon in soils, except for sites that are so arid that few trees are likely to grow and sites with carbonaceous soils such as limestone. Although there are often measurable amounts of soil organic carbon down to depths of several meters, carbon is generally counted if it is in the top 20 or 30 cm of soil, but some projects have measured soil carbon to 1 m depth or more. The density of soil carbon decreases with depth, and the amount of effort required to sample soil carbon increases with depth.

Total soil carbon stocks are often as large as, or larger than, woody biomass carbon stocks. If there are small or modest degrees of disturbance of the forest, soil carbon stocks are unlikely to change much. As a result, many projects that maintain existing forest do not measure soil carbon stocks because the stocks are assumed to be constant. However, in the case of forest clear-cutting and conversion to agriculture, soil carbon stocks may have large changes and should be measured, particularly if the agricultural activities include plowing.

The threshold size of roots and dead wood to be included in the soil carbon category must correspond to definitions used in the live belowground biomass and dead wood categories. By convention, live roots less than 2 mm in diameter are often classified as part of the soil carbon pool, and live roots of 2 mm or greater are classified as belowground live biomass. There is less standardization of the definitional boundary between soil carbon and woody debris, but typically the boundary is defined as a specific piece size or degree to which pieces are buried. Guidance provided by the IPCC specifies separate reporting of changes in organic soil carbon stocks and inorganic soil carbon stocks (but change in inorganic soil carbon stocks is assumed to be zero unless Tier 3 methods are used) (IPCC 2006). As a result, if inorganic soil carbon is likely to be present, laboratory tests that do not differentiate organic from inorganic carbon should be avoided. If measuring soil carbon, a key decision is the depth to which soil will be measured. In undisturbed systems, there is more soil carbon per centimeter of depth at the surface than there is at 40 or 100 cm below. At depths of more than one to three meters, the density of soil carbon is low, and changes in the stock are slow, but the total amounts can be significant because the mass of soil is so large. In closed, moist, and wet forests, most of the change in soil carbon happens near the surface in the top 20-30cm. However, in more arid woodlands, substantial carbon loss can occur in the deeper soil, at depths up to one meter or more. In the years to decades following conversion to plowed fields, typically 40-50% of this carbon is lost. . When switching from plowing to trees

or no-till cropping, it is possible that half the soil carbon gain in the first five to 10 years will be in the top 10 cm of soil.

To capture much of the carbon stock change that results from land management changes, while limiting sampling effort, many inventories sample only the top 20 or 30 cm of soil. In moist forest, dry forest, shrubland, and grassland areas where there is conversion to agriculture, soil carbon losses are usually large enough to justify the cost and difficulty of measuring soil carbon loss to 1 m depth. In wet forests and coarse texture soils that have little carbon, it can be efficient to only measure soil carbon to 20 or 30 cm depth. This shallow sampling is especially common for inventories focused on detecting carbon stock increases. Larger changes in percentage terms are easier to detect with sampling. Much of the gain in soil carbon in the first few years of conversion from crops to forest is in the top few centimeters of soil. Therefore, the gain in percentage terms is greatest when only the top few centimeters are measured. In conversion of tilled cropland to grassland there can be significant carbon gains to more than 1 m of depth and it may be worth conducting deep sampling.

When measuring soil carbon loss upon conversion of forest or grassland to cropland with plowing, the percentage change in carbon stock may be large, even when measuring to significant depths, such as 50 or 100 cm. As a result, avoided deforestation projects may sample soil much deeper than 30 cm, such as to a depth of 1 m, to be able to claim credit for avoiding emission of deeper soil carbon.

## **4.3 CONCEPTS AND CONSIDERATIONS IN INVENTORY DESIGN**

Many possible inventory designs can be used to estimate forest carbon stocks. The goal is to choose an efficient design that achieves the desired level of precision at a minimum cost. In general, the process of designing an inventory involves a sequence of steps:

- 1) Needs assessment
- 2) Sample design selection
- 3) Plot design considerations
- 4) Cost assessment and specification of sampling intensity

### **4.3.1 Needs assessment**

The first decision in designing an inventory is to assess what needs to be known as a result of the inventory. This requires choosing what is to be estimated, and over what geographic areas. The geographic scope might be a particular block of land amounting to only a few dozen hectares, an entire country, or something in between. Initially, REDD+ monitoring activities may also only focus on lands that are classified as managed forest, or forest subject to anthropogenic change.

The next decision is whether there are sub-divisions within the total area where extra information is needed. A country should aim to understand trends for specific regions or forest types. Producing accurate estimates of stocks and changes for all the various strata will significantly increase costs and may not prove the most efficient approach.

Consideration of inventory design should also take account of, and seek to build on, existing capacities and experience of personnel that will be involved in both field measurement and analysis; per COP19 (Decision 11/CP.19 paragraph 4(a)), NFMS “should build on existing systems.” Radically new approaches or

technologies should be introduced incrementally and only after trial applications can foster confidence of responsible personnel.

### 4.3.2 Sampling design selection

Sampling must be unbiased to ensure that resulting inventories will be reliable. There are many options available for developing a sampling design. Four common approaches, illustrated and elaborated below in Figure 4.1 are: i) random sampling; ii) systematic sampling; iii) stratified (random or systematic) sampling; and iv) two stage sampling.

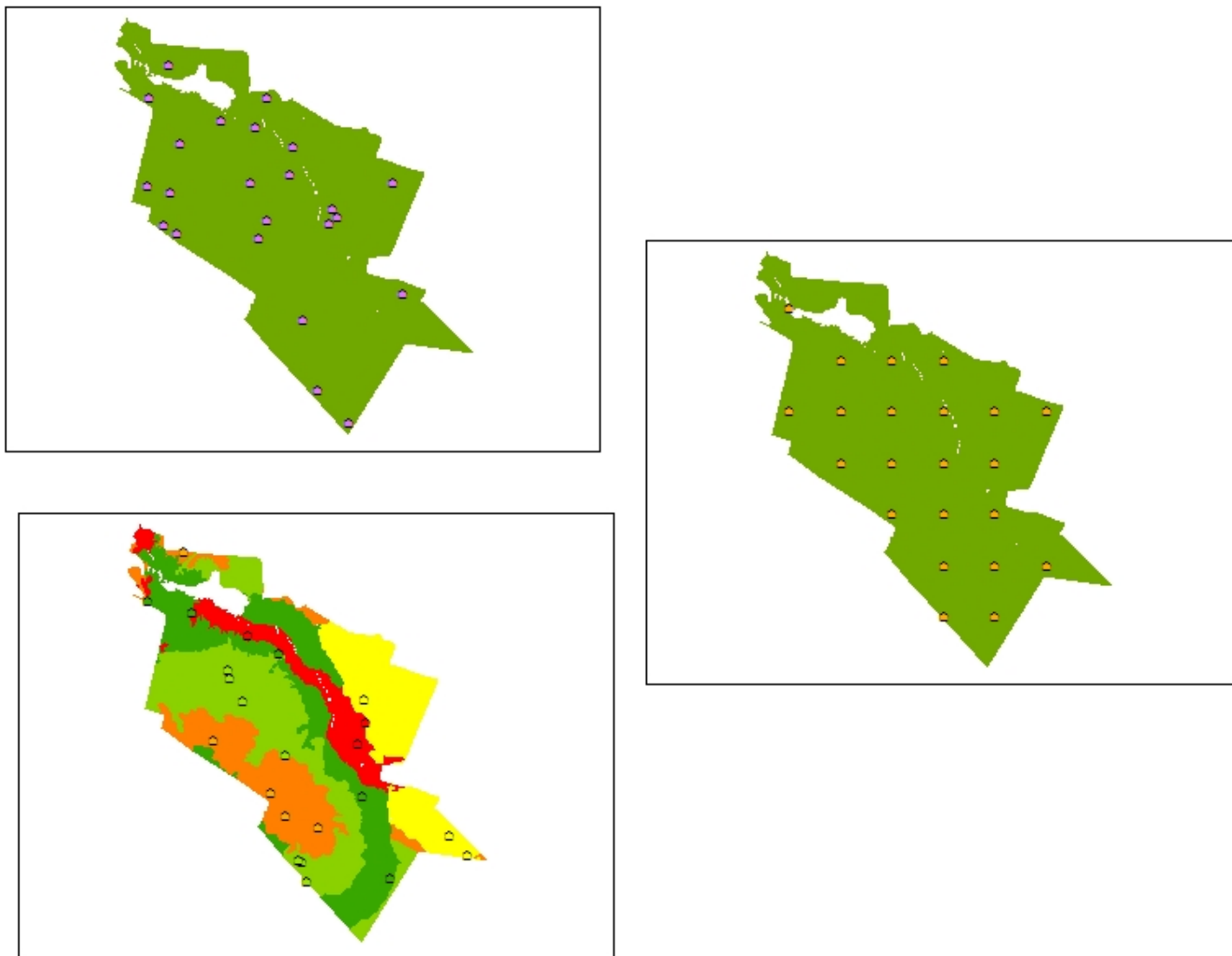


Figure 4.1. Diagram of random (top), systematic (right), and stratified random (bottom) sampling.

### *Random Sampling*

A random sample approach locates plots within a study area at random. The primary advantage of random sampling is that the calculation of means and uncertainty is simple. In practice, random allocation of plots often presents challenges to navigation in the field and produces plot distributions that invariably under-sample some areas and over-sample others, which, while un-biased, may appear to lack credible coverage; inventories must seriously consider perceptions of both specialists and non-specialists. For example, non-specialists may not fully understand bias and may have difficulty accepting random sampling and protocols that result in plots being located in sites that the non-specialist views as not representative of the forest. Training should include communication of the importance of measuring the various conditions that occur over the geographic extent of the inventory, and that quantifying this variability is a key part of quantifying how reliably the samples reflect the forest as a whole.

### *Systematic Sampling*

Many national forest inventories instead use a systematic sampling design, where regularly spaced plots are measured. A systematic sample ensures that all geographic areas are equally represented, and is especially useful if little is known about forest conditions or dynamics. Its intuitive layout also facilitates navigation in the field.

Typically, systematic sampling involves laying a regular grid over the geographic area to be inventoried, and locating plot centers at the grid intersection points, with the first intersection point located at random. The spacing of the grid lines is calculated so that the desired number of plots can be placed in the area. Many people find systematic sampling attractive because it gives equal emphasis to all parts of the area being sampled. A variation on systematic sampling is to randomly locate one plot within each cell defined by the grid lines (as is done in the U.S. Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis program). Systematic sampling offers significant improvement over simple random sampling in terms of reduced uncertainty, though the calculation of uncertainty for systematic samples is less straightforward than for random samples.

An example of a recent national forest inventory performed using systematic sampling is the Integrated Land Use Assessment (ILUA) carried out by the Zambia Forestry Department (2005-2008). The ILUA set up 221 tracks (each track has 4 sampling plots) systematically across the country at 50 km distances. Mexico provides another example, where the National Forest and Soil inventory established a systematic sample grid of 25,000 geo-referenced permanent points. Each point contains four sites of 400 m<sup>2</sup>. From 2008 onward, about 20 percent of the points have been re-measured, such that all points are monitored once every five years (GOFC-GOLD, 2013).

### *Stratified Sampling*

Stratified sampling is accomplished by dividing the sampling area into relatively homogenous sub-areas, and separately sampling each sub area. Stratification increases efficiency of sampling, giving more precise estimates for the same or less effort. Within each stratum, a systematic sample or simple random sample is conducted. Carbon stock (or stock change) is estimated for each stratum, then the stocks of the strata are summed to estimate the stock (or stock change) of the entire area.

It is important to understand that stratified sample designs do not produce estimates at the stratum level with equal precision as for the overall population – the goal of stratification is to distribute sampling effort more efficiently to produce a population-level estimate.

While many approaches to stratification exist, it is common to stratify by ecotype or forest type. This approach to stratification increases statistical power, giving a more precise estimate of carbon stocks for a

given number of plots of a given design and also increases the likelihood that plots within a particular stratum will be similar to other plots in that stratum. For a given number of plots, having lower variance between plots gives a higher probability that the total carbon stock will be close to the carbon stock estimated from the sampling. Homogeneous strata need few plots to precisely estimate their carbon stocks and, therefore, sampling efforts can be focused towards more variable ecotypes or forest types.

If the goal of an inventory is to precisely quantify changes in forest carbon stocks, allocation of plots should be weighted toward areas where carbon stocks are susceptible to decrease from degradation or deforestation, or increase from forest growth and regeneration, and such areas should be identified and delineated as separate priority strata. This would mean stratifying by the expected future change in carbon stock, and allocating more sampling effort to strata that are expected to have greater change over time (decrease or increase).

Stratifying by expected change in carbon stock can be desirable, and may be essential if net changes in stocks are small compared to total stocks, as is often the case with degradation. The goal is to "block" differences into different strata.

Stratification is generally performed *ex ante*, but strata can also be redefined *ex post* via post-stratification and plots re-allocated in a changing landscape. Post-stratification involves re-allocating sample plots among strata, after the original plot allocation has taken place, and requires that the new strata areas are known exactly and that the existing plots can be unambiguously re-assigned to the new strata (e.g., through monitoring of forest cover and change classes with remotely sensing). While this post-stratification approach is straightforward in terms of estimation of the mean, using the same calculation as a pre-stratified sample introduces some additional uncertainty due to the random and changing sample sizes within strata. Calculation of variance for a post-stratified sample is presented in Cochran (1977). The added uncertainty produced by post-stratification tends to be small, particularly where proportional allocation can be roughly maintained (e.g. through an original systematic sample), and where sufficient sample size (of 10 or more plots; Westfall *et al.*, 2011) is maintained within each stratum. The latter can be ensured by consideration in the definition of strata (e.g., combining forest types with small areas and sample sizes), or by deploying supplemental samples.

The IPCC recommends stratifying by climate, soil, ecological zone, and management practices (Vol. 4, Chapter 3.3.2.1). When choosing strata, developers should consider what is known about the forest and the dynamics of carbon stock change. Within each stratum, the goal is to have relatively homogeneous forest (in terms of structure), or forest with the same carbon stock dynamics, but for this forest to be different from other strata. Of equal or more importance, the cost of placing large numbers of plots in remote inaccessible forest areas may be prohibitively expensive and/or logistically impossible. Thus, the selected sampling intensities in these areas may be less than in accessible areas. In this case, areas with different sampling intensities constitute different strata.

To stratify a country's forest, it is first necessary to have a current map of the dimension being used to stratify. This may be a national forest benchmark map or some other valid map source. To stratify within each land-cover type, one can use various GIS data on elevation, soils or other parameters. Stratification approaches are further discussed in the GFOI Methods and Guidance, section 1.4.5 (GFOI 2013). If no previous information on forest types exists in the country, the stratification can be done initially using global ecological datasets, such as maps of Holdridge life zones<sup>15</sup>, World Wildlife Fund Ecoregions<sup>16</sup>, and FAO ecological zones<sup>17</sup>. Various remote-sensing-based data can also be used. These include indices based on

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<sup>15</sup> <http://geodata.grid.unep.ch/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.worldwildlife.org/science/data/terreco.cfm>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.fao.org/geonetwork/srv/en/main.home>

spectral and/or temporal information, such as greenness indices and seasonality indices. They also include classifications or derived products, such as global biomass maps produced by research programs. Discussions of these can be found in Chapter 5.

The value of stratification is illustrated with the following example (Table 4.1), in which the sample sizes required to target 95 percent confidence intervals equal to  $\pm 10\%$  of the mean are calculated for a dataset both with and without stratification.

		Stratum 1	Stratum 2	Stratum 3	Stratum 4	Total
Pilot observations	Area (ha)	2,500	7,000	12,000	10,000	31,500
		20	90	65	50	
		30	110	25	85	
		70	180	95	120	
		120	140	40	75	
		25	75	90	170	
		45	110	65	100	
Mean		51.7	117.5	63.3	100.0	83.1
Standard deviation		38.0	37.6	27.3	41.6	43.6
CV		74%	32%	43%	42%	52%
Design 1	Sample size for 4 independent forest inventories	217	41	74	69	402
Design 2	Sample size (not stratified)					110
Design 3	Sample size (stratified with Neyman allocation among strata)	6	16	20	25	67

Table 4.1: Comparison of required sampling intensities for stratified and unstratified sample designs

Design 1 allows for reporting with the targeted precision at the individual stratum level by implementing an independent sampling effort in each forest stratum. This is an important consideration, in that stratification, as shown in Design 3, achieves the targeted precision at the population level, not at the stratum level. For example, highly variable strata covering small areas, like stratum 1 in Table 4.1, will have less influence on the total number of plots needed than those strata that cover larger areas, like strata 3 and 4. The advantage of stratification is illustrated in comparing Designs 2 and 3, both of which are designed to generate estimates at the population level, yet require substantially different levels of field effort to accomplish them: 67 sample plots for the stratified design (Design 3), and 110 plots for the unstratified design (Design 2), which ignores sources of variability within the population.

#### *Two stage sampling*

Sampling vast hard-to-access landscapes necessitates efficient deployment of field effort, as travel between sample units represents the largest time and labor investment in forest inventory. This can be achieved using

a two-stage sample, involving two steps in sampling. For example, the first step might involve selecting polygons to sample from a population of polygons, and the second step involve allocating sample points within selected polygons. While two stage sampling introduces an added source of sampling error, it concentrates field effort and results in minimizing overall effort.

### 4.3.3 Plot design considerations

Plot design considerations include the type of plot to be used, as well as the size of the plot. Inventory developers will also need to consider whether plots will be permanent or temporary, and the variables that need to be measured. Each is discussed below.

#### *Plot types*

In a forest inventory, typical options for a plot design are:

- **Points** (dimensionless): variable radius plots can be implemented using a relascope or wedge prism, where a tree is determined to be in or out as a function of the ratio of its diameter to distance from plot center.
- **Lines** (one dimensional): on a sample line<sup>18</sup>, it can be observed how many features intersects the line. This method can be used to calculate the volume of coarse woody debris.
- **Areas** (two dimensional): all the trees found on a determined area are measured. Often these plots are called "fixed area" plots because the size is fixed. Typically, fixed area plots are circular or rectangular (including transects).

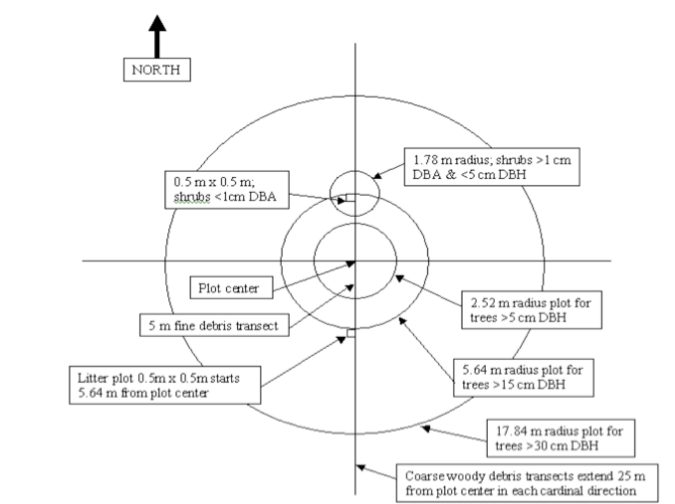


Figure 4.2: Sampling design including nested plots and line samples to measure the different types of carbon pools. From Smith *et al.* (2007).

<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that a sample line plot design isn't the same as a transect plot design. A transect plot design, even if long and narrow, is an area (two-dimensional).

Plots of different types may also be combined to achieve efficiencies in measuring different forms of forest biomass, such as combining lines with fixed area or point plots within which to sample lying dead wood and aboveground biomass, respectively (Figure 4.2).

Fixed area plots can have different shapes: circular, square, or rectangular. Normally, it is preferable to have circular plots because they have the smallest perimeter for the same area, reducing the amount of border trees. In contrast, in forests where visibility and penetrability is limited, transects tend to be preferable to facilitate accessibility to the entire plot and ensure that trees do not remain uncaptured. Also, transects tend to cover more site conditions, increasing the variability within plots.

The typical diameter distribution in a mature forest has a negative J shape (i.e., a very high number of small trees and fewer larger trees). Nesting designs that incorporate fixed area subplots of different sizes, targeting different diameter classes, allows for increased efficiency in plot measurements as they distribute measurement effort more evenly across diameter distributions. The same efficiencies are achieved, and surpassed, using variable radius plots, which sample trees with probability proportional to size.

Fixed area and variable radius plots are equally valid choices for a forest inventory (Grosenbaugh and Stover, 1957; Schreuder *et al.*, 1987). While variable radius plots are more effective in directing sampling effort to the most influential elements in a population (large trees), they are difficult to use in dense stands of small trees (e.g., early successional forest). Most importantly, the choice of fixed area versus variable radius plots depends on the level of comfort and familiarity of personnel. It is often advisable to keep with tradition to avoid extended learning periods and consequent measurement errors.

#### *Plot size*

Plot “size” is assessed differently for different plot types. For line plots, the key issue is length. For prism plots, the key issue is the prism factor, which is the ratio of diameter to distance from plot center that determines whether or not a tree is measured. For area plots, plot size is simply the area encompassed by the plot. These issues determine the “size” of the plot, and how many trees are included.

Plot types and sizes should be kept constant within strata. However, different plot types may be used in different strata to accommodate different forest structures and logistics.

Plot size affects the variability of carbon stocks observed on different plots, and the variability used in calculations of plots needed for the inventory will imply an approximate plot design. When designing an inventory to achieve a target level of precision, it is recommended to analyze actual plot data to estimate the variability that will result if different plot sizes are selected for different sizes or types of trees. Larger plots capture more variation in forest structure, and consequently have lower inter-plot variability. Therefore, required sampling intensities (see below) can be reduced by increasing plot size.

Defining the sample unit as a cluster of plots may also be used as a means of reducing inter-sample variability. An example of a cluster pattern would be five plots per cluster where one plot is centered on the central point of the cluster, and the remaining four plots are located with plot centers 200m away from the cluster center, in the cardinal directions. Data is analyzed using cluster means, not the values observed on individual plots, thus, effectively, the sample unit is the cluster, not the plot, and achieves the same reduction in inter-plot variability as larger plot sizes. Effectively, the cluster is simply a larger, dis-aggregated plot.

In the field, plots may need to be adjusted to account for slope and boundary considerations. Forest inventories report measurements over horizontal areas. Slope corrections, where plot size is increased, can account for the fact that distances measured along a slope are smaller when projected into a horizontal map plane. These typically need be applied only if the slope is greater than 10 percent. Where plots overlap the



boundary of an inventory area, corrections are applied to produce equivalent measurements for a complete sample (e.g., using a mirage method) or, with variable radius plots, a walk through method (Avery and Burkhardt 1994; Ducey *et al.*, 2004).

#### *Permanent plots versus temporary plots*

Permanent plots, which are re-measured periodically (e.g., every five years), allow for estimating the stand growth and disturbances with more precision (for a given number of plots) and can therefore quantify small increases or decreases in stocks. Typically, when forest carbon is being measured, it is necessary to detect the magnitude of change in carbon stocks over a short period of time such as five years or less. Note that weather and disturbance events can cause annual changes in forest carbon stock that are larger than anthropogenic changes, and attempting to quantify annual changes in forest carbon stocks resulting from human activities can be confounded by weather and wildfire.

When establishing permanent plots, it is good practice to increase the minimum number of plots, for the baseline number of plots needed, by 5 to 20 percent, providing a cushion in case some permanent plots cannot be relocated or land cover changes. There is a risk that plots, when visibly marked, may be treated differently by forest users or plantation managers and, therefore, it may be desirable to mark plot centers with monuments that are not visible to the human eye. For example, a metal stake may be placed completely in the ground for re-identification with a metal detector (Smith *et al.*, 2007; Diaz, 2011).

Temporary plots are often used in timber inventories. An advantage of temporary plots is that both stratum boundaries and the intensity of sampling can be easily changed over time.

#### *Parameters to measure*

The parameters that will be measured in the sample plots depend on the carbon pools of interest and the allometric equations that will be used to convert tree measurements into biomass. It is strongly recommended to work in reverse, first considering what needs to be known as a result of the inventory, then considering the analysis steps, back to the plot data, and thus determine what data should be collected.

### **4.3.4 Cost considerations and specification of sampling intensity**

The sampling intensity (i.e., the number of samples measured) predicates the precision and resolution of estimates that can be achieved by a forest inventory. Selecting the sampling intensity depends on a range of factors, including budget constraints, desired precision, desired scale/resolution of estimates, forest variability and plot size employed.

The goal of sampling is to reach a desired precision of the estimate of carbon stocks for an acceptable cost. Inventory costs are driven by variable costs that are a function of field effort. The majority of field effort is represented by travel between plots, not by measurements at the plots. Consequently, approaches that minimize travel time, including two stage samples and cluster sample designs, can improve efficiency in field effort. A range of inventory designs should be compared with representative cost data to find a design that meets the specified needs at an acceptable cost.

Some general principles dictating required sampling intensity must be considered. First, more plots yield lower sampling errors. To reduce uncertainty by half can require four times as many plots. Thus, getting extremely precise estimates may become expensive. Second, the statistical precision of a biomass estimate depends on the variability of the forest. The greater the variability of the forest, the more plots will be needed to obtain a given level of precision.

The key input to estimating the number of plots needed to obtain a given level of precision is the variation between plots, calculated as the coefficient of variation (CV). The CV is a measure of how different plots are from each other. Technically, the CV is the standard deviation divided by the mean. These statistics are discussed in Section 4.6.5 on calculating uncertainties. Table 4.2 shows the final results of a hypothetical example of estimating sampling sizes needed to reach specified sampling errors. In this case, the number of plots required to meet an increasing level of precision increases by four to reduce the uncertainty by half. On the other hand, the number of plots is relatively independent from the size of the area. Plot numbers in stratified sampling are dependent on the variability of the carbon stock in each stratum and the level of precision required, but are not dependent on the spatial extent of the project. The CV can be estimated from prior surveys that use a similar plot design in similar forests. If no prior surveys exist, a pilot study should be undertaken to estimate the CV. For small plots in forest with gaps, the CV can be well over 100 percent. In fully stocked plantations, the CV can be less than 30 percent.

As explained previously, larger plots may average out some of the fine-scale variations in forests, giving less plot-to-plot variability than smaller plots. When calculating the number of plots needed, one must choose an estimate of variability between plots. The chosen variability implies a plot size. For example, a level of variability might assume that almost all plots contain at least four large trees and that very few plots will contain gaps with few or no medium or large trees. Thus, when choosing plot size, the inventory developers will have to consider the density of large trees in the forest and the range of sizes of gaps, and choose a plot size that is large enough that with the clumped spacing of trees in the forest, most plots will have the required number of trees. At some point, the cost of increasing the size of existing plots no longer yields a significant reduction of variance when compared to that which could be achieved by increasing the number of plots to the sample. There is a theoretical optimal balance between plot size and number of plots that can be achieved through some combination of field experiments or prior knowledge. However, when sampling large areas, travel costs can have more effect on total cost than the number of plots, and for a given amount of money, greater statistical precision might be obtained by using fewer and larger plots than the theoretical optimum calculated without considering costs.

There are other more complex sampling systems that may or may not give more power for a given level of effort. These include stratified random cluster sampling, two-stage sampling, ranked set sampling, and panel sampling. Many inventories aim to keep crews continuously employed but only re-measure plots once every five years. In such a case, 20 percent of plots would be measured each year, with 100 percent of plots measured every five years. This is an example of a panel sample. If any of these more complex sampling systems are considered, a biometrician or statistician should be consulted to ensure that sampling intensity calculations and data analysis procedures are correct.

Coefficient of Variation	+/- 20 Acceptable Error	+/- 10 Acceptable Error	+/- 5 Acceptable Error	+/- 2 Acceptable Error
100%	98	392	1568	9801
50%	25	98	392	2450
20%	4	16	63	392
15%	2	9	35	221

Table 4.2: Example of the number of sample plots needed to achieve specified sampling errors with simple random sampling. The significant level is 95 percent for a large area

## 4.4 THE FOREST CARBON INVENTORY TEAM

A national forest inventory team should be comprised of:

- An entity with overall responsibility for the entire inventory and the ability to make decisions that are binding to regions (if regions are used). This entity must also coordinate closely with the single national entity designated with the overall responsibility for the GHG inventory. The entity responsible for the entire inventory may be governmental or may be part of a university or some other non-governmental organization with appropriate expertise and ability to continue operation. The entity is responsible for developing the inventory, which includes:
  - Selecting the sampling and plot design;
  - Setting up protocols for data collection;
  - Organizing the procurement of data collecting equipment;
  - Data processing and analysis;
  - Coordinating with the land-cover mapping team; and
  - Coordinating with regions and users of inventory results.
- Regional offices that are responsible for:
  - Organizing and training field teams;
  - Performing quality checks on data collection performed by field teams;
  - Providing backstopping support to field teams;
  - Entering data (including translating local species names into scientific names); and
  - Transmitting data to the central national office.
- Field crews that are responsible for data collection.

A key issue is how field crews will be staffed. A well-established national inventory where measurements are repeated regularly should have its own staff. If the inventory covers a very large area, it may be efficient to have different staff in different regions. Community-based monitoring, as discussed in Section 7.2, including the training and incorporation of local community members into the inventory, should be one goal for national inventories. Ideally, field crews should be a combination of technicians with measurement skills accompanied by local community members. The inclusion of members of the local community is crucial for the following reasons:

- Allows access to the plots;
- Provides information on the local names of species measured; and

- Provides information on the uses of important species found in the plot.

Field crews will need training to apply the selected protocols of the inventory. After training, an experienced supervisor should keep in close contact with crews during their first month of work. Supervision should include visiting crews as they are doing plot work, and checking the accuracy of their measurements (quality assurance and quality control is addressed below). It is highly desirable to have local community members included in the field crews, because they tend to know access routes and other locally unique information. On the other hand, the training of local community members to collect forest inventory measurements may not be cost effective, especially if data collection is not performed frequently. One solution is to have teams composed of individuals who, together, capture the necessary measurement skills, species identification ability, and local knowledge. This might mean having technicians with measurement skills who travel around large areas and temporary crew members who know local terrain and assist in measurements. Community monitoring may be more practical for detecting and specifying locations of infrequent events, such as new logging or clearing.

## 4.5 FIELD WORK AND ANALYSIS

### 4.5.1 Field work

Preparation for field work requires more than writing a field protocol and choosing plot locations. Key components of successful field work are:

- Logistics planning and implementation to ensure that training, equipment, supplies, transport, food, lodging, and communications are all provided as needed;
- Field Manual specifying how field work is done, and how to address unusual cases;
- Quality objectives for each measurement; and
- Field data check procedures, which may limit acceptable values of data entries if electronic data recorders are used, or procedures where team members check each other, as the data is being measured and recorded. Quality assurance procedures should include both immediate checks, where a supervisor or another person spot checks data by re-taking measurements (while the team is still on the plot), and check cruising, where a different team independently re-visits and re-measures a subset of plots, and an independent person compares the two sets of measurements to make sure the measurements are within the required accuracy and precision limits. There must be a process for giving crews feedback on the quality of their work, ideally with rewards for good quality work and additional training if deficiencies are found.

Careful adherence to meticulous field measurement protocols serves to reduce measurement error, an often over-looked source of error in forest inventories, in part because it cannot be readily calculated like sampling error. Instead, measurement error is typically assessed through remeasurement of a sample of plots via the spot checks described above. Measurement error results from a host of issues, including not only mis-measurement of DBH and height (especially the latter in closed canopy broadleaf forests), but also species misidentification, misinterpretation of live versus dead, misinterpretation of border trees and strata boundaries, and mis-implementation of boundary correction methods. At the plot level, with well-trained field crews, measurement error of around 4 percent is achievable. Where field measurements include tree heights, measurement error may reach 8 percent, particularly in closed canopy forest.

All inventories should have written standards specifying the maximum inaccuracy allowed for each piece of data. Maximum allowable errors should be developed in consultation with experts in both field work and data analysis. Particular attention should be given to errors that would have a large effect on final carbon stock or stock change estimates.

Including specific location details or complementary types of data can assist in checking and correcting errors and other problems. For example, recording the location of, and tagging, individual trees within a plot helps check for trees missing from the measurement, check cruising the accuracy of measurements, and relocating plot centers.

Manual instruments such as diameter tapes, tape measures, and clinometers may be easier for field technicians to learn to use, and may be more durable than electronic measuring instruments. However, using laser hypsometers is much faster than tape measures and clinometers for measuring tree heights. Laser rangefinders may be needed to estimate the heights of tall trees in dense forests.

Typically, the greatest challenge in estimating costs is the number of plots per day that a field crew can measure. Often, this depends more on the amount of time it takes to get from one plot to the next than the amount of time spent at each plot.

Many projects record field data on paper data sheets. Paper data sheets are both low cost and familiar, easy for field technicians to use, and do not fail due to dead batteries or mechanical problems. Electronic data recorders can be hard to keep charged through multiday periods in the field, and data should be removed from field recorders daily which can be difficult if teams go into the forest for a week or two at a time. Electronic data recorders also require substantial skill to set up. Over time, however, data recorders can save considerable costs in terms of reducing the need to print data sheets and copy data from paper sheets to electronic form. Electronic forms can be designed to prompt users to fill in missing values and can question or reject implausible values. Tree species can also be specified using a menu, avoiding considerable time spent sorting out spelling errors in species names. While commercial timber cruising software is readily available, it may not be adaptable to record the data that an inventory needs to record.

There are a variety of textbooks and Manuals available that describe how to perform field work. It is recommended that countries carefully review multiple Manuals when developing their own field Manual, and field test procedures before adopting them. The United States, Canada, Ecuador, Mexico, Russia and others have detailed field Manuals that provide useful examples when designing inventories.

### *Locating plots*

To ensure the integrity of the sample design and avoid bias, plots must be located prior to fieldwork, based on a desktop GIS analysis. Further, best practices when collecting Global Positioning System (GPS) data should be used, taking into account the published accuracy of the receiver type. And since errors can occur with GPS locations, there must be a method for relocating plots that does not only rely on consumer-level GPS readings. Many inventories use monuments to mark plot centers. The monument must be something that is unlikely to be removed over time. For example, many inventories drive a section of steel rebar completely into the ground at the plot center, and re-find the rebar with a metal detector. Aligning tree tags or painted markings on trees toward the plot center can assist in relocating plot centers, as long as the tags are not commonly removed by people or animals, and as long as the markings do not cause the trees in the plots to be treated differently from the trees outside the plots. Recording the distance and direction from the plot center to each tree is very useful in later relocating plot centers and facilitating check cruises.

## 4.5.2 Laboratory analysis of samples

Generally, laboratory analysis of woody biomass samples is not needed. Exceptions are identification of unknown tree species and determination of wood densities. Smith *et al.* (2007) provide a discussion of wood density determination.

Soil carbon does require laboratory analysis. Key components of soil carbon quantification are:

- Soil depth to be measured (in cm, usually 30 cm);
- Soil bulk density (in g/cm<sup>3</sup>); and
- Organic carbon content (percent).

The depth of sampling is specified in the inventory design. Bulk density is calculated for each sample from the measured mass and measured volume of samples. Bulk density can be measured on samples from which a subsample is later removed for carbon measurement, or from a separate sample taken at the same location as sampling for carbon. Carbon content is determined by laboratory analysis.

The most common techniques for analyzing the carbon proportion of soil are based on measuring emissions from dry combustion of the samples. This approach involves oxidizing a small sample at very high temperatures and using infrared gas absorption or gas chromatography to measure the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted.

## 4.6 CALCULATING CARBON STOCKS FROM FIELD DATA

### 4.6.1 Data management for calculations

Calculating carbon stocks from field data must be done in an organized manner or errors will occur. Calculation procedures should be tested on pilot data prior to committing to a particular inventory design, to ensure that all needed data will be collected. Procedures should include specifying the sequence of calculations, version tracking, limiting who can make changes to data, and tracking any changes to data. Factors used in calculations should be well documented as to their values, sources, and why the particular values are used in particular situations.

For UNFCCC reporting, it may be necessary to separately calculate the stock (or stock change) of each reported carbon pool. However, if separate reporting of each pool is not required, there is the option of calculating the carbon stock of each carbon pool on a per hectare basis, and then summing the pools to get the per hectare carbon stock represented by each plot. Having all plots on a per-hectare basis allows calculation of statistical confidence of measurements based on the variability across plots and the numbers of plots. Combining all pools is statistically appropriate and tends to give somewhat lower plot-to-plot variability than separately calculating the stock of each carbon pool. However, there is often interest in knowing the change in stocks of a particular pool – especially the live tree pool – and it is often desirable to separately calculate stocks for different pools or groups of pools. If only some pools are measured, and default Tier 1 factors are used for other pools, the non-measured pools should not be combined with the measured pools before the calculation of uncertainty.

If carbon stocks (or stock changes) are calculated separately for different pools occurring at a particular site, a statistician should be consulted to give proper methods of calculating the total uncertainty for the land-cover

type. For example, if 100 plots are measured and there are live tree, dead tree, coarse woody debris, shrub, herbaceous and litter pools, the different pools do not count as different samples when calculating uncertainty. The sample size is  $n = 100$ , not  $n = 600$ , which would be the case if each observation of each pool counted as a different sample. Methods for calculating uncertainty in simple situations are described below.

The carbon stock for a particular stratum is obtained by calculating the average carbon stock per hectare of all the plots within a stratum and multiplying by the area of the stratum to get the stratum carbon stock. Total carbon stock is then calculated by summing the stocks of the different strata. If the carbon stock is calculated separately for each inventory date, the change in stock is often calculated as the difference of means between the two time periods. If temporary plots are used, and the same plots are not measured at the two different time periods, the difference of the means must be used. Alternatively, if permanent plots are measured, the change can be calculated for each plot, and, from this, population level estimates of the total amount of change can be calculated. For a given number of plots, this approach usually gives greater statistical confidence (as long as plots with significant disturbance – such as logging or fire – are not mixed with plots without disturbance) and statistical uncertainty is calculated from the set of changes observed on the different plots. Calculation of carbon stocks from field data requires good organization to ensure that the data are efficiently sorted and the resulting calculations are correctly generated. It is important to record the details of data manipulations performed, including: corrections of errors in the data; deletions of uncorrectable data, factors and equations used, including the sources of those factors and equations; the sequence of calculations; and the reason for each calculation. Without robust records, it is impossible to check the quality and accuracy of calculations and resulting carbon stock estimates, and this information is key in the subsequent verification phase of MRV.

Before calculations commence, all data should be compiled into a single file for each carbon pool. Data should be examined for missing and implausible values. Problems should be checked against plot sheets or earlier forms of the data, and corrected where possible. If correction is not possible, drop the data from the data set, recording the reason why the data was dropped. Data should not be removed from the analysis only because values are outliers.

## **4.6.2 Allometric equations**

### *Selection of allometric equations*

Carbon equations usually take two forms: allometric equations or biomass conversion and expansion factors (BCEFs). Allometric equations are regressions derived from detailed measurements of volume of trees, or weighing of harvested trees and relating one or more structural variables — typically DBH and tree height — to a variable of interest, such as tree volume or biomass (Diaz and Delaney, 2011).

Allometric model selection is often one of the largest sources of error in forest inventories. The sample dataset from which the allometric equation is derived, which can usually be identified from source documents, should be representative of the population of trees to which it will be applied, and ideally should be drawn from a comparable geographic scale, otherwise scale dependent variability in allometric relationships will be lost. The latter is a particularly important issue where, for example, pan-tropical equations are applied to derive estimates for smaller geographic areas.

Significant errors are also likely to occur if equations are applied to trees larger than the range from which the equation was developed, and there will be no way to determine the size of the errors. As a result, biomass equations should not be used for trees larger than the largest tree used to develop the equation in question, unless the biomass estimates for these larger trees are compared to measured biomass of other large trees and



the estimates are documented to be reasonable. Alternatively, equations for a similar species may be used, and adjusted for the difference in wood density.

Most allometric equations give unrealistic results when applied to trees larger than the trees from which the equation was developed. Therefore, it is preferable to use allometric equations that are developed from trees similar to those being studied. In particular, the species (or combination of species) or growth form and potential biomass should be similar. This unreliability is particularly great with equations that are simple exponential models. Logistic equations, where the rate of increase in predicted biomass declines as the diameter increases, tend to have less error when applied to trees larger than the trees from which the equation was developed. Unless the allometric equation was developed using measurements of trees in the area where the equation will be used, and from stands with similar trajectories of development as the stands to which the equation will be applied, equations that use diameter only should be considered useful for rough estimates of biomass. General equations are provided in Annex 4A.2 of the IPCC Guidelines (2006). If an equation will be applied to a wide variety of species, either the species should be grouped so that each group has a similar wood density, or wood density should be incorporated into the biomass estimation.

Equations that use height and diameter but not wood density can be adapted to estimate the biomass of species different from the species from which the equation was developed, if the growth forms of the species are all similar, and if estimates are adjusted for differences in wood densities. In this case, the wood-density adjustment factor is calculated by dividing the specific gravity of the species to which the equation will be applied by the specific gravity of the species used to develop the equation.

When considering taxa-specific equations, or equations that use height, one should consider both the availability of analysts who can identify the species and the additional cost and uncertainty of tree-height measurements.

BCEFs are dimensionless factors that convert the merchantable volume of trees into their total aboveground biomass. BCEFs are used for rough estimates of biomass when a timber inventory is available but resources are not available to measure carbon stocks in forests. When using BCEFs, it is critical to apply the same definition of merchantable volume (or growing stock) that was used in the derivation of the BCEF. BCEFs are unreliable when applied to forests of different structure from the forest where the BCEF was developed. Various sources can be useful when seeking allometric equations, such as local forestry institutions, GlobAllomeTree<sup>19</sup> and published literature.

#### *Developing new and testing existing equations*

If no information is found regarding a certain species, or group of species<sup>20</sup>, REDD+ projects may have to develop new allometric equations. Under the Global Environmental Facility's (GEF) Carbon Benefit Project, Dietz and Kuyah (2011) prepared guidelines for establishing regional allometric equations through destructive sampling<sup>21</sup>. Another guide for developing allometric equations is Aldred and Alemdag (1988).

New allometric equations can be developed with a relatively small sampling of approximately 30 trees for a particular species or group of species, but a larger sample is desirable. Wood density may need measuring, and

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<sup>19</sup> A database developed by FAO, the French Research Centre CIRAD and Tuscia University;  
<http://www.globallometree.org/>

<sup>20</sup> The most useful groupings may be by morphology class (e.g., single-stemmed trees, multiple-stemmed trees, shrubs) (MacDicken, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> More guidance on developing biomass tables is found in MacDicken (1997) Annex 4, Section C.



because forest measurements are made on live green trees, green wood volumes must be used to calculate wood density. Dry wood volume cannot be used.

Checking the fit of published allometric equations is good practice when equations are applied to sites with different productivities, climate conditions, or growing conditions from where the equations were developed. This can be checked by destructive sampling or measuring the volumes of a few trees of different sizes. Limited destructive sampling for this purpose could be conducted in coordination with an active harvest operation in the area of interest, significantly reducing cost and effort required for this labor intensive activity. Care should be taken to achieve a representative sample of tree species across a range of diameter classes (> 15cm dbh, below which there are rarely substantial inaccuracies in equations), undertaking supplemental harvest (e.g., non-commercial species), as necessary, to achieve this. Destructive sampling involves cutting down and weighing a sample of trees, and cutting a subsample of tree parts, weighing them in the field and drying them to develop a dry-to-field weight ratio for the weights of the whole trees. Volume is measured by dividing the tree trunk into segments and measuring the two end diameters and the length of each segment, and also taking measurements on a sample of branches. Results are plotted against equation predictions to assess bias and either validate the equation or re-parameterize the equation to produce a better fit.

#### *Belowground biomass*

Belowground biomass is extremely difficult to measure for an individual tree, because roots of different trees and shrubs intertwine. As a result, belowground biomass is often estimated using general equations that estimate it as a function of aboveground biomass. In general, the ratio of belowground to aboveground biomass is higher for dry and nutrient-deficient sites, and for young successional forests, where more energy is allocated to root growth. For large projects on dry sites, destructive sampling may be worthwhile to measure the biomass of roots in the project area, because these measurements may give significantly greater biomass than default ratios for sites of any productivity. Belowground biomass can be measured by digging and weighing root balls, and coring a sample of locations between the stems. Methods are described in Bledsoe *et al.* (1999).

### **4.6.3 Non-tree pools**

Scaling up from samples to a per-hectare mass is straight-forward. Samples are dried and weighed and the dry to field weight ratio is calculated. The field measurements are transformed to dry weight and scaled to per hectare basis.

Processing of litter samples and calculations of litter biomass are similar to the methods used for herbaceous vegetation. The carbon proportion of dry biomass weight can be estimated either by laboratory analysis, or by examining samples to see what plant parts compose the litter (e.g., foliage versus branch wood, stem wood, or dead herbaceous vegetation), finding the carbon contents of each component in the literature, and calculating a weighted average carbon fraction.

The volume of coarse woody debris per hectare is calculated for each density class for each stratum:

$$\text{Volume of coarse wood debris (m}^3\text{/m}^2\text{)} = \pi^2 * [(d_1^2 + d_2^2 + \dots + d_n^2)/8L]$$

where  $d_1, d_2, d_n$  = diameter (m) of each of the  $n$  pieces intersecting the line, and  $L$  = the length of the line (100 m; Harmon and Sexton, 1996). Volume is converted to mass using the appropriate density factor.

#### 4.6.4 Combining carbon pools

The per-hectare carbon stock of each pool in each plot is summed with the other pools in that plot to give the per hectare carbon stock for each plot. The total carbon stock is calculated by multiplying the average value per hectare times the number of hectares.

In reality, measurements are taken over a period of weeks to months. However, for the sake of reporting and change over time, measurements are taken to represent a particular date. Some inventories only specify the year that measurements represent. However, because some carbon stocks vary between seasons, it is better to assign a date that the measurements represent. For example, measurements taken during a dry season of November 2011 through February 2012 could be taken to represent the carbon stock present as of February 1 of 2012. If inventories are taken over multiple years, either a panel design should be used to calculate the average and changes, or models should be used to normalize the data to a single year. These methods are beyond the scope of this Manual. Consult an appropriate textbook for guidance on how to use these methods.

#### 4.6.5 Quantifying uncertainty

The reliability of carbon stock estimates is reported in the form of statistical confidence intervals that quantify the chance that the sample plots used to calculate carbon stocks might be different from the actual conditions that exist throughout the entire forest.

A common index of uncertainty associated with an estimate from an inventory is the confidence interval. The confidence interval represents a range of values surrounding an estimate, typically the mean—that is, most likely. The width of the confidence interval conveys to the data consumer a sense of confidence in the accuracy of the estimate. Confidence intervals can be calculated for different “confidence levels”, and are based on statistical theory. Typical confidence levels are 90 percent and 95 percent. To interpret, for example, a 95 percent confidence interval of  $\pm 10$  percent surrounding an estimate of 100 tons per hectare of carbon, one can say that if a similar inventory was conducted many times in the exact same way but choosing a different set of plots, 95 percent of the confidence intervals generated would contain the true population value. The true population value is the value that would be found if every individual in the population was measured. In this example, the population value would be the carbon stock measured if every tree was measured. People often interpret that to mean that one can be 95 percent confident that the true value lies within the confidence interval, in this example, between 90 and 110 tons per hectare.

Technically, these uncertainties are reporting the chance that the sample is different from the actual total population. The technical name for this chance difference is sampling error. There are many other kinds of errors that could lead to false numbers. There are several mechanisms that can be used to limit errors other than sampling errors. These include quality standards, and independent checking of measurements, data, and calculations to detect and fix human errors. All these potential errors mean that two independent measurements of the same tree, made by different people, might differ by a few millimeters. Nonetheless, most assume that these non-sampling errors are random and not biased, and thus that they increase the confidence interval and do not bias the stock estimates.

To calculate a confidence interval, first the standard deviation and standard error of the estimate must be calculated. The standard deviation is a measurement of how different individual samples are from each other. For example, if the standard deviation of a set of plots is 50 tons per hectare of carbon, then approximately 2/3 of the plots will have carbon stocks within 50 tons per hectare of the average carbon stock. The standard deviation is a property of the population. The standard error of the estimate is a measurement of uncertainty of the estimate of the mean value. The standard error is a property of the sample and can be reduced by

measuring a larger sample, i.e., measuring more plots. The standard error of the estimated mean for each carbon pool within each stratum is:

$$SE = \sqrt{(S/n)}$$

where SE is the standard error of the estimated mean carbon stock per hectare for the particular carbon pool and stratum; S is the standard deviation of the estimated mean carbon stock per hectare of the particular carbon pool and stratum; and n is the number of plots in the stratum. The confidence interval for each carbon pool within each stratum is then calculated. The confidence interval is:

$$CI = \pm t \times SE$$

where CI is the confidence interval; t is the  $t_{critical}$  point from a table of student t test values, for the appropriate confidence level and degrees of freedom. This is for a two-tailed test, i.e., a 95 percent confidence would leave 0.025 of the probability in each tail of the distribution, and the degrees of freedom is typically the number of plots minus one. SE is the standard error for the particular stratum and pool.

The confidence interval can be expressed as a percentage of the mean:

$$U_n = (CI/\bar{X})$$

where:  $U_n$  is the uncertainty in percent for pool and stratum n; CI is the confidence interval for that pool and stratum, in tons per hectare; and  $\bar{X}$  is the average estimated carbon stock of that pool and stratum, in tons per hectare.

There are multiple acceptable methods for combining uncertainties across multiple pools or strata. The methods differ depending on the degree of difference of type between the pools or strata, and the degree of congruence of sampling methods used in the different pools or strata. Pools should be independent and pools should technically be spatially separated. For example, on-site biomass and carbon stored in wood products are separate pools. Separate classes of biomass, such as live trees and dead trees, should be combined to estimate the biomass carbon stock.

If the inventory is stratified, the uncertainty is reduced relative to the same number of plots in a simple random sample. To calculate the uncertainty of a stratified inventory, the uncertainty is calculated for each stratum and the uncertainties are weighted and combined. The details of calculating the uncertainty of a stratified inventory are beyond the scope of this Manual. For guidance, consult a forest measurement textbook such as Avery and Burkhart (1994) or a statistics textbook. Note that typical uncertainties in forest inventories are generally weighted by the number of sample units observed in each stratum or by area, rather than by the number of tons in each stratum. Also, if doing paired sampling, consult a statistics textbook for guidance.

If calculating the change in carbon stock from one simple random sample to another measured at a later date, the change is calculated as the difference of means. Methods differ for calculating the difference of means confidence, depending on whether temporary or permanent plots are used, and are presented in many statistics textbooks. Permanent plots achieve greater precision in the estimation of change than temporary plots – for permanent plots, the covariance term is subtracted in the estimation of standard error.

## 4.6.6 Propagation of error

If the uncertainty for a combined estimate of sinks or emissions from multiple, independent pools is being calculated, particularly if different pools are measured with different UNFCCC methodology tiers (such as Tier 1 factors for shrubs and forest floor, and Tier 3 measurements of live trees) the combined uncertainty of the estimated change can be calculated using Equation 5.2.2 of the IPCC *Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry* (GPG-LULUCF) (2003):

$$U_E = \sqrt{\frac{(U_1 + E_1)^2 + (U_2 + E_2)^2 + \dots + (U_n + E_n)^2}{|E_1 + E_2 + \dots + E_n|}}$$

where  $U_E$  is the combined uncertainty in percent for the sum of changes in all pools 1 to  $n$ , in tons;  $U_n$  is the uncertainty in percent for pool  $n$ ; and  $E_n$  is the emission or removal for the stratum, for the pool  $n$ , in tons.

## 4.7 DATA CHECKING

### 4.7.1 Data cleaning, checking and accuracy standards

Data quality is essential. If field data have substantial errors, the entire inventory could be worthless. Inventory design, field technician training and management of field crews are the foundations of data quality. Regardless of the strength of the foundation, data must be thoroughly checked before carbon stocks are calculated. This includes checking for missing data and implausible data values. As discussed above, if no reliable correction of a data error can be achieved, the faulty plot should be excluded from carbon stock calculations.

### 4.7.2 Archiving data and metadata

To recalculate changes in carbon stocks over time, data from an inventory must be stored so it can be retrieved at a later date. Methods for measurement, data cleaning, and any adjustments or calculations must be clearly specified to build confidence in later users, and ensure that later measurements and calculations are comparable to earlier data. This is also important for satisfying the IPCC principles of TACCC.

Metadata describe how data are collected and what they represent. Key aspects of forest inventory metadata are the protocols used to direct field measurements, as well as the underlying sampling methodologies applied (e.g. sample design, delineation of sample population area). Correctly and consistently archiving data and associated metadata represents an important, and necessary, step in an inventory as it improves the efficiency of future inventories. However, limited time is often invested in these activities. Ideally, professional data managers will be consulted in the design of data storage forms and use of data storage equipment. At a minimum, it is important to develop a plan for how data and metadata will be stored and protected from unauthorized changes or loss. Data should be archived in at least two locations, and information about where data is stored, what is included, and who controls access should be readily available. Having multiple teams involved in data analysis maintains awareness of the data and appropriate uses of these data. Further, it increases the likelihood of institutional memory transfer. Relatively frequent use of the data ensures that data will be transferred to new storage and retrieval media formats and processing systems, as new equipment and software are adopted. This is especially important given the long time periods involved in REDD+ MRV.

### 4.7.3 Data analysis and reports

Typical reports from forest carbon inventories include:

- Calculations of biomass and carbon stocks, often with reports by pool and stratum;
- Calculations of stock changes over time;
- Timber inventories, or at least estimates of wood volume in live trees; and
- Reporting uncertainties across pools and strata.

Over time, forest inventories become irreplaceable windows to the past. The initial use of an inventory might be only to measure timber volume or carbon stock, or to start estimating changes in carbon stocks. Depending on parameters measured, they may contribute to the study of additional dynamics as well. However, as repeated measurements form an archive, the value of these data will increase. New needs and questions arise, and a well-documented historic data set can provide a window into past conditions or changes, and are a way of evaluating changes over time without having to wait years or decades for a new set of measurements. One cannot foresee what issues will become important in the future, and experiences show that a well-maintained inventory will likely have many valuable uses.

## 4.8 CONSOLIDATING INVENTORY DATASETS

Given resource constraints, it may be necessary in the early stages of national REDD+ accounting, prior to the implementation of a national forest inventory, to develop estimates from existing datasets (e.g., from commercial forest inventories, REDD+ projects, environmental research).

While it is not necessary to collect different datasets using the same sampling approaches, there are a number of critical considerations to ensure that data are consolidated to avoid or minimize bias in the derivation of an overall stock estimate. Foremost among these considerations is that the population that a given inventory represents be clearly delineated, i.e. that the area within which samples were drawn (with a known probability) is mapped and documented. This is just as important as the plot data itself, otherwise it is not clear what population (forest area) that data represents.

A second critical consideration is that the candidate data must be screened to ensure a minimum acceptable level of data consistency and quality. Important assessments are:

- Raw data (plot measurements with individual tree data) should be preferentially sourced, to ensure consistency in estimation procedures (e.g., allometric equations used) across inventories, and permit aligning inventories to common minimum diameter thresholds.
- All data must have been collected with minimum quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) procedures, ensuring minimal measurement error and sample bias (see discussion of QA/QC in this same chapter).

- All data must cover the same pools and use the same pool definitions, including diameter thresholds for tree measurements (in some cases it may be possible to reconstruct diameter distributions<sup>22</sup>, but strictly commercial inventories cannot be re-interpreted as all species total biomass).
- All data must be collected from within a maximum time range (e.g., a 2014 estimate might be derived from data collected up to 5 or 10 years prior to the reporting date). Where substantial areas of forest are in an early successional stage, a shorter allowable timeframe is recommended.
- Minimum sample size of 10 to ensure stable, un-biased estimates of mean and variance (Westfall *et al.*, 2011).

To derive a total estimate, the individual inventory estimates are weighted by their respective (sampled) population areas. The result is an area-weighted average, with each sampled area treated as an individual stratum (Table 4.3). In this way, the entire population of interest (e.g., national forested area) is constructed as a sort of jigsaw puzzle, with pieces represented by sampled areas, each with their own estimate. There will inevitably be gaps remaining that have not been sampled, that can either be:

- Delineated and excluded from MRV, e.g. in the case of remote, inaccessible areas where anthropogenic changes are unlikely to occur, thereby focusing MRV on managed lands;
- Ignored (e.g., if they are an insignificant area), accepting a certain level of unknown bias;
- Delineated and sampled with a new targeted field effort to fill the gaps; or
- Assigned estimates based on predictions derived from relationships of known estimates with ancillary data (e.g., spatially-explicit geo-physical data, satellite imagery), e.g. using regression or nearest-neighbor approaches (see, for example, McRoberts *et al.*, 2007).

Inventory	Sample population area (ha)	Estimate (mean t CO <sub>2</sub> /ha aboveground live biomass)	Standard error (mean tCO <sub>2</sub> /ha aboveground live biomass)
A	10,000	150	10
B	5,000	125	50
C	1,000	200	20
X (un-sampled)	10,000	130 (prediction)	60 (model prediction error)
TOTAL	26,000	139	81

Table 4.3: Example of an area-weighted average with each sampled area treated as an individual stratum

<sup>22</sup> E.g., estimated from stand tables per Gillespie *et al.* (1992).

Uncertainty in the overall estimate is derived by propagating inventory level errors, similar to a stratified sample. Where an un-sampled area is assigned an estimate based on a prediction, the error of the prediction should be included (e.g., root mean squared error of predicted – observed, referencing against a validation dataset), as well as any error around the estimate of the independent variable(s) (Table 4.2).

Importantly, this approach of building a national inventory from smaller scale datasets (e.g. inventories of REDD projects) also facilitates participation from multiple stakeholders. By utilizing information from multiple scale datasets, it acknowledges the value of data collected via project-level MRV, and projects would become contributors to, and participants in, national/jurisdictional MRV.

## 4.9 THE GAIN-LOSS METHOD

Estimating comparatively “rare” and small changes in biomass distributed over a large landscape, like those produced from selective cut timber extraction activities, is challenging, particularly where the objective is to resolve those changes with even modest levels of statistical significance. Probability-based sampling approaches, even with permanent plots (which permit greater resolution of change, and are particularly useful for monitoring forest growth), would typically require prohibitively high sample intensities using the stock change method.

A more efficient approach to estimate small changes in comparison to the stock size is to focus directly on measurement of fluxes to and from the stock (i.e., the gain-loss method). As discussed in Chapter 3, in addition to the stock change method, the IPCC recognizes gain-loss as an alternate method to estimate carbon changes (IPCC, 2006).

Typical fluxes (i.e., sinks and sources) tracked by a gain-loss type approach would include:

- Sequestration from forest growth;
- Emissions from natural mortality (competition-related and senescence) and disturbance (mortality due to wind, fire, diseases); and
- Emissions from wood removals due to logging and fuel wood collection.

The latter source of emissions, from anthropogenic wood removals, requires targeted field-based sampling of areas subject to extraction activities, or alternatively, reliable information on wood removals from which harvest-related emissions can be estimated. Some recent advances have applied this approach to estimation of logging impacts by Griscom *et al.* (2014) and Pearson *et al.* (2014). Many challenges remain, particularly with regard to subsistence and illegal logging, which understandably are difficult to locate and access (for targeted field sampling) or for which reliable and complete estimates of wood removals are unavailable. Remote sensing-based approaches have not yet achieved sufficient resolution of stock change to be viable for direct estimation of emissions from degradation, though they have achieved success in identifying areas subject to degradation (Souza *et al.*, 2005) and could be used, in tandem with field-based approaches, to target sampling and scale emission estimates. Emerging technologies in remote sensing are discussed in Chapter 5.

## 4.10 REFERENCES

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## **4.11 SELECTED RESOURCES**

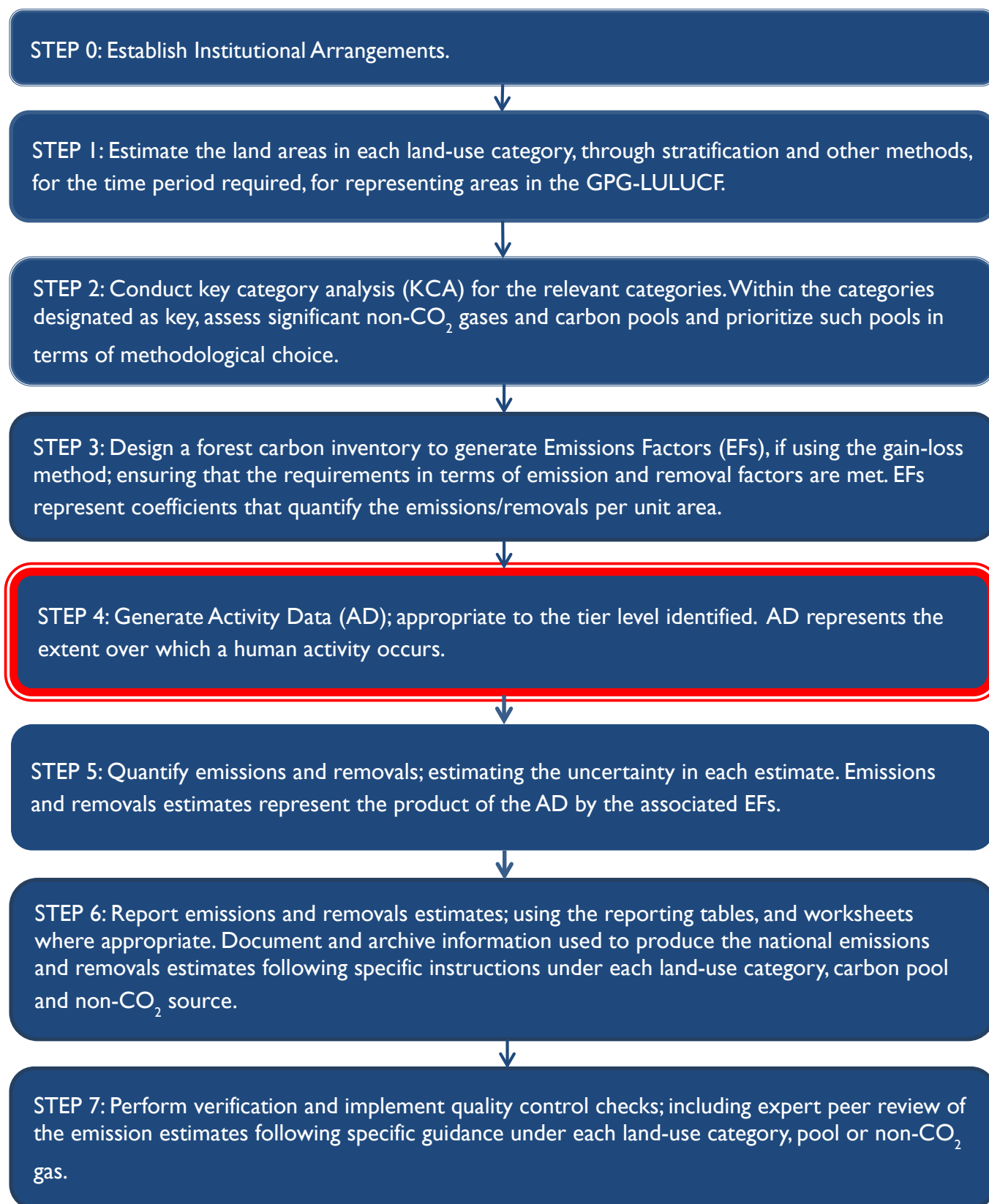
Carbon Measurement and Monitoring (CMM) Module of the USAID-supported Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (LEAF) program. Available at: <http://www.leafasia.org/>

# 5.0 REMOTE SENSING OF LAND COVER CHANGE

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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the application of remote sensing-based approaches to forest cover and change monitoring. Section 3.3, *Inventory and Reporting Steps*, of this Manual outlines the sequence of steps required for generating a national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory. This chapter is relevant to the activities highlighted on the following page.



In the context of the activities highlighted above, this chapter discusses:

- The context of land uses within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC);
- A brief review of remote sensing for forest monitoring;
- Overall steps and needs for consideration in developing a satellite-based forest monitoring system; and
- An overview of emerging areas of remote sensing-based research for forest monitoring.

Remote sensing, especially satellite-based approaches, provides the most practical option for monitoring land cover change over large areas. This chapter emphasizes optical satellite remote sensing of deforestation. Optical satellite remote sensing is the most heavily used type of remote sensing for this application, and deforestation represents the largest source of GHG emissions from the land-use sector in most tropical-forest countries. Another important use of remote sensing in a National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) is to produce a forest benchmark map. This is needed to define the national forest area at the beginning of a reporting period and within which carbon stocks and forest changes will be monitored. Finally, remotely-sensed data represent a key input to a stratification of forest types and can be used to characterize the seasonality of leaf cover, inundation, and spectral variations due to very different canopy structures. Stratification should seek to identify forest types with potentially significantly different levels of biomass to assist field sampling strategies (see Chapter 4). Additional forest strata could be of interest for national management and planning purposes and such stratification activities can be facilitated through the use of remotely-sensed data.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (GPG-LULUCF) is a key resource for countries. However, it provides limited information on specific approaches to remote sensing of land use. The information in this chapter summarizes remote sensing issues for a NFMS. As mentioned in Chapter 1, other valuable resources include the Global Observation of Forest and Land Cover Dynamics (GOFC-GOLD) Sourcebook (GOFC-GOLD, 2013), the Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) Methods and Guidance Document (MGD) (GFOI, 2013), and the Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute's REDD-plus CookBook (Hirata *et al.*, 2012). Links to additional resources for training on remote sensing are provided in Section 5.8.

## 5.2 LAND USES AND CATEGORIES IN THE UNFCCC

LULUCF, within the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), refers to land-use change or persistence among the six broad uses defined by the IPCC: Forest Land, Cropland, Grassland, Wetlands, Settlements, and Other Land (IPCC 2006, Vol. 4; see Chapter 2). Possible types of land-use change among, or persistence within, these six broad uses are called Categories. Sub-categories can be defined within a category to more precisely define changes and emission sources.

For land use, the IPCC recognizes two methods to estimate carbon emissions: the stock change method<sup>23</sup> and the gain-loss method (IPCC, 2003), as noted in Chapter 3. This chapter discusses remote sensing of land-use change in the context of the gain-loss method, where estimates of changes between uses is a specific input to emissions estimates. However, the remote sensing techniques and issues discussed in this chapter are also relevant to application in the Stock-Change method, particularly in the stratification of forests for field sampling.

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<sup>23</sup> The GPG-LULUCF (IPCC, 2003) uses the term Stock-Change, while the Guidance from 2006 uses Stock-Difference (IPCC, 2006). There has been no decision for non-Annex regarding use of the 2006 Guidelines, and thus in this Manual we use the former term throughout, even though the 2006 Guidelines are more up-to-date and use the latter.

Activity data (AD), or the extent over which a human activity occurs, are data on the area of a Category that potentially results in GHG emissions or removals, over a given period of time. As illustrated in Chapter 3 (Figure 3.2), AD are combined with Emissions Factors (EFs). EFs are coefficients that quantify the emissions/removals per unit area, thus providing the data on differences in the carbon stocks before and after the cover change has occurred. Multiplying the AD, the extent over which a human activity occurs, by the EFs, the coefficients quantifying the emissions/removals per unit area, provides the estimated associated GHG emissions for each category.

The IPCC (2006) describes three overall approaches, not to be confused with tiers, for the representation of land use (see Chapter 3). These approaches, listed in Box 5.1, are used to estimate AD for each Category:

### **Box 5.1: Approaches**

**Approach 1:** Net area of each land use reported at different time period, yet no tracking of specific conversions among them

**Approach 2:** Tracking of land-use conversions, yet on a non-mapped manner

**Approach 3:** Tracking of land-use conversion on a mapped manner

Approach 3 is most informative and applicable to a mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, plus the role of conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+). However, it is acceptable to use a mix of the three approaches among regions or categories in a country. Case studies of countries that have used different approaches are provided in Annex 2A.1 of the GPG-LULUCF. For example, existing data available for the Argentine Pampas were sufficient for either Approach 1 or 2. Agricultural census data, documenting the area of each land use over time and with full coverage, existed for the entire region, thus enabling Approach 1. Data existed on land-cover change, documenting transformations between natural grasslands to pasture and cropland, thus enabling Approach 2. In Australia, the creation of a multi-temporal map of change in forest cover as well as some sub-categories enabled Approach 3 for those categories.

It is important to consider the characteristics of land-use parameters that will be monitored and the cost implications of a full-coverage mapping versus a sampling-based method. While satellite-based remote sensing is a valuable tool for monitoring several parameters of land use, some types of land-use categories (e.g., forest degradation), or regions (e.g., mountainous areas), may be more effectively monitored through airborne or field-based data collection approaches. The costs associated with these approaches could be significant and thus necessitate a sampling-based approach.

### **5.2.1 Definition of national forest and other classes**

The 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories consolidated both LULUCF and Agriculture into the Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use (AFOLU) in Volume 4 (IPCC 2006; See Chapter 3). Throughout this chapter, definitions have been adapted from the 2006 IPCC Guidelines and the GPG-LULUCF 2003, unless noted otherwise. While countries must report on land use, satellite monitoring is more suited to detecting land cover, as it is based on relationships between observed spectra in the images and the structural characteristics of the soil and vegetation covering land. Land use, however, can usually be inferred based on local context and a general knowledge of the area.

#### *Forest definition*

A fundamental step in the development of a MRV system is the national definition of forest. Countries have some flexibility in developing their forest definition, yet they are constrained by certain criteria. The definition

must be developed based on both the physical structure of the present and potential vegetation as well as how the land is used. The physical criteria for forest, and the range countries can select for their definition, are included below in Box 5.2.

### **Box 5.2: Definition of forest criteria**

Potential to reach a minimum canopy height at maturity of 2m to 5m;

Minimum tree-crown cover of 10 percent to 30 percent; and

Minimum patch size of 0.05 ha to 1 ha.

Tree-crown cover is not the same as leaf cover, as tree crown cover is defined by the periphery of the crown, while leaf cover is the proportion of leaf versus canopy-gaps. A site is defined as forest if it meets the above criteria *and* if its main use is assumed to be forest-related. For example, while an urban park or agricultural fallow may meet the physical criteria of forest, these areas have urban and agricultural uses (i.e., non-forest uses), thus, they belong to a non-forest category. Agricultural fallow is a particularly important example for many tropical countries, as much of their agricultural land is in some stage of fallow. While in terms of structure these are young, regrowing “forests,” they are part of an agricultural cycle with a defined temporal period, and are expected to be re-cleared after that period. Therefore, they are part of a non-forest use. Considering agricultural fallows as non-forest greatly facilitates reporting on deforestation and associated GHG emissions, since a country would not be required to estimate rates of the appearance of new fallows and their re-clearance when reporting changes in forest area<sup>24</sup>.

According to the IPCC Report *Definitions and Methodological Options to Inventory Emissions from Direct Human-induced Degradation of Forests and Devegetation of Other Vegetation Types*, forest degradation could be defined as “a direct human-induced long-term loss (persisting for X years or more) of at least Y percent of forest carbon stocks [and forest values] since time T and not qualifying as deforestation or an elected activity under Article 3.4 of the Kyoto Protocol” (IPCC 2003). For example, selective logging may occur in a site defined as forest. If the tree cover was not reduced enough to pass below the threshold of the forest definition, then the site remains forest, but has undergone degradation. Conversely, another site that has been logged and did cross below this threshold could be classified as deforestation. However, in addition to the change in physical structure, the use of the land must also change. If the site is still under a forest use (i.e., forest concession subjected to some selective-logging cycle), it would still be defined as forest despite the structural change. In this case, there are carbon stock losses in the ‘forest remaining forest’ class. This will likely necessitate a subclass for ‘intact to degraded forest,’ and this subclass should be sampled to estimate carbon stock change. The GFOI MGD provides a further discussion of forest degradation in Chapter 2.2.2.

#### *Forest benchmark, stratification and change estimation*

The development of forest mapping for REDD+ activities can be considered as a trio of components: creation of a forest benchmark map, stratification of forests within the map extent, and estimation of changes within the map extent. It is also preferable to conduct these three activities one at a time; attempting to do all in a single process can lead to slow and overly-complicated processes.

The forest benchmark map should be created first, as this defines the geographical extent for conducting the other two activities. The development of the forest benchmark map should reflect the national forest definition, and use as much field information, aerial photos, very high resolution imagery and expert knowledge as possible to facilitate remote sensing imagery interpretation. For example, if agricultural fallows

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<sup>24</sup> Examples of national forest definitions are available at <http://cdm.unfccc.int/DNA/cdf/index.html>

are excluded from the national definition, aerial photos or very high resolution imagery could be obtained over sample areas to allow analysts to train themselves in the interpretation of fallow versus mature forest in different parts of a country. This is a critical step for analysts to correctly train and assess classifications of forest for the benchmark period. Other characteristics that analysts should pay special attention to include gradations to lower-stature vegetation that fall below a threshold in the national forest definition, such as montane shrubs, or open-canopy vegetation, such as open woodland.

The benchmark map should be based on satellite data from dates closest to the start date of a monitoring period. This could be the date of initiation of REDD+ activities, and thus it defines the extent within which REDD+ crediting may be possible and where monitoring is required. It could also be the start date of a historical analysis for use in estimating a Forest Reference Emissions Level or Forest Reference Level (FREL/FRL; see Chapter 2). In the latter case, it will eventually need to be updated to define the extent of forest at the beginning of the implementation of REDD+ activities. Satellite images for an exact date can be difficult to acquire due to cloud cover or gaps in data collection. Therefore, image dates used for the benchmark map may vary. A conservative approach is to avoid using images from before the start date, as this may result in the inclusion of forests that were cleared just before the start date.

A forest benchmark map should have as few data gaps as possible; gaps can occur as a result of cloud cover, satellite sensor problems, etc. This may necessitate the acquisition of multiple images for the same area and, thus, analysts will need to identify an appropriate methodology for analyzing multiple images. See, for example, Section 5.4.2. of this Manual, or Section 3.5.2 of the GFOI MGD (GFOI 2013); Step 5.2 of the GOFC-GOLD SourceBook (GOFC-GOLD 2013). The creation of a forest benchmark map will require a careful and iterative process. Generally, it will necessitate several iterations of image analysis followed by reviews from experts and stakeholders, such as sub-national governments and REDD+ project implementers. It is important that a final benchmark map is communicated to stakeholders with any concerns addressed, as this sets an important precedent for where REDD+ activities may or may not be implemented. Once the forest benchmark map is finalized, any areas defined as unmanaged forest (see Chapter 3) can be omitted in order to provide a final definition of where REDD+ can be implemented and where monitoring must be conducted.

Stratification of forests within the benchmark area should be conducted in coordination with the field-based inventory team (See Chapter 4) and with the guidance of an expert statistician. Stratification is not required, although it is recommended as a method to reduce both field-survey costs and carbon-stock uncertainties, as discussed in Chapter 4. Even the creation of a few broad classes is very useful for these purposes. Stratification based on satellite imagery can benefit from the inclusion of seasonal information, e.g., where more deciduous forests may have significantly lower biomass levels. Seasonal information could be obtained from coarser resolution data, such as monthly image composites from MODIS, or from very high resolution imagery, if acquired for particular leaf-on and leaf-off months. Other characteristics often discernable from satellite data are major differences in canopy structures, such as those of inundated forests, liana forests, and palm forests. Stratification can also make use of ancillary GIS data, such as data on climate, soils, and elevation. Different potential strata can be assessed by merging with any existing data on carbon stocks, and those strata with little difference in stocks may be combined, resulting in fewer total strata. If such field data do not exist, strata can be created based on expert opinions of forest types that should have different biomass levels, and these can be re-combined later if field data indicate otherwise.

The creation of a forest benchmark map facilitates the estimation of change within forests. Many approaches exist for estimating change within forests. Section 5.4.2. of this Manual, Section 3.5.2 of the GFOI MGD (GFOI 2013), and Step 5.2 of the GOFC-GOLD SourceBook (GOFC-GOLD 2013) provide useful overview information on the range of approaches and methodologies available. A key consideration is the type of change to estimate. At a minimum, forest clear-cutting (removal of all trees) should be estimated, as this is the main emissions source for many countries. A decision should also be made on the minimum size of clearance to be estimated. While the inclusion of the smallest clearances, i.e., smaller than a few hectares, can



potentially yield a more correct and higher rate, the time and resources involved may be costly, could lead to greater classification error, and may not reflect a significant source of emissions.

Degradation from selective logging is more difficult to detect and often only detectable for more intensive forms and with data obtained soon after the logging event. Other forms of degradation, such as wildfire, may be considered. Again, not all of these must be estimated in the same process. For example, a country could first produce an estimate of forest clear-cutting using one approach, and then use a different approach, such as sampling of higher-resolution data or even targeted field surveys, for degradation.

#### *Other classes*

It may be important to further stratify the six broad use classes into sub-classes where carbon stocks vary significantly. This should be assessed as part of both the national Key Category Analysis (KCA) discussed in Chapter 3 and the forest stratification process discussed in Chapter 4. Including sub-classes may provide data that are very useful for REDD+ national strategies and management policies. However, countries should have strong justification for including sub-classes since this will require methodologies that consume more resources. The expected increase in the accuracy and overall usefulness of emissions estimates should be clearly assessed, and countries should consider the trade-off that usually exists between thematic precision of a land-use change study and the accuracy of the change estimates (e.g., Mather, 1999; Foody, 2000). Tables 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate this below. Table 5.1 presents an example of a land-cover change matrix with three broad categories (forest, degraded forest, nonforest). Conversely, Table 5.2 presents an example with greater thematic precision where the broad categories have been divided into sub-classes.

Issues related to sub-classes are somewhat different for forest versus non-forest. For forests, a country will conduct a stratification for a national forest inventory. This can be performed one time, following the creation of the forest benchmark map, as it can be assumed there are no transitions among these naturally-occurring vegetation types over the required reporting periods. In contrast, transitions among different post-deforestation land uses do occur over short time periods. Spectral distinction of these uses is often difficult, especially when one cannot be very selective about the season of the imagery used for analysis because of frequent cloud cover. For example, managed grassland, cropland, plantations and fallows may be difficult to distinguish, depending on the season and stage of crop development at the acquisition times of available images. Again, strong justification in terms of improvement of emissions estimates is needed to justify attempts to include transitions among these classes.

A step-wise process may be worth exploring that uses different methods and levels of detail for different monitoring aspects. For example, an initial step could be to produce a forest benchmark map, with forest sub-classes that have significantly different carbon stocks. A second step could be to produce a map of a single, broad deforestation class that occurs anywhere within this benchmark. By combining the two, deforestation can be attributed to different forest sub-classes. A third step could be to use samples of airborne or other very-high resolution data to estimate the proportions of sub-classes of non-forest following deforestation, as well as any important transitions among those.

Combining approaches like these can provide all of the necessary estimates to complete a full land-cover change matrix, while not requiring a very difficult process of spectral classification of all transitions among sub-classes. This is an area where there are many options, and many different opinions within the research community.

		T2									
T1	a)	Forest	Degraded Forest	Non-forest	Sum T1	T1	b)	Forest	Degraded Forest	Non-forest	% T1
	Forest	9,940	40	20	10,000		Forest	99.4	0.4	0.2	100
	Degraded Forest	5	1,970	25	2,000		Degraded Forest	0.3	98.5	1.3	100
	Non-forest			4,000	4,000		Non-forest			100.0	100
	Sum T2	9,945	2,010	4,045			% T2	99.7	98.9	101.5	

Table 5.1: Example of a land-use change matrix with few land-use classes and change categories. “Forest” in this table is non-degraded forest only. “Non-forest” includes all non-forest, both naturally-occurring and anthropogenic. Values in (a) are in absolute units, such as hectares, and in (b) are percentages. T1 and T2 are the first and second time periods, referred to in the IPCC as “Initial land-use class” and “Land use during reporting year.” Values in Sum T1 and Sum T2 are total area and percent change for each class. Values inside the matrix are areas and percent change for each category of persistence or change. In this example, gross deforestation plus forest degradation is 0.6 percent (adding values 0.4 and 0.2 in the first row of (b)).

a)

T2									
	Lowland Forest	Montane Forest	Degraded Lowland Forest	Degraded Montane Forest	Natural Grassland	Fallow	Cropland	Pasture	Sum T1
Lowland Forest	7945		35			3	5	7	7995
Montane Forest		1995		5		2	3		2005
Degraded Lowland Forest	5		1500			2	6	12	1525
Degraded Montane Forest				470		1	4		475
Natural Grassland					993		3	4	1000
Fallow						350	50	150	550
Cropland						200	700	100	1000
Pasture						50		1400	1450
Sum T2	7950	1995	1535	475	993	608	771	1673	

T1

b)

		T2								
	Lowland Forest	Montane Forest	Degraded Lowland Forest	Degraded Montane Forest	Natural Grassland	Fallow	Cropland	Pasture	% T1	
T1	Lowland Forest	99.4		0.4				0.1	0.1	100
	Montane Forest		99.5		0.2		0.1	0.1		100
	Degraded Lowland Forest	0.3		98.4			0.1	0.4	0.8	100
	Degraded Montane Forest				98.9		0.2	0.8		100
	Natural Grassland					99.3	0.0	0.3	0.4	100
	Fallow						63.6	9.1	27.3	100
	Cropland						20.0	70.0	10.0	100
	Pasture						3.4		96.6	100
	% T2	99.7	99.5	98.8	99.2	99.3	87.5	80.8	135.1	

Table 5.2: Example of a land-use change matrix with more precise land-use classes and change categories. “Forest” here means intact, non-degraded forest, according to the national forest definition. Natural Grassland, Fallow, Cropland, and Pasture represent non-forest classes. Values in (a) are in absolute units, such as hectares and in (b) are in percent. T1 and T2 are the first and second time periods, referred to in the IPCC as “Initial land-use class” and “Land use during reporting year.” Values in Sum T2 are total area and percent change for each class. Values inside the matrix are areas and percent change for each type of category. In this example, the majority of forest occurs in the lowlands, the majority of deforestation (to fallow, croplands, and pasture) and forest degradation also occurs in the lowlands. A high degree of rotational land use is also indicated by, for example, the large areas of change from cropland to fallow (200) or pasture (100). The 12.5 percent reduction in fallow indicates intensification of land use, either via a shortening of fallow cycles or an increase in permanent pasture. The 35.1 percent increase in pasture indicates an increasing importance of this use.

## 5.3 OVERALL STEPS AND NEEDS

Figure 5.1 illustrates the key decisions a country should consider when developing an effective and efficient satellite-based forest monitoring system after identifying which categories and sub-categories to monitor and the scale of monitoring. Criteria include the type and resolution of satellite data and the degree to which a full coverage, or sampling-based, approach should be applied to monitoring different land cover classes. The appropriateness of different monitoring methodologies will need to be assessed, including the types and availability of different satellite data, pre-processing, classification algorithms, level of automation and analyst expertise. Where automation is not possible, it is important to consider how consistency will be achieved and what methods will be used to effectively combine data from different time periods. Each of these decisions is discussed below.

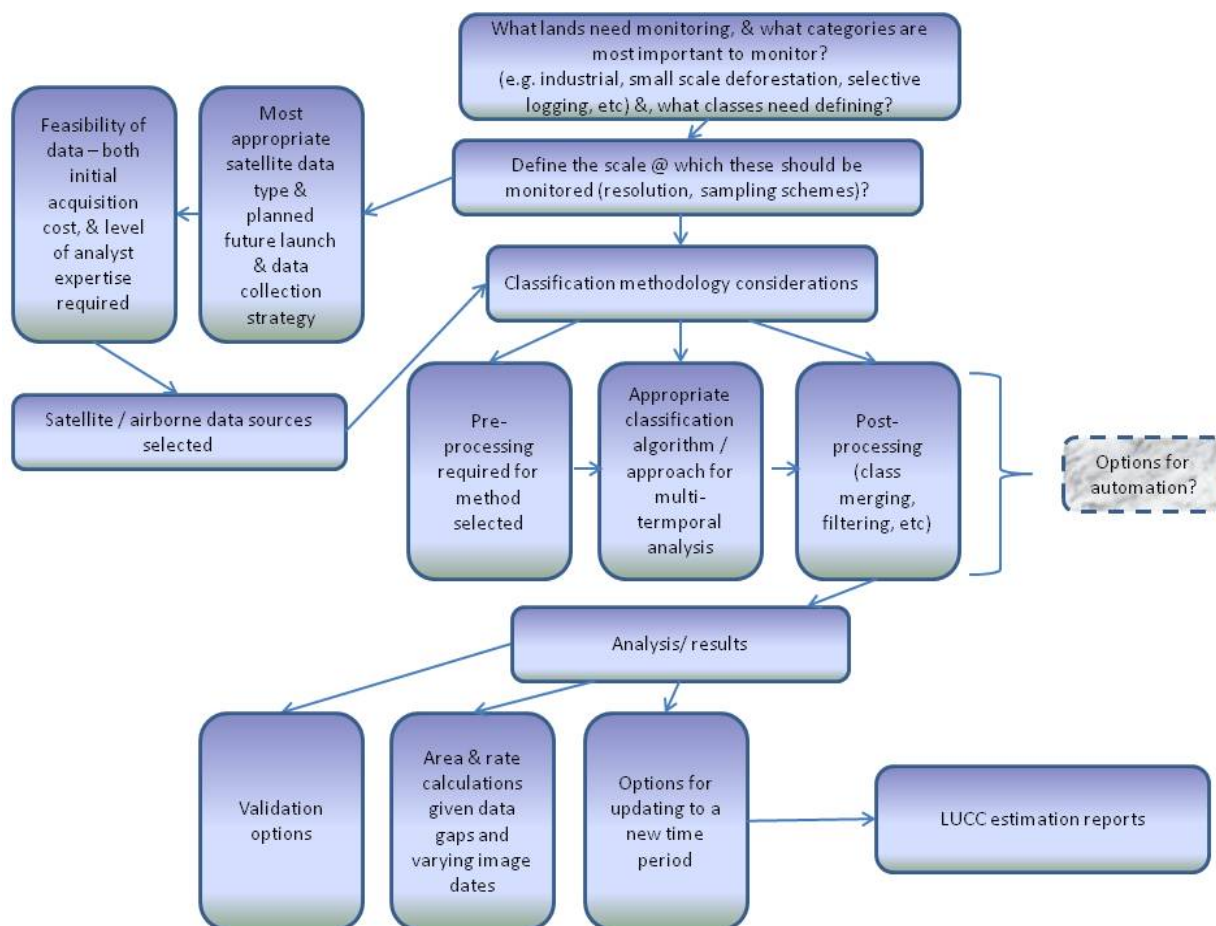


Figure 5.1: Key considerations in the development of a NFMS

### 1) What categories are most important to monitor?

A KCA involves identifying the major land-use-based sources of GHG emissions. A KCA should be performed as part of the development of a REDD+ strategy within the national development-planning context. For MRV, the process should extend to defining the types of land-cover changes that are major GHG contributors and to aligning these definitions with the land-cover change categories defined by the GPG-LULUCF. Finally, a country must determine the geographical extent of managed land, and thus where monitoring should be conducted (see Chapter 2).

### 2) What are the appropriate scales and/or sampling approaches for monitoring?

Once the categories and classes to monitor have been assessed, it is necessary to consider the appropriate scale and approach. For example, do change events occur in small patches of several hectares, or are they much larger? Different types of changes may also be most appropriately monitored with different sources of data. For example, some land-use dynamics may be very appropriate for satellite-based monitoring, whereas other dynamics, particularly some forms of degradation and post-deforestation land-use changes, may require airborne or field-based monitoring. These latter land-use dynamics may require more costly data -collection

processes and thus necessitate a sampling approach. Further, some vegetation types, such as deciduous woodland, may require data from particular or multiple seasons within each year, again necessitating increased data and analysis demands.

### 3) What methodological aspects should be considered?

A country should consider a range of methodological options. This will avoid either: (i) the use of methods with little justification based on in-country testing, or (ii) spending too much time investigating issues that can be well-informed by existing literature or are not significant to the potential accuracy of the final emissions estimates. Many differing views exist regarding optimal methods for monitoring land-use change and, therefore, a country should seek its own cadre of experts with strong fundamental backgrounds in remote sensing to fully access and understand the relevant literature and options. A country should obtain opinions from a range of international experts, and conduct assessments with national data, focusing on the categories identified in the KCA.

Some of the main questions to consider within the methodological options are:

- 1) What types of satellite data are most appropriate for monitoring the classes identified?
- 2) What type of classification approach should be used?
- 3) What types of pre-processing are needed for the particular method of image analysis being considered, and what level of analyst expertise is required?
- 4) How much of the process can be automated, and for those parts that are dependent on analyst interaction, how can consistency and reliability be assured?
- 5) How should data from different time periods be combined to produce change estimates?
- 6) What post-classification processing steps should be applied?
- 7) What validation approach should be used, including data sources and sampling?

Some of the most important considerations are whether to use optical data versus Radio Detection and Ranging (RADAR) data, what spatial resolution is needed and whether the data source has an appropriate archive and acquisition strategy.

For question 4, a country should seek to produce the most accurate estimates possible for key categories while using an approach that is “replicable.” This is a fundamental requirement of the GPG-LULUCF, although it is only vaguely defined in the context of satellite monitoring. Question 5 includes both the approach to processing the satellite imagery from multiple dates and the approach to estimating change rates from completed land-use change maps or sample estimates.

By distinguishing mature forest versus fallow areas, either during creation of the forest benchmark map or during the stratification of forests in this map, a country can minimize confusion between mature forest clearing and fallow cycles in later monitoring. While older secondary forest can be difficult to distinguish from mature forest, most fallows younger than 10 years are distinguishable, and the great majority of fallow periods are shorter than 10 years. Question 6 includes merging of temporary sub-classes, possibly combining information from multiple dates into a single multi-date product, and often some type of filtering to a defined minimum-mapping unit (MMU). The MMU should be smaller than the minimum patch size included in the national forest definition, or a case should be made that using a larger MMU does not significantly affect resulting area estimates. However, while using a larger MMU may not significantly affect area estimates for static areas of classes, estimates of change can be very sensitive to the MMU. Question 7 should consider

various sampling schemes and the availability of very high-resolution satellite or aerial observations, as well as an independent team of analysts to interpret validation data and conduct error calculations.

## 5.4 REMOTE SENSING OVERVIEW

This section provides a summary of remote sensing fundamentals. Numerous text books are also available on remote sensing of land-cover. Links to selected internet resources are provided in Appendix 5B.

### 5.4.1 Types and characteristics of remote sensing data

Remote sensing is the process of sensing energy emitted or reflected at some wavelength along the electromagnetic (EM) spectrum by an object, rather than being in direct contact with it. The human eye, for example, senses a relatively small portion of the total spectrum of energy emitted by the sun; this is the visible portion of the EM spectrum. The amount and type of energy sensed is usually recorded in digital form; the amount representing the strength of the signal, and the type representing the recording of the signal across a spectrum. Fundamental assumptions, though not always valid, are that different land-cover types can be distinguished based on this recorded information and that land use can be inferred from land cover.

Satellite-based remote sensing is most common because of the full, repeated coverage offered by one or more satellite data sources; thus enabling national monitoring for terrestrial-based applications. Airborne remote sensing capacities are also of interest, as such systems could be applied over large regions, or entire countries, depending on the type of equipment, sampling approach, and resources available. At the highest level, two broad types of remote sensing for monitoring land-cover exist: passive and active.

#### *Passive remote sensing*

The majority of remotely-sensed data used for monitoring land use is passive. Passive remotely-sensed data are acquired by a sensor that passively receives energy originating from another source; the instrument does not emit its own signal. The sun is the source for visible and shortwave-infrared spectral regions of the earth, the feature itself is the source for thermal-infrared regions (Figure 5.2). The portion of the sun's energy across these spectral regions reflected by the land surface is often indicative of the structural and chemical characteristics of the surface features (Figure 5.3). Different spectral regions are represented by relatively narrow "spectral bands" (Figure 5.4) and, by combining images of energy measured in different spectral bands and assigning a separate color for display, "multi-spectral" images are produced, as illustrated in Figure 5.5.

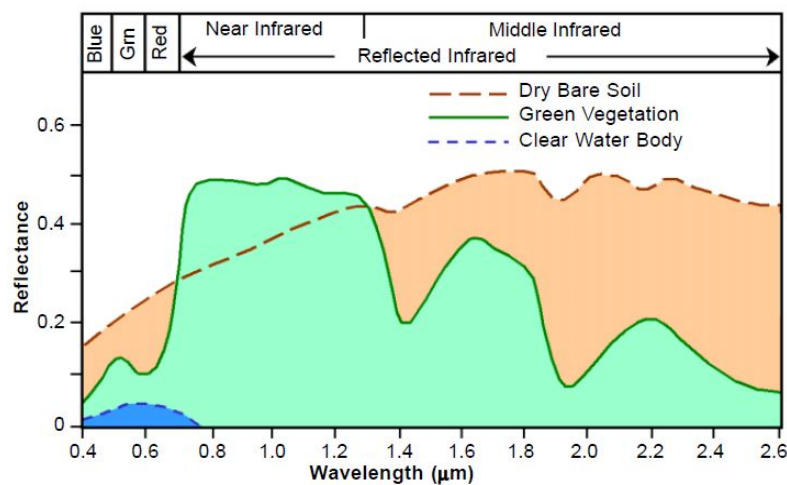
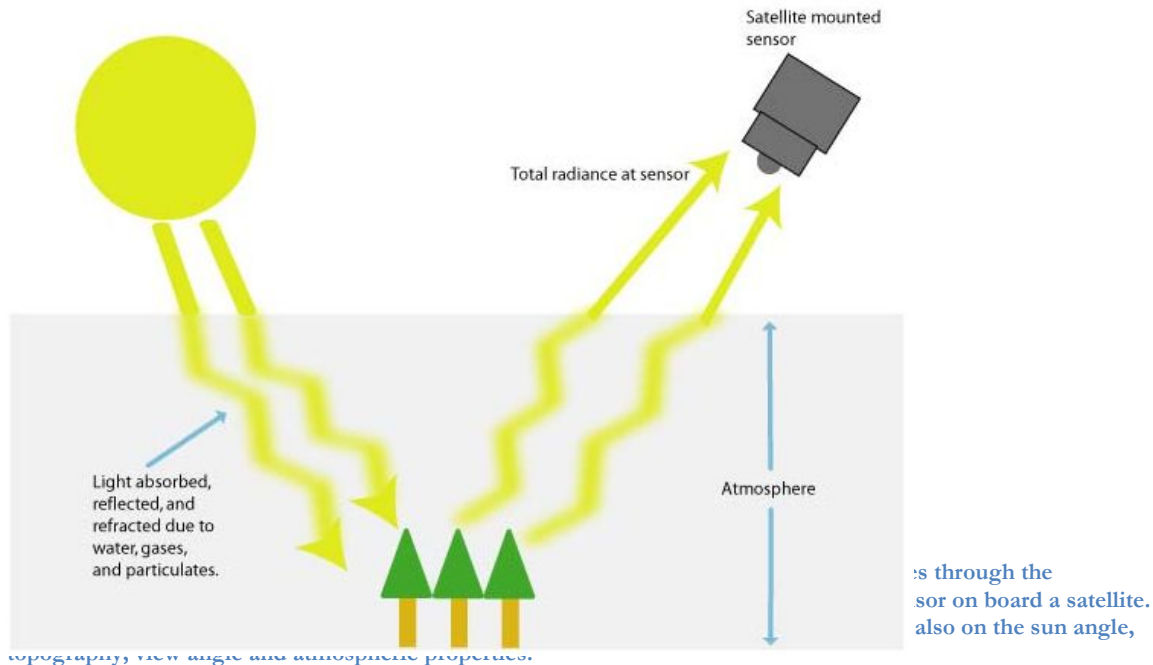


Figure 5.3: Generalized spectral curves of fundamental features in remote sensing of land-cover. Most types of land-cover are a mixture of these features, plus non-green vegetation and shadows caused by the geometry of terrain and vegetation.

A)



B)



Figure 5.4: Example of spectral resolution. Both (a) and (b) represent the entire visible range of the electromagnetic spectrum. Spectral bands are defined by a range of wavelengths, and in the example here they are divided by white lines. A single channel of a multi-spectral sensor is sensitive to energy only within a certain band. In (a), the bands cover a wide range of energy, and a sensor with such bands would be considered a broad-band sensor. In (b), the bands are narrow, and a sensor with channels along these bands would have a high spectral resolution. A sensor, such as illustrated in (b), with so many channels and bands would be considered hyper-spectral.

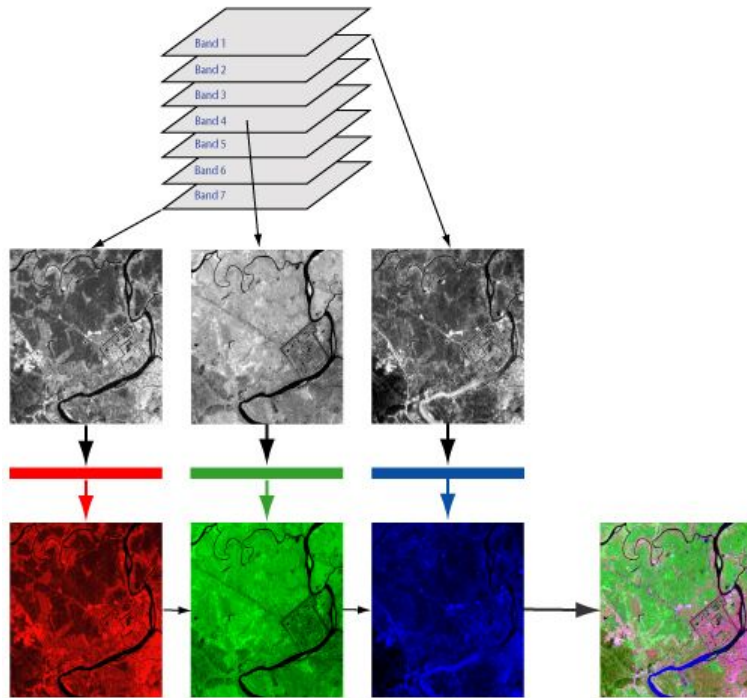


Figure 5.5: Image data combined from three sensor channels to produce a multi-spectral image. Such color-composite images aid visualization and interpretation of the land-cover. Brightness levels, shown as grey tones, represent values in the individual channels.

In addition to the visible and near and shortwave-infrared regions, passive remote sensing systems also acquire data in the thermal region. Thermal energy is emitted by the land surface itself and, while rarely used for distinguishing types of land-cover, it facilitates the detection of clouds, active fires, and urban heat islands, as well as modeling various ecosystem processes and vegetation-climate interactions.

#### *Active remote sensing*

In active remote sensing, an instrument sends out a signal at certain wavelengths and measures the return time and strength of the back-scattered signal. RADAR and Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) are the most commonly used active remote sensing techniques for terrestrial applications.

In forest environments, RADAR information is primarily related to structural features at the wavelength scale of the energy being sensed, versus optical sensors which measure reflected energy that is largely a function of canopy architecture, leaf pigments, and soil background. RADAR data provide information related to the density of leaves in the canopy, or branches and tree trunks, depending on the wavelength used. RADAR data are also sensitive to canopy and soil moisture, and are extremely influenced by topography. One major advantage of RADAR systems is their ability to penetrate clouds due to the longer wavelengths, the microwave portion of the EM spectrum. Because of their sensitivity to the geometric properties of forests, RADAR data have potential for relating to forest biomass. RADAR data, and data from other satellite sources, for example, were used to produce two recent maps of global forest biomass (Saatchi *et al.*, 2011; Baccini *et al.*, 2012).

Until recently, all RADAR sensors on board satellites collected measurements in only one wavelength band and one polarization. The resulting images did not have the dimensionality that multi-spectral images have, and thus yielded limited potential for classification of land-cover types. Several recent satellites carry RADAR sensors that collect data in multiple bands and in different polarizations, thus extending their utility for classification of land-cover types. RADAR is further discussed in Section 5.5.



As with RADAR, LiDAR instruments emit a pulse of energy, some of which is scattered back to the sensor by the target. The distance between the sensor and the target is then calculated from the elapsed time for the LiDAR signal to make a complete round trip. However, in contrast to RADAR, LiDAR operates in the visible and near infra-red portions of the EM spectrum and, thus, does not penetrate clouds. Applications of LiDAR in forestry have mainly focused on measurement of canopy height, sub-canopy topography, and the horizontal and vertical distribution of vegetation; these parameters can be used to model estimates of aboveground biomass (see, for example, Clark *et al.*, 2004; Lefsky *et al.*, 2002; Lim *et al.*, 2003; Nelson *et al.*, 2009).

LiDAR systems are also generally classified into full-waveform LiDAR and discrete LiDAR systems (see Figure 5.6). Full-waveform systems record the entire waveform of a returning pulse, while discrete systems sample a discrete number of points, usually between one and five, per transmitted pulse. Both forms of LiDAR have been shown to be useful for estimating forest biomass via comparison with field data and modeling. While some LiDAR instruments collect data only along sampling lines, others have scanning abilities to collect data both along and across sampling lines, enabling the creation of images.

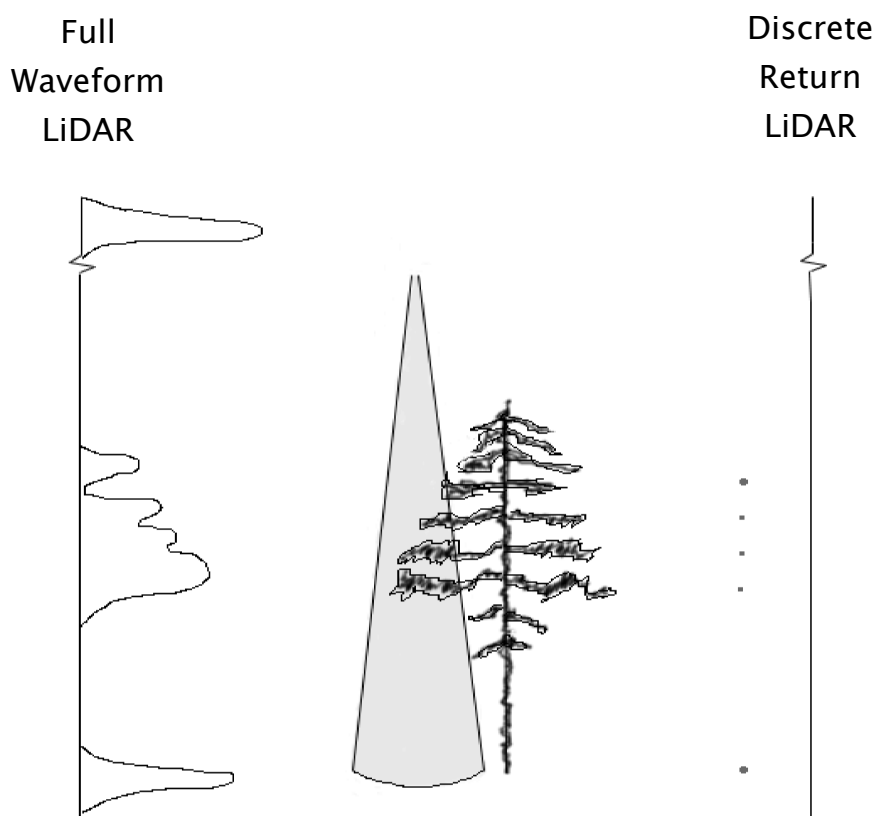


Figure 5.6: Example of full waveform vs. discrete waveform LiDAR (Lim *et al.*, 2003)

The majority of LiDAR remote sensing to-date has been airborne-based. However, one LiDAR instrument, the Geoscience Laser Altimeter System (GLAS) on board the Ice, Cloud, and land Elevation Satellite (ICESAT) was satellite-based. Though the ICESAT satellite is no longer operational, GLAS provided full-form LiDAR information for linear tracks along the satellite path, with a ground resolution of 70m. The linear samples from GLAS were inputs to the two global biomass studies noted above.

#### *Resolution and other considerations*

In addition to the type and spectral characteristics of different images, consideration must be given to: spatial and temporal resolution, data collection strategy, cost of procuring the imagery and image archive length. Spatial resolution is important as the resolution must be fine enough to detect the changes of interest (i.e., at least half the size of the scale of changes). Publically available data have spatial resolutions ranging from 0.7m to 1km. Data used for land-cover monitoring have resolutions ranging from 5m to 30m. For example, A 30m resolution observation, or pixel, represents a ground area of 900 m<sup>2</sup> (30m by 30m); a ground area of one hectare would be represented by 11 pixels at this resolution.

Data with coarser spatial resolutions are used for global studies and are not generally suitable for land-cover monitoring, as such data will not detect smaller-scale changes. The use of such data for land-cover monitoring yields an inherent bias in such derived estimates. Conversely, high resolution data, less than 10m, has traditionally only been used over small areas because of cost and frequency of availability. However, as high resolution data continue to become available and more affordable, the use of these data over large areas, especially via sampling, is becoming more practical.

Temporal resolution refers to the frequency with which data are collected. Many satellites, such as Landsat, have defined orbits that dictate how frequently the satellite will return to view the same location on the earth and acquire a new image. The re-visit time for Landsat is 16 days, so the most that an area could be monitored is every 16 days. However, persistent cloud cover often reduces the frequency of acquiring useable images. Other satellites, including many of the high resolution sensors such as RapidEye, Quickbird, IKONOS, WorldView-2, SPOT HRV series, CBERS HRC, GeoEye-1 & -2, the DMC constellation, KOMSTAT-2 or RESOURCESAT-1 are pointable, meaning they can be tilted to view a location that is at an angle to their defined orbit. While this can result in the same area being repeatedly imaged at much higher frequency, such acquisitions occur for short periods and some require tasking. While this has historically limited the practicality of using such satellites in a monitoring capacity, Box 5.3 highlights two examples where very high-resolution imagery is being used extensively in the development of NFMSs.

#### **Box 5.3. Examples of the use of high resolution imagery in NFMSs**

While many countries are generating forest benchmark maps and deforestation monitoring products using Landsat imagery, some countries are investigating the utility of other sources of, for example, higher resolution imagery for monitoring purposes, especially in areas where degradation pervades. Guyana, for example, has implemented a national-level, annual monitoring activity using wall-to-wall RapidEye imagery. For Guyana, RapidEye, with five MSI bands of 6.5m, has proven particularly useful for assessing and addressing the impacts of forest degradation.

Mexico utilizes Landsat in its MRV system and has also incorporated RapidEye. It uses RapidEye imagery from the dry and wet season to better differentiate between seasonal biomass coverage.

Data archive length is another important consideration for developing historical analyses, even for periods as brief as the past decade. To facilitate consistent monitoring and ease of logistics, it is preferable to work with a single source of data throughout a study period when possible. The Landsat series is the most common data source for monitoring land-cover change, as data extend back to 1972 for the multi-spectral scanner (MSS) and 1982 for Thematic Mapper. Figure 5.7 illustrates the archive history of the Landsat satellite series.

Further, as the Landsat satellites have a defined orbit, roughly the same area is acquired each time the satellite returns to view the same location on the earth, meaning image pairs from multiple dates mostly overlap.

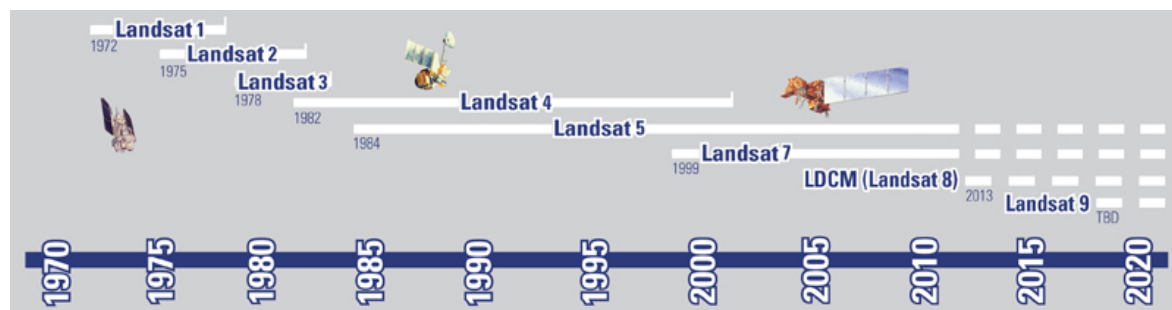


Figure 5.7: Landsat archive timeline. Landsat 1 – 3 carried only the MSS instrument; Landsat 4 – 5 carried both the MSS & TM instruments; Landsat 7 carries the ETM+ instrument but since 2003 has experienced data gaps due to mechanical failure; Landsat 8, carries the OLI and TIRS instruments. From [http://landsat.usgs.gov/about\\_ldcm.php](http://landsat.usgs.gov/about_ldcm.php)

Finally, a satellite program's future sensor launch and data acquisition strategy, as well as cost policies, are important considerations when planning a monitoring program. The Landsat Data Continuity Mission (LDCM), for example, ensures that future National Aeronautic and Space Agency (NASA) satellites will continue to provide a long-term data record, including the successful launch of Landsat 8 in February 2013. Landsat's no-cost data policy allows flexibility in data use. Costs of other data sources are also trending downwards. The upcoming launch of the Sentinel-2 series, with 2A scheduled for launch in 2015, will provide an additional source of imagery for consideration in the development of NFMS (see Box 5.4). RapidEye, with five satellites in its current constellation, has a follow-on mission planned for 2019-2020; thus providing another source of data for an extended period. A table of current and future satellite data options, including characteristics, is listed in Section 5.6.

#### Box 5.4: Additional future data sources for consideration in the development of NFMSs; the example of Sentinel-2

The European Space Agency (ESA) is responsible for the space component of the Copernicus programme, under which a series of dedicated satellites, the Sentinels, are being constructed. The Sentinel-2 series of multi-spectral imaging satellites, with 13 bands located in the VIS, NIR and SWIR wavelengths and spatial resolutions of 10m, 20m and 60m, will provide additional data options for consideration in the development of NFMS. The first satellite, Sentinel-2A, will be launched between May-July 2015 and will offer a revisit time of 10 days. When the second unit (Sentinel-2B) is launched in 2016, a 5-day revisit time will be possible. The interoperability between these sensors and the Landsat missions will further enhance the revisit time and improve overall data availability. Based on the free, full and open data policy adopted for the Copernicus programme, the Sentinel data products available to all users.

In summary, key data characteristics to consider are:

- What geographical, phenological, and atmospheric (especially persistent cloud cover) conditions exist?
- What are the spectral regions, and bands within them, where data are collected, and how do these relate to the potential for distinguishing the land-cover types of interest, and changes among them?
- What is the spatial resolution of the data and how appropriate is it, relative to the scale of the land-cover changes to monitor?

- What is the temporal resolution in terms of potential frequency of acquisition of non-cloudy observations compared to the desired frequency of monitoring?
- What is the longevity of the image archive length – does this meet the historical mapping needs?
- What are the cost implications of these data in terms of purchase and analysis?
- What are the future satellite development and launch commitments?

### 5.4.2 Image pre-processing, analysis, and post-processing

Image pre-processing refers to any step that is applied to an image in preparation for the image analysis step, and image analysis is the process of generating a land-cover class for all parts of an image. Post-processing occurs after the image analysis step, and enables the estimation of rates and patterns of land-cover change to be generated.

Pre-processing usually includes geometric registration and co-registration, atmospheric correction, and occasional data transformation. Atmospheric correction may be necessary depending on the image analysis approach that will be used. Data transformation, though useful, is optional depending on the image analysis approach. As previously outlined, post-processing activities may include a number of steps. Finally, the calculation of change rates and error estimates are required. The summary of pre-processing, analysis, and post-processing steps below is based on optical data and approaches to classification, using examples of Landsat data analysis.

#### *Image pre-processing*

##### *Geometric registration and co-registration*

Geometric registration is the process of mapping data in a geographical coordinate system. This is to understand the geographical area represented and is applied when importing the image into a GIS or image-analysis format for processing.

However, geometric registration may have errors up to 100s of meters. Therefore, although images have been geometrically registered, it does not mean that images of the same area acquired from different dates will overlay well enough to avoid errors in change estimates resulting from poor co-registration. Therefore, co-registration may still be necessary. Co-registration is a standard, simple process that takes a modest amount of time and involves the identification of one image to use as the base image to which the remaining images will be co-registered. Automation is increasingly available for processing numerous images, but traditional analyst-driven methods are also sufficient. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) has been reprocessing much of the Landsat archive, resulting in the creation of a L1T *precision and terrain corrected* product<sup>25</sup>. These data have already been geometrically corrected using precision ground control points and Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM) Digital Elevation Model (DEM) information, yielding a dataset with accuracies within 30m and, thus, eliminating the need for further geometric correction. Co-registration among images should be reviewed and may require adjustments.

##### *Atmospheric correction*

The atmosphere has several effects on visible and infrared energy as it passes through the atmosphere from the sun to the land and back to a satellite or airborne sensor (Figure 5.8). Atmospheric correction is frequently performed in combination with a bi-directional reflectance distribution function (BRDF) correction. BRDF defines how light is reflected from a surface, and is dependent on both the incident and reflected directions.

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<sup>25</sup> [http://landsat.usgs.gov/descriptions\\_for\\_the\\_levels\\_of\\_processing.php](http://landsat.usgs.gov/descriptions_for_the_levels_of_processing.php)

Atmospherically-corrected images contain data representing surface reflectance, in unitless values from zero to one, as opposed to the digital numbers of the raw image data. Most atmospheric correction algorithms are applied to satellite images prior to mapping, and use a single correction algorithm for the entire image. These usually assume constant atmospheric conditions across an image, although there is active research on accounting for variability within an image.

Performing atmospheric correction depends on the image analysis approach used (Song *et al.*, 2001). Approaches to classification that involve the creation of sub-classes for each type of land use and change can yield accurate maps without atmospheric correction because sub-classes can account for different atmospheric conditions. Conversely, methods that apply constant class signatures over images with variable atmospheric conditions should include atmospheric correction. Some semi-automated methods apply constant signatures over multiple images or image dates, and these methods are highly dependent on careful atmospheric correction.

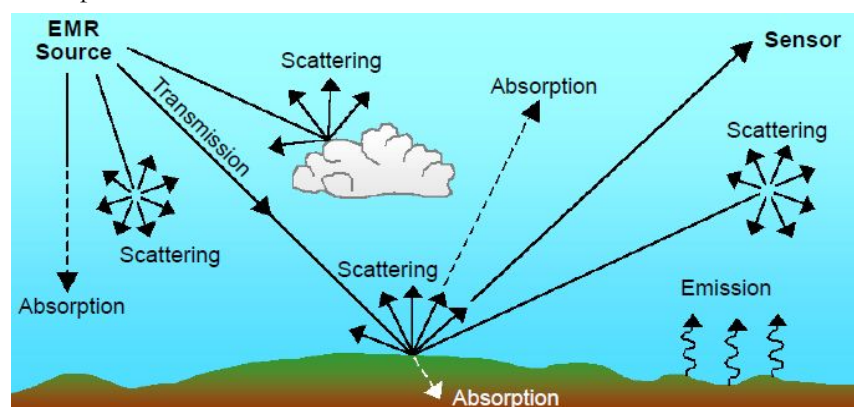


Figure 5.8: Atmospheric effects on optical data. The electromagnetic radiation source is the sun, and this radiation can be blocked or scattered by clouds in addition to being affected by a “clear” atmosphere. A “clear” atmosphere still causes scattering and absorption of the radiation as it is transmitted from the sun to the earth and back to the satellite. Sun and sensor view angles also impact the effects of the atmosphere. BRDF characterizes how an object illuminated by a source, such as the sun, appears brighter or darker depending on the angle of the source and the angle at which it is viewed by a satellite sensor.

Several programs exist to perform atmospheric corrections over entire images. LOTRAN and 6S are the most common, and several tools have been created to facilitate their application. One example, developed by NASA, is the Landsat Ecosystem Disturbance Adaptive Processing System (LEDAPS) tool (Masek *et al.*, 2008). LEDAPS uses information on water vapor, atmospheric pressure, ozone, a topography-dependent Rayleigh scattering correction and an aerosol optical thickness component based on Kaufman *et al.* (1997) to generate a surface reflectance value for each pixel. LEDAPS also generates water, cloud, cloud shadow and snow masks.

These corrections can be applied to several partially-cloudy images of the same area. The images can then be combined to produce a single, “gap-filled” composite mosaic. While the corrections are applied to all the images and the resulting composite should therefore appear seamless, atmospheric artifacts may remain, appearing as darker or brighter patches (Figure 5.9), and requiring each atmospherically-corrected image to be classified separately and then combined. Alternatively, additional algorithms based on, for example, local histogram matching could be applied to further reduce artifacts. In addition, beginning in summer 2013, all Landsat data, including those from the LDCM, will be available with top-of-atmosphere (TOA) reflectance corrections applied<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> [http://landsat.usgs.gov/about\\_LU\\_Vol\\_7\\_Issue\\_2.php#3b](http://landsat.usgs.gov/about_LU_Vol_7_Issue_2.php#3b)



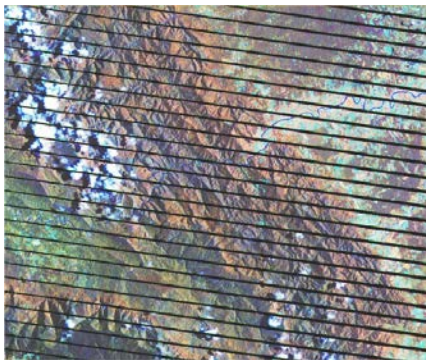
A)



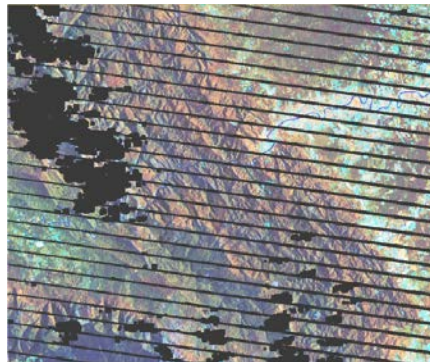
B)



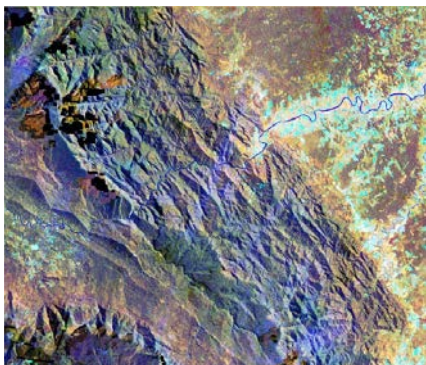
C)



D)



E)



F)

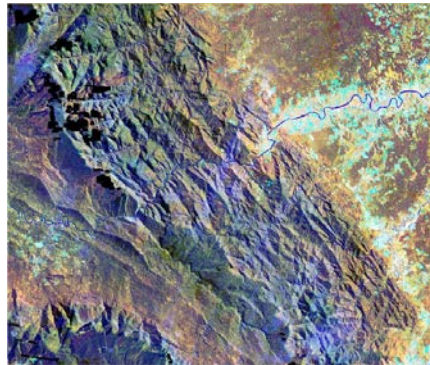


Figure 5.9: Example of atmospheric correction of Landsat data from San Martin, Peru. A) an unstretched “true-color composite” where the red, green and blue bands are assigned to the red, green and blue colors in the display. The black lines are SLC-off data gaps. B) the same image, but with a Gaussian stretch applied to the data histogram. C) the near-infrared, middle-infrared and red bands assigned to the red, green and blue colors, a common assignment for a “false-color composite”, allowing visual exploration of the infrared data. D) the same, but post-atmospheric correction and with a cloud/cloud-shadow mask applied using LEDAPS. Note that while the linear gaps have been filled, some of the cloud gaps remain since they were also cloud in the second image, thus requiring additional images. E) a mosaic of two atmospherically corrected images, but with no histogram matching between them applied; note the orange-tone artifacts that appear to the left of the remaining cloud gaps in the upper-left of the image. F) mosaic of the same two images, but with histogram matching applied; the artifacts in E) are no longer visible.

### *Data transformation*

Some analysis methods include data transformation techniques, such as various forms of ordination, prior to classification. Principal components analysis (PCA) is one example of a transformation technique involving ordination. These techniques alter the information to facilitate interpretation. The “Tassled Cap” transformation has been used extensively in the classification of vegetation types. Spectral mixture analysis (SMA) is another data transformation approach. SMA utilizes estimated spectral reflectances of a set of “pure” features that aim to represent the observed surfaces. In vegetated lands, for example, these are sunlit leaf, soil, and woody vegetation or litter. Soil theoretically could be split into multiple soil types with different reflectance properties, and water could be included. Shadow is also generally included, as this is an important feature of most spectral images because of the geometry of the vegetated canopies.

SMA involves defining the spectral reflectance of each main feature representing the landscape under study and, based on these, estimating the proportions of each component for each pixel. Definition of the pure features may be via laboratory analysis, field analysis, or literature. When applied in SMA, they are referred to as “spectral end members,” since they are located at the outer ends of the multi-dimensional distribution of the spectral data. End members can also be defined by simply selecting the extreme pixels in the multi-dimensional data; these are termed “image end members.” However, if image end members are used, the resulting SMA analyses are relevant only to that image. An output could estimate, for example, that a particular pixel represents an observation of a piece of land that is 30 percent sunlit leaf, 20 percent soil and 50 percent shadow. These can be visualized as “fractional images” and used as inputs to classifications. SMA can be a useful approach in understanding the spectral data contained in the image data, as it explains the data in terms of physical features. Like PCA, and other types of data ordination, SMA does not add to the information content. Depending on the classification approach used, these techniques may help to produce more accurate or efficient land-use classification.

### *Classification*

Land-cover classification produces a thematic representation of land by categorizing pixels based on their spectral signatures. Two broad types of classification exist: supervised and unsupervised.

In supervised classification, the analyst identifies “training sites” and creates training data by delineating areas known to be of each class. Statistics of the pixel data within these areas are calculated and, at a minimum, these include the means, variances and co-variance matrix of the spectral data, defining the “spectral signature” of each class. The level of statistical separability among the classes can be evaluated, and this may suggest a need to merge or add additional sub-classes. Based on these statistics, various algorithms can be used to estimate the most likely class of the remaining, unidentified pixels, yielding a classified image.

Often, output classifications are evaluated and, based on conspicuous errors, training data are modified and a new iteration of the classification is run. Some of the common algorithms in remote sensing software packages are, in increasing complexity: Parallelepiped, Minimum Distance, Maximum Likelihood, and Mahalanobis Distance. Figure 5.10 illustrates the supervised classification approach.

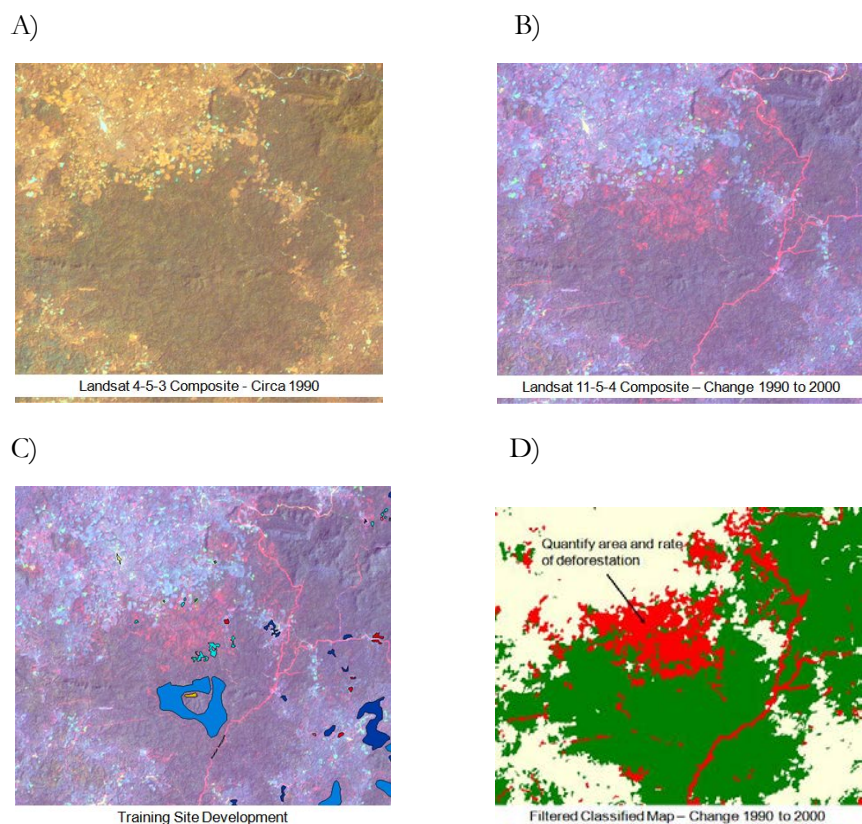


Figure 5.10: Example of a supervised classification of two dates of images in a single process, from Liberia. Spectral images (A) from two dates can be combined and viewed to more easily observe spectral changes (B) indicative of land-use change. Training sites can be drawn (C) based on field and aerial data as well as an analyst's knowledge of an area and expertise in interpretation. These are the basis for class statistics used to classify the rest of the image. The final product (D) is often filtered to eliminate small and spurious errors.

In unsupervised classification, no training process is applied. Instead, algorithms identify spectrally similar pixels and then assign them to a user-specified number of groups. The output of an unsupervised classification is then reviewed by an analyst, and each group is labeled to a class based on the analyst's visual interpretation of the spectral data, the location of the pixels, and available ancillary field or other data. Additional iterations are typically run to further split groups that overlap different land-cover types. The ISODATA algorithm is common in most software packages.

An assumed advantage of supervised over unsupervised classification is that the analyst directs the process based on *a priori* knowledge of the area being classified. Conversely, an assumed advantage of the unsupervised approach is the algorithm evaluates the distribution of the data itself. Supervised algorithms that explore the distribution of the data while still allowing the analyst to direct the process via training are increasingly used. Two such algorithms are Decision Trees (DTs) and Neural Networks (NNs). DTs operate by iteratively seeking a binary split in the data in each of the bands, based on the data in the training sites identified by the analyst. The split is one that optimizes accuracy at that stage in the development of the DT. The final tree is often composed of hundreds of splits and terminal nodes representing the land-cover classes contained in the training data. "Boosting" and "pruning" processes can be applied to DTs in order to improve the efficiency and reduce the number of final splits; the resulting DT is a set of rules that is applied to the rest of the pixels to produce a classified image. Numerous studies have used DTs to generate robust classification results in many regions (Friedl *et al.*, 1999; Hansen *et al.*, 2000; Pal and Mather, 2003; Rogan *et al.*, 2003; Hansen *et al.*, 2008b).

NNs attempt to mimic the human learning process to associate a class with the image data. Many variants of NNs exist, though NNs can run more slowly than DTs. Both DTs and NNs have become favored over



maximum likelihood and other classification algorithms. Most recently, Random Forest ensemble classification methods have been successfully applied to land-cover and land-cover change classification (Pal, 2005; Gislason *et al.*, 2006; Rodriguez-Galiano *et al.*, 2012). This approach, unlike DTs, randomly selects some, but not all, of the variables to build the resulting tree and identifies resulting splits based only on this subset of variables. Such methods do not suffer from overfitting, which can be a problem with DTs, and generally perform efficiently.

Other approaches under exploration include learning classification techniques, such as Random Forests<sup>27</sup>, in which multiple decision trees are constructed and an output class is selected based on the majority of votes from all the trees. Random Forests, for example, could be particularly useful in areas where the spectral separation of vegetation types is limited.

All of the above approaches are examples of “per-pixel” classification, meaning the pixel is classified solely based on its spectral characteristics. Any of these methods can be expanded to become part of a contextual classification. In contextual classification approaches, a pixel is classified based on its own spectral characteristics as well as those of surrounding pixels. One type of contextual classification is textural classification. In this approach, the variance of the pixels within a certain window around the center pixel, e.g., a five-by-five pixel window, is used to inform the classification. Another type could use the average, or some other metric, of the pixels within the window. Weighting can also be used to apply different weights to pixels that are closer to, or further from, the central pixel being classified.

Image segmentation, another contextual approach, is a statistical method that groups contiguous pixels into areas (segments) that are relatively homogeneous. Segmentation generally represents an intermediate step prior to classification, and segmentation algorithms allow an analyst to specify the relative size and shape of the segments. The resulting segmented image can then be classified at the segment level, rather than the pixel level, providing additional information that can be utilized by the classification algorithm, or the analyst while developing the training data sites.

Each of the above approaches can be applied to a single image at a time, or to mosaics of images of the same area and time period. They can also be applied to multi-temporal image data, i.e., images from the beginning and end of a study period. This enables a direct estimation of change and persistence from the multi-temporal imagery. Some form of “direct change estimation” process is usually recommended for change estimation. This process also includes a single classification step that yields a two-date classification, rather than the classification of two individual images and two single-date classification outputs, both of which may contain errors. These errors would be compounded when the two maps are combined during post-processing.

Some recent semi-automated approaches use much more of the data archive than a single image from a start date and another one from an end date. These approaches may be based on the seasonal signal of different types of vegetation and estimate changes based on where anomalies in these seasonal signals are detected (see, for example, Friedl *et al.*, 2010 or Jiang *et al.*, 2012). Other approaches mine all available data, such as the entire Landsat archive, and generate many multi-temporal metrics, such as “linear trend in red reflectance” or “maximum middle-infrared reflectance recorded since the initial date” (e.g., Hansen *et al.*, 2008a; 2008b). These are powerful because short-lived signals of land-use change are more likely to be captured, and all available data are employed, which may be critical in cloudy areas.

#### *Replicability and analyst interaction versus automation*

In the case of estimating deforestation, many studies with analyst interaction have produced accurate estimates of national forest cover. Accuracies have often been reported over 90 percent (e.g., Harper *et al.*, 2007; Lindquist *et al.*, 2008; Evans *et al.*, 2010; Longépé *et al.*, 2011); accuracies for land-use classes such as agriculture and grassland tend to be lower, generally 70 to 80 percent, and these estimates are generally derived from local rather than national studies.

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<sup>27</sup> [http://www.stat.berkeley.edu/~breiman/RandomForests/cc\\_home.htm](http://www.stat.berkeley.edu/~breiman/RandomForests/cc_home.htm)

In recent years there has been valuable research on automated methods for processing satellite data. This has mostly been in the pre-processing steps, although in some cases it has also included the classification step. For example, there are well-published approaches that use automation for a series of pre-processing steps, then the actual change estimation is conducted using a set of rules or digital classification assisted by analyst interpretation (Souza *et al.*, 2005; Masek *et al.*, 2008). Conversely, the recently published Deforestation Atlas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was produced by an entirely automated approach (Hansen *et al.*, 2008a).

There are a wide range of options to apply automation in the classification step itself. For example, classification algorithms could be rule-based, in the form of thresholds applied to reflectance data, or derived data in some other units. In this case, the validity of the results would be very dependent on precise correction and normalization of the images in the pre-processing step. Further, if relatively few rules are used, the assumption that accurate results can be achieved over large areas, using few rules, must be valid. This is often not the case and should therefore be tested. Such rules, for example, may only yield accurate results over certain parts of the study area where the cover types are most easily distinguished with the spectral data, or to classes that are spectrally distinct, such as dark or clear water, snow, and bright non-forest areas such as urban areas and exposed sand and soil. While rapid estimation of cover and change based on these rules could be achieved for much of the country, the remaining areas or classes would need to be estimated via other approaches.

Another example of automating the classification step could be to automate the process of collecting data on training sites. Hansen *et al.* (2008b) sampled an existing vegetation map to generate training points. While the results are encouraging, further testing should be conducted in other regions, especially mountainous regions or areas with more deciduous vegetation. A related approach is to use traditional interpretation methods to identify training sites for classes, as is typically done in a supervised classification approach. A large set of training sites could be built for the entire country, or for various strata within it. Once it is confirmed that this set can be used to produce an accurate map, the same training sites could be applied to new data in later years to calculate new class spectral signatures to be used with the new imagery. The approach could be automated once a national training data set is defined, as the spectral variations in the new data are accounted for each time these new data are combined with the training site locations.

Countries could potentially automate all but the final steps of a methodology to estimate change. Another approach could be to automate the estimation of the most conspicuous changes (e.g., clear-cutting of forest) while applying a less-automated method to estimate the less conspicuous ones. Alternatively, a country could choose to monitor certain parts of the country that are more appropriate for automated monitoring, like areas with modest topography and cloud cover. Difficult areas may require more direct analyst interaction to obtain accurate results. As the scientific community itself uses a broad range of approaches, this indicates there is no single best answer and countries should evaluate options themselves. In doing so, countries should seek an optimal balance between the accuracy of the final estimates, the replicability of the methodology, and the cost.

### *Post-processing*

Post-processing refers to any step conducted after the classification step, and the post-processing steps required will vary depending on the classification approach and attributes desired in the final map product used to calculate areas for categories.

If the classification methodology included the creation of sub-classes merged into the final desired classes, this should be done first. Each class in the digital output file of the classification has an assigned number, and merging can be accomplished by recoding the values of all the sub-classes to a value that represents the final class. If a two-date classification was not conducted, the following step should be applied to the two classifications to create a two-date change map. The values of the classifications from both dates should be recoded to form the basis for a final class map that records categories of change and persistence. However, note that the previous section recommends directly estimating change from multi-temporal images. With

direct change detection, yielding a two-date classification, the output classifications will already have values representing classes of change and persistence and, therefore, the previous recoding step would not be required. Further, errors present in each of the single-date classifications would be compounded in the merged classification output.

After recoding to the final class values, some filtering of the product is usually desirable. Filtering is generally performed for two reasons. First, to eliminate small errors associated with micro-topography and other very local effects that produce a speckled pattern of mis-classified raster cells and, second, to eliminate patches smaller than a desired MMU or the minimum patch size in a national class definition. Note that we use the term cell instead of pixel when referring to classification outputs rather than spectral images. Some classification methods are more prone to producing these errors than others, but they are common artifacts that should be removed.

Two broad types of filters are commonly used, and can be used in sequence. “Local filters,” are based on the class values around (within a three-by-three window) a center cell. A common type is a local majority filter, where the center cell is re-assigned to the most common cell value within the window. This not only removes the speckled pattern but also smoothes jagged edges, which may or may not be desired. For small windows, such as a three-by-three window, this is subtle. The second type of filter is a “sieve filter.” In this, patches of cells with the same value are identified, and patches smaller than a user-defined size eliminated. As mentioned above, this is useful because the final product can have a defined MMU that meets a country’s national definition of forest.

#### *Calculating change rates*

Several factors must be carefully addressed when calculating change rates. First, the source images may not be from the exact beginning and end of the time period reported, especially where cloud cover limits the coverage of optical images. For example, many studies that report changes over five or ten years use images that are within one or two years of each target date. In this case, the study areas should be divided into areas where the image pairs representing the start and end time have different lengths of time separating them. For example, for a 2000 – 2010 study, one part of the analysis may be based on images from 2001 and 2009, while another is from 1999 and 2011. These areas should be defined and recorded as having an eight and twelve-year difference in dates, and rates of change calculated for each area with a given difference, and for each forest stratum. In this case, each forest stratum experiencing change between the eight year difference would have an entry, and each forest stratum experiencing change between the twelve year difference would have an entry. This allows for a temporal extrapolation for each area in each stratum, in this case to a ten year period.

Data gaps, from cloud cover or other reasons, must also be addressed. If reporting in units of percent, one should consider if the sampled area, which may be the great majority of the study area, is representative of the entire study area. If reporting in absolute units, extrapolation is needed. This may warrant another stratification so that percent rates are not extrapolated into very different areas and thus not well-represented by those where data exist. After extrapolating the percent rates, rates can be converted to absolute values by combining with the forest area at the beginning of the reporting period. In this step, data on change can be combined with those on the forest strata, in order to report change for each forest stratum.

Third, if the analysis was not for a single-year period, the total rate should be reported for the entire time period, not in per-year units. In the above example of 2000 – 2010, if the aim is to report in units of percent per year, then a correction must be applied. This is calculated based on areas at the start and end date:

$$\text{Annual change rate} = [ (\text{area } t_2 / \text{area } t_1) \wedge (1 / (\text{date } t_2 - \text{date } t_1)) ] - 1$$

where  $t_1$  and  $t_2$  are the beginning and end of the time period of the study, in years (Puyravaud, 2003).

## Accuracy assessment

Uncertainty is the error in a particular estimate, in this case the estimate of an area of change over time. Accuracy equals one minus the error value, and thus accuracy assessment also refers to assessment of error or uncertainty. Performing an accuracy assessment of a thematic map represents a very important component of the process. An accuracy assessment allows errors in the map to be estimated and uncertainty quantified, thus providing additional explanation of, and validity to, the results. . The main elements of an accuracy assessment are the error matrix, or confusion matrix, and associated statistics (Congalton, 1991). The error matrix is generated by comparing the classification results with reference data. The statistics include overall accuracy, and the producer's and user's accuracy for each class in the product. The Kappa coefficient can also be calculated, but many articles highlight the limitations of this statistic (Olofsson *et al.*, 2012; Pontius and Millones, 2011; Foody, 2002).

In the example error matrix in Table 5.3, the columns contain verified land uses and the rows contain estimated uses from the classification. The values along the diagonal are the number of correctly classified pixels, and those off the diagonals are errors of omission and commission. Overall accuracy is the portion of the total number of correctly mapped pixels.

The producer's accuracy indicates how often a pixel is correctly assigned to a specific class. This statistic is based on errors of omission, i.e., how often a pixel was incorrectly omitted from the class. The user's accuracy indicates how often a pixel was incorrectly assigned to a given class. This is based on errors of commission, i.e., how often a pixel was incorrectly included in a class. In the example table, the producer's accuracy for degraded forest is:  $100 \times 1,890 / 2,040 = 92.6$  percent. The user's accuracy for the same class is:  $100 \times 1,890 / 2,000 = 94.5$  percent.

		Reference			
		Forest	Degraded Forest	Non-forest	Map total
Land-use map	Forest	9,880	90	30	10,000
	Degraded Forest	70	1,890	40	2,000
	Non-forest	10	60	3,930	4,000
	Reference total	9,960	2,040	4,000	16,000

Producer's accuracy (%)		User's accuracy (%)	
Forest	99.2	Forest	98.8
Degraded Forest	92.6	Degraded Forest	94.5
Non-forest	98.3	Non-forest	98.3

Table 5.3: Example of an error matrix and resulting overall accuracy. In this hypothetical case, the land use totals are the same as in the beginning time in Table 5.1

Both the land-use change and error matrices are common formats for reporting land-use change and errors. While they differ from the reporting-table format of the IPCC, shown at the end of Chapter 3, the data can easily be transferred. It is useful to calculate these statistics for the different strata in a study area, as this allows one to combine errors with errors in carbon stock for each stratum. It also allows one to assess where improvements are most needed, i.e., which parts of the GHG inventory are contributing the greatest errors in GHG estimates and should be reviewed as part of the KCA.

The examples in Table 5.3 demonstrate error estimation in land-use cover for a single date. However, countries must estimate errors in land-use change estimates over time. Multi-date accuracy assessments use the information available from two dates. An appropriate approach is the use of careful, cross-checked, visual interpretation of a combination of very high resolution imagery, along with imagery used in the classification itself. Multiple interpreters can be used, and the consistency of their interpretation can indicate confidence of the validation data set itself. Field surveys can be valuable for the classes that are the most difficult to interpret even with very high resolution imagery, such as degraded forest. Once the error for a particular area of change, or AD, is estimated, it can be combined with the error of the change in stocks per unit area estimated via field inventories. This can be done using Equation 5.2.2 from the UNFCCC “Good Practice Guidance for LULUCF” (2003) for the propagation of errors, similarly to the application described in Chapter 4.

Error-adjusted area estimates, such as those described in Olofsson *et al.* (2013), use the information available in the matrix, together with the total area of each class identified in the map, to generate area-adjusted errors based on the proportional area of each class and errors identified in the matrix. Error matrices and accuracy assessments can also be extended to provide confidence interval (CI) information. This is especially important as it quantifies the confidence of a particular class, thus providing very pertinent additional information. Olofsson *et al.* (2013) describe a process for creating CI bounds based on area-adjusted error matrices

In addition, it is important to account for a rare class when developing a validation strategy (Stehman *et al.*, 2010). This type of proportional sampling design ensures that adequate sampling occurs in sparser yet critical classes, such as deforestation. The sampling design could focus on areas of deforestation identified in the map, and a stratification could be used to categorize areas of high change probability and low change probability. Proportional sampling could then be focused in these strata to ensure each class is adequately represented in the validation analysis.

Section 3.7 of the GFOI MGD (GFOI, 2013), provides guidance on considerations for generating reference data and performing an accuracy assessment. These include: i) ensuring the reference data are of a higher quality than the map data (for example, Manual interpretation of an image by an analyst is generally considered higher quality than an automatic classification algorithm); and ii) Combining reference data sources (i.e., field and aerial surveys which can be particularly cost effective if resources are limited). The GFOI MGD also provides two example approaches for performing an accuracy assessment and area estimation; one stratified and one model-based approach.

Olofsson *et al.* (2014) also provide a full review of good practice recommendations for producing transparent and “scientifically rigorous” accuracy estimates and estimates of area based on change between time one and time two. They detail three separate steps that should be undertaken to complete an accuracy assessment including: i) the sampling design, which answers the question, ‘what is a suitable subset area to sample?’, understanding that evaluation of the entire map is not possible; ii) the response design, which answers the question ‘are the maps and reference data in agreement?’; and iii) analysis, which answers the question of ‘how to calculate accuracy and quantify uncertainty?’.

Accuracy assessment is very important, and MRV programs should work with expert statisticians in developing strategies for validation sampling and combining information on uncertainties in AD with those in EFs. This will lead to stronger estimation of the overall uncertainties in estimated GHGs.

## 5.5 EMERGING AREAS OF RESEARCH

Several areas of particularly active research in support of REDD+ activities include: the mapping and monitoring of degradation; the use of other sources of remotely-sensed data, such as RADAR, in monitoring; and the increased use of field sampling to facilitate remote sensing product validation.

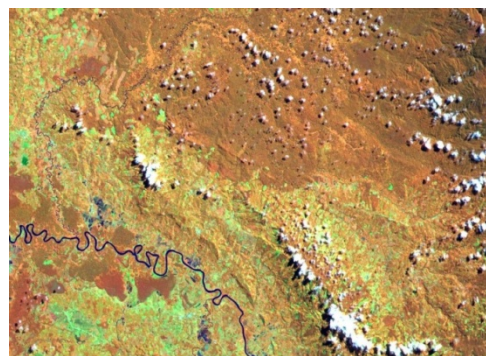
### *Mapping and Monitoring of Degradation*

Forest degradation is a substantial contributor to GHG emissions from land-use change (Nepstad et al, 1999; Souza and Roberts, 2005; Stickler *et al.*, 2009; GOFC-GOLD, 2012; Hirata *et al.*, 2012), with estimates ranging from 20 to 50 percent of total land-use GHG emissions over large regions (see, for example, Houghton and Hacker, 1999; Lambin *et al.*, 2003; Asner *et al.*, 2005). Mapping and monitoring of forest degradation remains challenging. Multiple definitions of forest degradation exist, adding to the complexity of mapping and monitoring forest degradation. The IPCC's definition of forest degradation is provided in section 5.2.1. Conversely, GOFC-GOLD (2012) presents a range of human activities that result in forest degradation including selective logging, forest fires (canopy and sub-canopy) and fuelwood collection. GOFC-GOLD (2012) lists a range of human activities that result in forest degradation including selective logging, forest fires (canopy and sub-canopy) and fuelwood collection. These different activities may require different monitoring approaches, and a country should seek to understand the implications and applicability of different approaches. Readers should also refer to the relevant sections of both the GOFC-GOLD SourceBook and the GFOI MGD.

### *The use of other sources of remotely-sensed data in mapping and monitoring forest*

A second area of research in support of REDD+ activities is the use of other sources of remotely-sensed data, such as RADAR, to map and monitor forest extent and characteristics, deforestation, and degradation. Several characteristics make RADAR an attractive source of information for such applications. First, because RADAR sensors operate in longer wavelengths (generally 1cm to 1m) of the EM spectrum than, for example, optical sensors, they are able to penetrate clouds and are thus useful for monitoring in areas with persistent cloud cover. In addition, because the signals received by the sensor are less affected by atmospheric conditions, and the properties of the emitted radiation from active sensors are controlled and well known, RADAR images are directly comparable over time. RADAR signals are also sensitive to the geometric properties of a forest, providing information on the distribution of aboveground biomass. Figure 5.11 illustrates a detail of a Landsat image compared to a PALSAR satellite image for an area in San Martín, Peru.

A)



B)

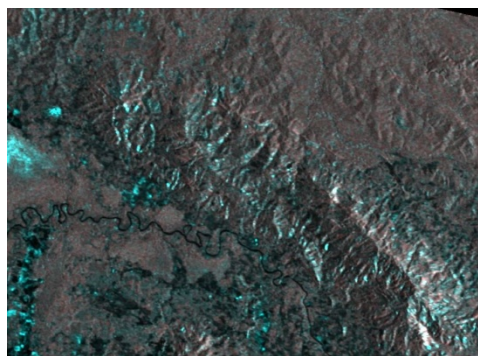


Figure 5.11: Examples of Landsat and RADAR images, from Peru. Ground observations in the Landsat data in A) are partly obscured by clouds, while the PALSAR image in B) is cloud free. While the brightness variations in both are affected by terrain, this is more noticeable in the latter

The following provides a brief introduction to a selection of active remote sensing concepts. Additional Such concepts are key to understanding the basic characteristics of active remote sensing data. RADAR measures the distance between an object on the ground and the sensor based on the strength of radio waves that are transmitted as pulses of microwave beams, directed by an antenna, that illuminate a strip of the earth's surface (swath). The intensity of the signal that is scattered back to the receiver from this transmitted energy is recorded as the returned signal, and the distance is calculated based on the time elapsed for the RADAR signal to make a complete round trip. The next transmitted pulse illuminates the next strip of terrain along the swath, and a two-dimensional image is created (each pulse defines one line).

As with optical sensors, RADAR sensors exploit different wavelength bands. A shorter wavelength band, such as an X-band ( $\lambda = 3$  cm) may only penetrate the upper layer of a forest canopy, whereas a P-band ( $\lambda = 23$  cm) may penetrate leaves and small branches thus providing information about both the big branches and stems of the trees. Thus, resulting P-band images are important for measuring vegetation biomass and aboveground carbon stocks.

The surface roughness, geometric shape and dielectric properties of an object also affect the information received by the RADAR sensor. Surface roughness is a relative term that is dependent on the RADAR wavelength. For example, small objects such as leaves and twigs are considered rough for small wavelength RADAR, but smooth for longer wavelength RADAR such as P-band RADAR. Water bodies tend to be relatively smooth, with most of the energy being reflected away from the RADAR, while trees and other vegetation are rough, causing backscatter, and thus have a bright appearance in a RADAR image.

The difference in intensity of RADAR returns from two surfaces of equal roughness is an indication of the difference in their dielectric properties, and these are strongly affected by their moisture. For example, the brightness of areas covered by bare soil may vary depending on the roughness and moisture content of the soil. For soil types of similar roughness, the surface with a higher moisture content will appear brighter.

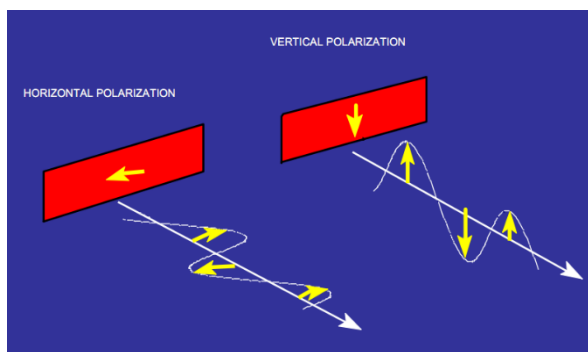
A key characteristic of RADAR data not found in most optical data is polarization; this is described below. Apart from polarization, several additional characteristics distinguish RADAR instruments and data from their optical counterparts and are useful to understand. These include phase, side-looking observation, Synthetic Aperture RADAR (SAR), interferometry, and polarimetry; these are outlined in Box 5.5

Polarization refers to the orientation of the electric field with respect to the direction of propagation. In active remote sensing, the electric field of the resulting radiation has a preferred orientation. Linear is the most common polarization used in RADAR remote sensing where a radiated electric field is oriented either horizontally (horizontal polarization) or vertically (vertical polarization) with respect to the direction of propagation, as shown in Figure 5.12. A sensor that can transmit either horizontally (H) or vertically (V) polarized waves and receive both will result in the following four polarized images:

- HH: horizontal transmission and horizontal reception;
- VV: vertical transmission and vertical reception;
- HV: horizontal transmission and vertical reception; and
- VH: vertical transmission and horizontal reception.

Some space-borne satellites including RADARSAT-1 and ERS-1/2 have only single polarization (RADARSAT-1 with HH and ERS-1/2 with VV), while other satellites, including RADARSAT-2, ENVISAT and ALOS/PALSAR acquire data with all four polarizations ("quad-pol") or two polarizations ("dual-pol"). The below discussion includes a selection of SAR applications that are relevant to REDD+ activities.





5.12: Horizontal and vertical polarizations

### Box 5.5. Additional characteristics of RADAR

**Phase** describes the relationship of the lead, or lag, of an electromagnetic wave with respect to a reference wave of the same wavelength, and is expressed in degrees. 360 degrees represents one complete cycle and, therefore, a wave that is lagging one quarter of a wavelength behind the reference has a phase of 90 degrees.

Most RADAR sensors are also **side-looking** instruments, unlike many optical sensors which acquire imagery at nadir (i.e., observing a location directly below the sensor). This across-track capability, termed Side Looking RADAR (SLR), introduces a range of geometric distortions including foreshortening, layover, and shadows that require full, or partial, correction.

Some RADAR remote sensing systems, such as **Synthetic Aperture RADAR (SAR)** systems, are able to achieve a relatively high resolution without the use of a large antenna. Data from such systems are generally processed by data distributors to Single Look Complex level data, containing both amplitude and phase information, and a range of derived products which are usually geocoded, orthorectified, and radiometrically corrected. And, while some geometric and radiometric distortions due to terrain relief may persist, these processed and derived products are generally more appropriate for use in mapping. Among the distortions that may persist is speckle. SAR speckle causes pixel-to-pixel variation in intensities even over a homogenous area; this grainy 'salt and pepper' texture degrades the quality of the image and complicates interpretation. Speckle can be reduced by averaging the backscatter response within a pixel, though this can effectively reduce resolution, or by applying smoothing filters.

Another relevant RADAR concept is **SAR interferometry**. As mentioned in the introduction, a RADAR image contains information about the intensity of the signal and the phase. If two SAR images have been acquired over the same area from very close antenna positions, the different path lengths from these positions to the object on the earth's surface cause the differences in phase. The path difference is geometrically related to the distance between two antennas and the terrain height. Since the antenna positions are precisely known, the observed phase differences can be used to infer three-dimensional information about the terrain height. The technique is known as SAR Interferometry.

Finally, **SAR polarimetry** is a relevant RADAR concept. As previously discussed, more parameters can be measured from polarimetric RADAR compared to single-channel RADAR. The different polarization bands may contain unique and additional information about the surface object. For example, a signal that reflects off a tree trunk to the ground surface is likely to show distinctive polarization shifts from signals that return directly off the soil. Surface objects that scatter are vertically oriented and show high backscatter in vertically polarized imagery and low backscatter in horizontally polarized imagery. Such unique information is important for discriminating different land-cover types.



## *Applications of SAR*

Applications on the use of SAR data for forest mapping, measuring and monitoring aboveground biomass (AGB) and scaling-up ground-based AGB measurements are increasing. Multiple studies have tested the potential of combined RADAR channels of different frequencies and polarization for deforestation monitoring. For example, Saatchi *et al.* (1997) used C-SIR data to map land-cover types and monitor deforestation in the tropics, with an emphasis on characterizing several clearing practices and forest regeneration characteristics. They also mapped forest patches and fragmentation and found these data helpful in delineating areas with different degrees of forest disturbance. Rignot *et al.* (1997) compared SIR-C data with Landsat TM in a test site in Rondonia, Brazil; while the Landsat TM yielded a more accurate deforestation extent classification, the combined use of both Landsat and RADAR imagery further improved the mapping accuracy.

The recent systematic availability of fully polarimetric SAR data from the ALOS-PALSAR, ENVISAT, and RADARSAT-2 has led to further land-cover classification research using SAR imagery. Walker *et al.* (2010) assessed the ability of PALSAR and LANDSAT data to classify and map forest cover in the Xingu River headwaters in southeastern Amazonia, producing overall accuracies of 92 and 94 percent with PALSAR and Landsat, respectively, for the forest versus non-forest classifications. They also found a high degree of spatial similarity among maps derived from PALSAR, Landsat, and existing data from *Projeto De Estimativa De Desflorestamento da Amazonia* (PRODES), the Brazilian Amazon deforestation monitoring program.

In addition to polarimetric information, polarimetric interferometric SAR (PolInSAR) provides interferometric information (see Box 5.5) related to the structure and complexity of the observed objects. Substantial improvements in land-cover change classification can be achieved by combining polarimetric and polarimetric interferometric information (Shimoni *et al.*, 2009). In addition, the fusion of spatial and textural information derived from various SAR polarizations has been shown to improve classification results (Borghys *et al.*, 2006).

SAR data are also being evaluated for scaling up ground-based AGB and monitoring changes over large scales (Lu, 2006; Mitchard *et al.*, 2009). These data are sensitive to the geometric properties of the forest and directly related to measurements of AGB. However, this sensitivity appears to saturate at biomass levels of around 100 tons ha<sup>-1</sup> (Imhoff *et al.*, 2000) and approximately 81 percent of global forests are above this saturation limit (Nelson *et al.*, 2007).

Recently, data from PALSAR, the first long wavelength (L-band, 25 cm) SAR satellite with the capability to collect cross-polarized responses, has yielded improved estimates of AGB with little or no saturation, up to 250-300 tons per hectare based on the sensor's cross-polarized ability to exploit the strong response of three dimensional objects, such as trees, compared to bare soil. Mitchard *et al.* (2011) used L-band synthetic aperture RADAR backscatter data from 1996 and JERS-1 and PALSAR data from 2007 to produce biomass maps of a forest-savanna ecotone region in central Cameroon, characterized by small scale deforestation and degradation. They found that the RADAR data detected changes in a broad AGB class in forest-savanna transition areas with an accuracy of 95 percent. Similarly, Ryan *et al.* (2012) generated biomass maps and changes in carbon stocks with known uncertainties using PALSAR imagery in a region in central Mozambique yielding maps with sufficient accuracy to enable changes in forest carbon stocks of as little as 12 tons per hectare over 3 years, with 95 percent confidence to be detected. Mitchard *et al.* (2012) used a combination of PALSAR, space-borne LiDAR (ICESAT GLAS), and ground-based data to map AGB in Gabon's Lopé National Park.

While these results highlight the potential for space-borne imaging RADAR for estimating forest area and biomass, several limitations exist and the history of SAR data usage for land-cover classification remains relatively recent. One major limitation of SAR data utilization and analysis is the difficulty involved in interpreting RADAR backscatter as compared to optical spectral data (Saatchi *et al.*, 2000). The presence of topographic effect and speckle complicates both visual and digital analysis of RADAR images, and complex

areas with a greater abundance of secondary forests may yield significantly lower accuracies. Additional evaluations are also needed to assess the utility of newer RADAR data sources in mountainous areas.

Uncertainty related to the long-term data continuity of space-borne RADAR systems could also prove a limiting factor for forest monitoring. PALSAR and ENVISAT, for example, which both provided fully polarimetric L-band data, are no longer collecting. However, the Japanese Space Agency (JAXA) launched ALOS-PALSAR-2 in May 2014, and this instrument again contains an L-band.

Finally, though the range of advanced SAR processing techniques capitalizing on the availability of multi-polarimetric information is evolving, and classification methods based on polarimetric decomposition are being developed, SAR data generally yield less robust results than Landsat data for forest/non-forest classification in most studies.

#### *Use of Field Sampling To Facilitate Remote Sensing Product Validation*

Remote sensing data, in particular high resolution satellite imagery, RADAR, and various kinds of LiDAR hold promise to more efficiently map biomass stocks. This is of particular interest in the often vast and difficult-to-access landscapes contemplated under most national and jurisdictional REDD+ MRV. These data likely will not provide more accurate biomass data for plot sites than those derived from field data, and any RADAR or LiDAR-based estimates of biomass will need to be calibrated using field-plot data. However, where significant relationships can be calibrated, these data can be valuable in extrapolating field-based estimates over larger areas, especially remote areas that are costly to access. While these approaches hold promise, they are still in the process of refinement.

The same field measurement and QA/QC procedures described in Chapter 4 are also relevant in the collection of ground truth data. Sampling strategies differ however, as the objective is not to produce a field-based estimate but instead to model predictions, over a wider spatial extent, from remotely-sensed data. Therefore, ground-reference data used to build prediction models for remotely-sensed data do not need to be strictly uniformly sampled. Although, ideally the sample should be well-distributed across the area to which the model will be applied. The sample should achieve a roughly even distribution across the range of conditions of the remotely-sensed data, such as the range of reflectance values. This can be achieved via weighted random sampling, other unequal probability sampling approaches or a systematic sample approach. Note that these preferred sample designs require that the remote sensing data already be in hand, providing an equivalent range of spectral values within the area sampled via remote sensing, to optimize the design.

Large, fixed-area plots are best suited for generating ground-reference data to compare with remotely-sensed data. Larger plots facilitate the alignment of ground samples and remote sensing imagery, reducing the impact of GPS inaccuracy (Mascaro *et al.*, 2011). Circular plot designs and a minimum plot size of 0.2 ha is recommended for use with airborne LiDAR to reduce model errors (Zolkos *et al.*, 2013). Field measurements should also be collected as close as possible to the acquisition date of the remote sensing image.

Field measurement plots can calibrate and validate prediction models. In the latter case, a sample of plots are measured and held in reserve, and after model construction and application, used to assess the accuracy of the predicted values at different scales. This approach to assess model uncertainty is recommended because it is straightforward and captures the overall result of many potential sources of error that would otherwise have to be independently quantified and then propagated.

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## 5.7 COMMON SATELLITE DATA SOURCES FOR LAND-USE MONITORING

Sensor	Satellite – Agency	Swath Width	Resolution	Repeat Cycle	Systematic Acquisitions	Operational Status	Monitoring Applications
<b>Landsat 7 ETM+</b>	Landsat 7 - NASA	165km	15m panchromatic 30m multispectral 60m thermal	16-21 days	Yes	Yes, with SLC-off gaps	deforestation, encroachment, roads, log ponds
<b>Landsat 8 OLI</b>	LDCM - NASA	185km	15m panchromatic 30m multispectral 100m thermal	16-21 days	Yes	yes	deforestation, encroachment, roads, log ponds
<b>ASTER</b>	Terra - NASA	60km	15m multispectral	Varies	No	Partial (no SWIR channels)	deforestation, encroachment, roads, log ponds
<b>SPOT-5</b>	CNES	60km	20m multispectral 5m panchromatic (2.5m interpolated)	Varies	No	Yes	deforestation, encroachment, roads, log ponds
<b>SPOT-6</b>	Airbus Defense & Space	60km	6m multispectral 1.5m panchromatic	Varies	No	Yes	deforestation, encroachment, roads, log ponds
<b>CCD</b>	CBERS-2B – INPE	113km	20m multispectral	26 days	Yes	Yes	deforestation, encroachment,
<b>HRC</b>	CBERS-2B – INPE	27km	2.7m panchromatic	26 days	Yes	Yes	skid trails, illegal fishing vessels
<b>MODIS</b>	Terra / Aqua – NASA	2330km	250m visible 500m multispectral 1 km thermal	4 times per day (diurnal/ nocturnal)	Yes	Yes	fires, large-scale deforestation
<b>AWIFS</b>	Resource Sat-1	730km	56m	5 days	Yes	Yes	large-scale deforestation
<b>IKONOS</b>	IKONOS – GeoEye	11.3km @ nadir	4m multispectral (4) 1m panchromatic (1)	Varies	No	Yes	skid trails, canopy gaps, illegal fishing vessels / logging vehicles
<b>Pleiades 1a and 1b</b>	Airbus Defense & Space	20km	50cm panchromatic 2m multispectral	Varies	No	Yes	Skid trails, canopy gaps, logging roads

<b>GeoEye-1</b>	GeoEye-1 - GeoEye	Varies	0.4m panchromatic (1) (resampled to 0.5m) 1.65m multispectral (4)	Varies	No	Yes	skid trails, canopy gaps, illegal fishing vessels / logging vehicles
<b>QuickBird</b>	QuickBird – DigitalGlobe	Varies	0.6m (1) panchromatic 2.4m multispectral (4)	Varies	No	Yes	skid trails, canopy gaps, illegal fishing vessels / logging vehicles
<b>RapidEye Constellation</b>	BlackBridge	77km	6.5m multispectral	1-5 days	No	Yes	Deforestation, encroachment, roads, skid trails
<b>WorldView-2</b>	WorldView-2 DigitalGlobe	Varies	0.5m panchromatic 1.8m multispectral	Varies	No	Yes	skid trails, canopy gaps, illegal fishing vessels / logging vehicles
<b>Radarsat-2</b>	CSA	varies	8 m quad pol fine 25 m quad pol standard 100 m wide	24 days	varies	Yes	deforestation, roads, log ponds
<b>ASAR</b>	ENVISAT-ESA	varies	30 m polarization mode 150 m Wide Swath mode 1 km Global Monitoring mode	36 days	varies	No	deforestation
<b>PALSAR</b>	PALSAR-JAXA	varies	9 m Single pol 19 m dual pol 30 m quad pol 100 m Scan SAR	45 days	Yes- all mode No- quad pol	No	deforestation, roads, log ponds
<b>WorldView-3</b>	WorldView – DigitalGlobe	13.1km	0.31m panchromatic (1) 1.24m multispectral (8) 3.7m SWIR (8)	< 1 day	No	Yes	skid trails, canopy gaps, illegal fishing vessels / logging vehicles
<b>PALSAR-2</b>	PALSAR-JAXA	varies	1-3 m Spotlight 3-10 m Stripmap 100 m Scan SAR	15 days	Varies	Yes	deforestation, encroachment, roads, log ponds



## Future Missions

Sensor	Satellite – Agency	Swath Width	Resolution	Repeat Cycle	Systematic Acquisitions	Operational Status	Monitoring Applications
<b>SPOT-7</b>	Airbus Defense & Space	60km	1.5m panchromatic (1) 6.0m multispectral (4)		No	Launched June 2014, in calibration	deforestation, encroachment, roads, log ponds
<b>Sentinel-2 A/B</b>	ESA	290km	10/20m/60m	5 day (once both 2A & 2A are launched)		Anticipated launch summer 2014 (2A), then (2B)	deforestation
<b>VIIRS</b>	NPV – NASA	3000km	750m	2 times per day	Yes	recently launched, in calibration	fires

## 5.8 SELECTED RESOURCES

### *Online guides and other materials*

United Nations Space Science and Technology:

<http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/SAP/centres/index.html>

Systems for World Surveillance, Inc.

<http://www.rsat.com/tutorials.html>

Biodiversity Informatics Facility

[http://biodiversityinformatics.amnh.org/index.php?section\\_id=17](http://biodiversityinformatics.amnh.org/index.php?section_id=17)

European Space Agency Earthnet

<http://earth.eo.esa.int/download/eoedu/Earthnet-website-material/to-access-from-Earthnet/>

NASA Earth Observatory

<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/>

### *Software*

EXELIS: ENVI

<http://www.exelisvis.com/ProductsServices/ENVI.aspx>

INTERGRAPH: ERDAS Imagine

<http://geospatial.intergraph.com/products/ERDASIMAGINE/ERDASIMAGINE/Details.aspx>

PCI Geomatics

<http://www.pcigeomatics.com/>

American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) Biodiversity Informatics Facility, Open source GIS and remote sensing software

[http://biodiversityinformatics.amnh.org/index.php?section\\_id=33&content\\_id=138](http://biodiversityinformatics.amnh.org/index.php?section_id=33&content_id=138)

GRASS GIS

<http://grass.fbk.eu>

IDRISI GIS and Image Processing Software

<http://www.clarklabs.org/products/idrisi.cfm>

Quantum GIS

<http://www.qgis.org/en/site/>

Random forests Software

[http://www.stat.berkeley.edu/~breiman/RandomForests/cc\\_software.htm](http://www.stat.berkeley.edu/~breiman/RandomForests/cc_software.htm)

Rulequest data mining tools; See5 classification software

<http://www.rulequest.com/see5-info.html>

R statistical language

<http://www.r-project.org/>

#### *Open source*

Alaska Satellite Facility - Map Ready, SAR Tool Kit

[http://www.asf.alaska.edu/downloads/software\\_tools](http://www.asf.alaska.edu/downloads/software_tools)

ESA – polsarpro (Polarmetric SAR Data Processing and Educational Tool)

<http://earth.co.esa.int/polsarpro/>

NEST – Next ESA SAR toolbox

<http://nest.array.ca/web/nest/release-4B-1.1>

RAT – Radar Tools

<http://radartools.berlios.de/>

#### *Data access*

USGS Earth Resources Observation and Science Center (EROS)

<http://glovis.usgs.gov/>

(Landsat Archive, Global Land Survey (GLS) data, as well as various ASTER and MODIS products)

USGS LandsatLook Viewer

<http://landsatlook.usgs.gov/>

(Enables searching of both LandsatLook images & Level1 Landsat data)

National Research Institute (INPE) of Brazil

<http://www.dgi.inpe.br/CDSR/>

(Range of Landsat and CBERS imagery, as well as various MODIS products)

Global Land Survey (GLS) 2005 products: Global Land-cover Facility

<http://www.land-cover.org/data/>

(Range of data sources including the Landsat archive and selected imagery for a range of instruments including ASTER, Ikonos, Quickbird, Orbview, and MODIS)

RapidEye Catalog

<http://eyefind.rapideye.com>

(Access to the BlackBridge RapidEye image archive)

SPOT Catalog

<http://catalog.spotimage.com/PageSearch.aspx?language=UK>

(Access to the SPOT satellite archive)

Earth Remote Sensing Data Analysis Center (ERSDAC)

<http://imsweb.aster.ersdac.or.jp/ims/cgi-bin/dprSearchMapByMenu.pl>

(Access to the ASTER imagery archive)

#### *Global tree-cover loss and biomass data*

Global Landsat-based estimates of tree-cover loss from 2000 to 2012, produced by the University of Maryland and distributed by Google.

<http://earthenginepartners.appspot.com/science-2013-global-forest>

Two maps of global forest biomass, with a 1-km resolution, based on a suite of satellite data inputs, calibrated with plot data. These may be useful for national stratification of field sampling of biomass in a MRV system.

A. Baccini, S.J. Goetz, W.S. Walker, N. T. Laporte, M. Sun, D. Sulla-Menashe, J. Hackler, P.S.A. Beck, R. Dubayah, M.A. Friedl, S. Samanta and R. A. Houghton. 2012. Estimated carbon dioxide emissions from tropical deforestation improved by carbon-density maps. *Nature Climate Change*

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/NCLIMATE1354>

Pantropical National Level Carbon Stock Dataset

[http://www.whrc.org/mapping/pantropical/carbon\\_dataset.html](http://www.whrc.org/mapping/pantropical/carbon_dataset.html)

Saatchi S, N.L. Harris, S. Brown, M. Lefsky, E.T. Mitchard, W. Salas, B.R. Zutta, W. Buermann, S.L. Lewis, S. Hagen, S. Petrova, L. White, M. Silman and A. Morel. 2011. Benchmark map of forest carbon stocks in tropical regions across three continents. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 14;108(24):9899-904.

<http://carbon.jpl.nasa.gov/>

#### *Tutorials*

The remote sensing tutorial: Federation of American Scientists (FAS)

<http://www.fas.org/irp/imint/docs/rst/Front/tofc.html>

General remote sensing: Canada Centre of Remote Sensing

<http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/earth-sciences/about/organization/organization-structure/canada-centre-for-remote-sensing/11740>

USGS Change-tracking tool

<http://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/133/>

NASA fundamentals of remote sensing

[http://gcmd.nasa.gov/records/remote\\_sensing\\_tutorial-00.html](http://gcmd.nasa.gov/records/remote_sensing_tutorial-00.html)

Introduction to remote sensing - Virtual Hawaii

[http://satftp.soest.hawaii.edu/space/hawaii/vfts/oahu/rem\\_sens\\_ex/rssex.spectral.1.html](http://satftp.soest.hawaii.edu/space/hawaii/vfts/oahu/rem_sens_ex/rssex.spectral.1.html)

NOAA's Satellite and Information Service: Learning About Satellites and Remote Sensing

<http://noaasis.noaa.gov/NOAASIS/ml/education.html>

An introduction to remote sensing

CSIRO

<http://www.cmis.csiro.au/rsm/intro/>

An introduction to radar remote sensing: Canada Centre of Remote Sensing

<http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/earth-sciences/geography-boundary/remote-sensing/radar-remote/2122>

Radar polarimetry: Canada Centre of Remote Sensing

<http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/earth-sciences/geography-boundary/remote-sensing/radar/1893>

ESA's RADAR Tutorial

[http://earth.esa.int/applications/data\\_util/SARDOCS/spaceborne/Radar\\_Courses/](http://earth.esa.int/applications/data_util/SARDOCS/spaceborne/Radar_Courses/)

ESA's Synthetic Aperture radar: Land applications tutorial

[http://earth.eo.esa.int/download/coedu/Earthnet-website-material/to-access-from-Earthnet/2008\\_Bilko-SAR-Land-Applications-Tutorial/sar\\_land\\_apps\\_1\\_theory.pdf](http://earth.eo.esa.int/download/coedu/Earthnet-website-material/to-access-from-Earthnet/2008_Bilko-SAR-Land-Applications-Tutorial/sar_land_apps_1_theory.pdf)

# 6.0 REPORTING AND VERIFICATION: ELEMENTS AND GUIDANCE

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## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses key considerations on reporting and verification for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+). Section 3.3, *Inventory and Reporting Steps*, of this Manual outlines the sequence of steps required for generating a national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory. This chapter is relevant to the activities highlighted on the following page.

STEP 0: Establish Institutional Arrangements.



STEP 1: Estimate the land areas in each land-use category, through stratification and other methods, for the time period required, for representing areas in the GPG-LULUCF.



STEP 2: Conduct key category analysis (KCA) for the relevant categories. Within the categories designated as key, assess significant non-CO<sub>2</sub> gases and carbon pools and prioritize such pools in terms of methodological choice.



STEP 3: Design a forest carbon inventory to generate Emissions Factors (EFs), if using the gain-loss method; ensuring that the requirements in terms of emission and removal factors are met. EFs represent coefficients that quantify the emissions/removals per unit area.



STEP 4: Generate Activity Data (AD); appropriate to the tier level identified. AD represents the extent over which a human activity occurs.



STEP 5: Quantify emissions and removals; estimating the uncertainty in each estimate. Emissions and removals estimates represent the product of the AD by the associated EFs.



STEP 6: Report emissions and removals estimates; using the reporting tables, and worksheets where appropriate. Document and archive information used to produce the national emissions and removals estimates following specific instructions under each land-use category, carbon pool and non-CO<sub>2</sub> source.



STEP 7: Perform verification and implement quality control checks; including expert peer review of the emission estimates following specific guidance under each land-use category, pool or non-CO<sub>2</sub> gas.

Regarding reporting, it provides an overview of requirements and mechanisms, such as the reporting worksheets and tables contained in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Good Practice Guidance on Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (GPG-LULUCF) and of software options available to facilitate reporting. For verification, it describes the key provisions of decisions adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and discusses verification approaches included in the GPG-LULUCF.

According to the decisions adopted by governments working under the aegis of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC, developing countries<sup>28</sup> that are willing to develop REDD+ activities will have to establish a National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) to assess anthropogenic forest-related GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks (UNFCCC, 2010). As REDD+ actions should be results-based, developing countries will have to demonstrate that they are reducing emissions from deforestation compared to a business-as-usual scenario, also known as a Forest Reference Emission Level or Forest Reference Level (FREL/FRL).

In any international system in which an accounting procedure is foreseen, including the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol, and probably any future REDD+ mechanism, the information reported in a country's GHG inventory represents the basis for assessing that country's performance, as compared to its commitments or FREL/FRLs and could also form the basis for assigning any eventual incentives or penalties. Under the UNFCCC, information reported in GHG inventories provides the means by which the international community can monitor progress made by countries in meeting their commitments and in achieving the Convention's ultimate objectives.

The quality of GHG inventories relies not only on the robustness of the science underpinning the methodologies and the associated credibility of the estimates, but also on the way the information is compiled and presented. Information must be well-documented, transparent and consistent with specific reporting requirements and protocols (e.g., those under the UNFCCC) and guidelines included in voluntary or compliance schemes and processes.

## 6.2 REPORTING

Reporting for REDD+ can be defined as the process used to translate information resulting from measurements or monitoring (for example, information generated by a forest carbon inventory and a land-use change analysis) into an agreed format, such as the UNFCCC reporting framework. It encompasses the amount of GHG emissions avoided as a result of reduced deforestation and forest degradation, as well as the amount of GHG removals as a result of forest conservation and enhancement activities. Depending on the specific activity, other reported information may include data on forest areas affected, methodologies employed, emission factors used, impact on deforestation drivers, effectiveness of measures put in place, financial resources needed or used, or application of quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) procedures. The reported information is often used to help improve the transparency of actions and verify emissions and removals claimed for different activities.

This section of the Manual discusses reporting requirements for REDD+ based on decisions adopted by the COP to the UNFCCC. First, an overview of general reporting requirements under the UNFCCC is provided. This is followed by a discussion on reporting modalities for FREL/FRLs and reporting information on the implementation of results-based REDD+ activities.

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<sup>28</sup> In this section, we will use the terms “developed countries” and “developing countries” as synonyms to the UNFCCC terms “Annex I Parties” and “non-Annex I Parties,” respectively. However, in some cases, the UNFCCC terms may be used to accurately quote texts and requirements under the UNFCCC.



## 6.2.1 Overview of reporting requirements under the UNFCCC

Under the UNFCCC, all countries are required to provide information relating to the implementation of the Convention, including national inventories of anthropogenic GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks (see Box 6.1). To promote the provision of credible and consistent information, specific guidelines have been developed detailing standardized reporting requirements. These requirements differ across countries taking into account their specific capacities and capabilities. For example, reporting requirements for developed countries are more detailed and stringent in terms of the amount of information provided and the frequency of reporting.

The need for robust and defensible estimates on REDD+ has been highlighted during UNFCCC negotiations leading to the recognition that REDD+ “results-based actions should be fully measured, reported and verified”<sup>29</sup> (UNFCCC, 2010). Within the UNFCCC process, developing countries can submit information in the following ways:

- In national communications (NCs);
- In biennial update reports (BURs); and
- In the context of nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs).

A comparison of key UNFCCC reporting requirements for NCs and BURs is given in Table 6.1.

### Box 6.1: General provisions of the Convention relating to reporting of information

Article 4 ([http://unfccc.int/essential\\_background/convention/background/items/1362txt.php](http://unfccc.int/essential_background/convention/background/items/1362txt.php)), Paragraph 1 (a), of the Convention sets the obligation for all countries – taking into account their common but differentiated responsibilities and their specific national and regional development priorities, objectives and circumstances – to “develop, periodically update, publish and make available to the Conference of the Parties... national inventories of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of all GHGs not controlled by the Montreal Protocol, using comparable methodologies to be agreed upon by the COP.”

Article 12 ([http://unfccc.int/essential\\_background/convention/background/items/1379.php](http://unfccc.int/essential_background/convention/background/items/1379.php)) of the Convention requires each country to communicate to the COP the following elements of information:

- (a) “A national inventory of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of all greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol, to the extent its (a country’s) capacities permit, using comparable methodologies to be promoted and agreed upon by the Conference of the Parties”;
- (b) “A general description of steps taken or envisaged by the Party (the country) to implement the Convention”; and
- c. “Any other information that the Party (the country) considers relevant to the achievement of the objective of the Convention and suitable for inclusion in its (the country’s) communication, including, if feasible, material relevant for calculations of global emission trends”.

The Convention specifies the time frame for initial communications, but does not establish a frequency for submission, which is determined through decisions of the COP.

<sup>29</sup> Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 73. <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf>.

## National communications

National communications from developing countries provide information on: the ongoing and planned actions to address climate change; GHG emissions and removals; adaptation and mitigation measures to climate change; sustainable development; financial and technological transfers; and capacity-building activities. The preparation and delivery of NCs depends on the availability of resources, both human and financial, and on the institutional arrangements put in place for this purpose.

Guidelines for the preparation of NCs from developing countries were first adopted at COP 2 (Geneva, 1996) and subsequently revised at COP 8 (New Delhi, 2002)<sup>30</sup>. To facilitate the usage of these guidelines, the UNFCCC secretariat produced a user Manual<sup>31</sup> and a resource guide, both of which are available on the UNFCCC website.<sup>32</sup>

	National communications	Biennial update reports
<b>Frequency</b>	Every four years	Every two years (starting in December 2014)
<b>Format</b>	Hard copy	Electronic
<b>Years covered</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> NCs: 2000	2010 (or more recent years if information is available) for the 1 <sup>st</sup> BUR; subsequent BURs to cover a calendar year that does not precede the submission date by more than four years; time series back to the years reported in previous NCs encouraged
<b>Gases</b>	NCs and BURs: CO <sub>2</sub> , CH <sub>4</sub> , N <sub>2</sub> O required; HFCs, PFCs, SF <sub>6</sub> encouraged	
<b>Sectoral Disaggregation</b>	Only summary tables are required	Summary tables required; tables in annex 3A.2 to the IPCC good practice guidance for LULUCF and the sectoral report tables annexed to the Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines encouraged
<b>Version of the IPCC Guidelines</b>	Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines required; Good Practice Guidance (2000 and LULUCF) is encouraged	
<b>Documentation</b>	Encouraged to provide information on methods used	Encouraged to provide information on methods used; additional or supporting information, including sector-specific information, may be supplied in a technical annex

Table 6.1: Summary of key UNFCCC reporting requirements for NCs and BURs for developing countries

While developing countries are required to prepare their GHG inventory using the Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines (IPCC, 1996), the use of the IPCC Good Practice Guidance and Uncertainty Management in

<sup>30</sup> The latest version of the reporting guidelines are included in the Annex to Decision 17/CP.8. For the full text of these guidelines, see: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/cop8/07a02.pdf#page=2>.

<sup>31</sup> The Manual is available in English, French and Spanish.

<sup>32</sup> UNFCCC website: [http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/userman\\_nainc\\_en.pdf](http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/userman_nainc_en.pdf);  
[http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/09\\_resource\\_guide1.pdf](http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/09_resource_guide1.pdf);  
[http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/08\\_resource\\_guide2.pdf](http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/08_resource_guide2.pdf);  
[http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/09\\_resource\\_guide3.pdf](http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/09_resource_guide3.pdf);  
[http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/08\\_resource\\_guide4.pdf](http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/08_resource_guide4.pdf).

National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (GPG 2000) (IPCC, 2000) and GPG-LULUCF is encouraged. Providing documentation on the methodologies used to prepare the NCs is also encouraged but not required. Reporting estimates of GHG emissions and removals from all sectors is accomplished using a table included in the reporting guidelines (reproduced in Figure 6.1).

Greenhouse gas source and sink categories	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions (Gg)	CO <sub>2</sub> removals (Gg)	CH <sub>4</sub> (Gg)	N <sub>2</sub> O (Gg)	CO (Gg)	NO <sub>x</sub> (Gg)	NMVOCs (Gg)	SO <sub>x</sub> (Gg)
<b>Total national emissions and removals</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>1. Energy</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
A. Fuel combustion (sectoral approach)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
1. Energy industries	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Manufacturing industries and construction	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
3. Transport	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
4. Other sectors	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
5. Other (please specify)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
B. Fugitive emissions from fuels	X		X		X	X	X	X
1. Solid fuels			X		X	X	X	X
2. Oil and natural gas			X		X	X	X	X
<b>2. Industrial processes</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
A. Mineral products	X				X	X	X	X
B. Chemical industry	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
C. Metal production	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
D. Other production	X				X	X	X	X
E. Production of halocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride								
F. Consumption of halocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride								
G. Other (please specify)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>3. Solvent and other product use</b>	X			X			X	
<b>4. Agriculture</b>			X	X	X	X	X	X
A. Enteric fermentation			X					
B. Manure management			X	X			X	
C. Rice cultivation			X				X	
D. Agricultural soils			X	X			X	
E. Prescribed burning of savannahs			X	X	X	X	X	
F. Field burning of agricultural residues			X	X	X	X	X	
G. Other (please specify)			X	X	X	X	X	
<b>5. Land-use change and forestry</b>	X <sup>b</sup>	X <sup>b</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X
A. Changes in forest and other woody biomass stocks	X <sup>b</sup>	X <sup>b</sup>						
B. Forest and grassland conversion	X	X	X	X	X	X		
C. Abandonment of managed lands		X						
D. CO <sub>2</sub> emissions and removals from soil	X <sup>b</sup>	X <sup>b</sup>						
E. Other (please specify)	X	X	X	X	X	X		
<b>6. Waste</b>			X	X	X	X	X	X
A. Solid waste disposal on land			X		X		X	
B. Waste-water handling			X	X	X	X	X	
C. Waste incineration					X	X	X	X
D. Other (please specify)			X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>7. Other (please specify)</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Memo items</b>								
<b>International bunkers</b>	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Aviation	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Marine	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from biomass</b>	X							

Note: Shaded cells do not require entries.

<sup>a</sup> The following standard indicators should be used, as appropriate, for emissions by sources and removals by sinks of GHGs: **NO** (not occurring) for activities or processes that do not occur for a particular gas or source/sink category within a country, **NE** (not estimated) for existing emissions and removals which have not been estimated, **NA** (not applicable) for activities in a given source/sink category which do not result in emissions or removals of a specific gas, **IE** (included elsewhere) for emissions and removals estimated but included elsewhere in the inventory (Parties should indicate where the emissions or removals have been included), **C** (confidential) for emissions and removals which could lead to the disclosure of confidential information.

<sup>b</sup> Do not provide an estimate of both CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and CO<sub>2</sub> removals. "Net" emissions (emissions – removals) of CO<sub>2</sub> should be estimated and a single number placed in either the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or CO<sub>2</sub> removals column, as appropriate. Note that for the purposes of reporting, the signs for removals are always (–) and for emissions (+).

Figure 6-1: Reproduction of the reporting table for national communications of developing countries (source: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/cop8/07a02.pdf#page=2>)

It should be noted that the revised UNFCCC reporting guidelines were adopted in 2002, before the finalization of the GPG-LULUCF (IPCC, 2003). This resulted in developing countries reporting forest-related activities in their initial NCs based on the four categories of the Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines (Changes in forest and other wood biomass stocks; Forest and grassland conversion; Abandonment of managed lands; CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and removals from soils). All developing countries followed this structure in reporting emissions and removals in their initial communications.

For the preparation of subsequent NCs, the UNFCCC Secretariat is providing training that includes information on how to incorporate elements of the GPG-LULUCF in the inventory process. As a result, developing countries have started using the GPG-LULUCF. This has facilitated the provision of more detailed information.

### *Biennial Update Reports*

As part of the 2010 Cancun Agreements (Decision 1/CP.16 [UNFCCC, 2010], further elaborated by Decision 2/CP.17 [UNFCCC, 2011]), developing countries<sup>33</sup> are required to submit BURs containing information on GHG emissions and removals, as well as information on mitigation actions, needs, and support received for the implementation of these actions. Access to this information will facilitate the assessment of results of the implemented mitigation actions.

The reporting guidelines for BURs are contained in Annex III to Decision 2/CP.17 (UNFCCC, 2011). Specifically for LULUCF, paragraph 6 of these guidelines states that, “Non-Annex I Parties are encouraged to include, as appropriate and to the extent that capacities permit, in the inventory section of the biennial update report, tables included in Annex 3A.2 to the IPCC good practice guidance for LULUCF...”

Developing countries are currently preparing their BURs. The first BURs are due by December 2014, and subsequent BURs every two years (Decision 2/CP.17). Guidelines for the reporting of information were also adopted for the preparation of BURs. These include providing information on:

- National circumstances and institutional arrangements;
- National GHG inventory;
- Mitigation actions and their effects: For each nationally-appropriate mitigation action (NAMA), countries should provide information on the nature of the action, the reduction goals and progress indicators, the assumptions and methodologies used, the progress of implementation and estimated emission reductions, and their domestic arrangements for MRV; and
- Finance, technology and capacity-building needs and support received.

### *Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions*

Also as part of the Cancun Agreements (Decision 1/CP.16 [UNFCCC, 2010]), developing countries are to take NAMAs to deviate their emissions relative to business-as-usual emissions in 2020 in the context of sustainable development. NAMAs can be funded by external/international donors and/or through the use of domestic resources. Internationally supported actions will be measured, reported and verified domestically and will also be subject to international Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV), while domestically supported mitigation actions will be measured, reported and verified domestically.

The purpose of NAMAs is to serve as a mitigation strategy for a developing country; REDD+ could be part of the overall NAMA strategy of a country. To be efficient, sufficient, and predictable, financial resources should provide appropriate incentives to the relevant actors at the right time, making it worthwhile for them to change their current behavior and use of resources. To do so, a system for MRV of emissions and removals related to implemented actions is very important, and the cornerstone of such a system is a reliable

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<sup>33</sup> Additional flexibility is given to least developed countries and small island developing states.

national GHG inventory that is prepared following the IPCC principles (transparency, consistency, comparability, completeness and accuracy).

## 6.2.2 General guidance for reporting

The Warsaw Framework on REDD+ established modalities for national forest monitoring systems in Decision 11/CP.19. According to the provision of this decision, national forest monitoring systems should:

- Be guided by the most recent IPCC guidance and guidelines, as adopted or encouraged by the COP (i.e., the GPG-LULUCF); and
- Provide data and information that are transparent, consistent over time, suitable for MRV, and build upon existing systems while being flexible and allowing for improvement.

The following sections discuss specific reporting requirements for REDD+. In particular, reporting specifications for FREL/FRLs (Decision 12/CP.17), as result of implementation of REDD+ activities (Decision 14/CP.19), and on safeguards (Decisions 12/CP.17 and 12/CP.19) are provided.

### *Reporting on FREL/FRLs*

According to Decision 12/CP.17, FREL/FRLs are benchmarks for assessing each country's performance in implementing REDD+ activities. They are expressed in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>eq) per year and must be established using the GPG-LULUCF. Countries should ensure that their FREL/FRLs are consistent with their anthropogenic forest related GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks as contained in their national GHG inventories.

Subnational FREL/FRLs (covering less than its entire national territory of forest area) may be elaborated as an interim measure, while transitioning to a national FREL/FRL. FREL/FRLs can be updated periodically as appropriate, taking into account new knowledge, new trends and any modification of scope and methodologies.

Reporting on FREL/FRLs is voluntary. However, where countries decide to submit information on a FREL/FRL they must follow the provisions of the annex to Decision 12/CP.17 (see Box 6.2). The submitted information must be transparent, complete, consistent with the guidance agreed under the UNFCCC, and accurate for the purpose of allowing a technical assessment of the data, methodologies and procedures used in the construction of a FREL/FRL.

A country's submissions must include information and rationale on the development of the FREL/FRLs, including details of national circumstances and, if adjusted, include details on how the national circumstances were considered, in accordance with the guidelines contained in the annex to decision 12/CP.17 and any future decision taken by the UNFCCC. In the submission, a country may also note areas where technical improvement is needed and areas for capacity building on the construction of future FREL/FRLs.

The FREL/FRL-related information should be reported as soon as a country has collected all the required data, while the other information should be provided prior to a country receiving payment for its implemented REDD+ activities. As agreed by governments (Decision 13/CP.19), all submitted information will be subject to a technical assessment.

### **Box 6.2: Guidelines for submissions of information on FREL/FRLs**

Information to be submitted includes:

- (a) Information that was used by Parties in constructing a FREL/FRL, including historical data, in a comprehensive and transparent way;
- (b) Transparent, complete, consistent and accurate information, including methodological information, used at the time of construction of FREL/FRLs, including, inter alia, as appropriate, a description of data sets, approaches, methods, models, if applicable and assumptions used, descriptions of relevant policies and plans, and descriptions of changes from previously submitted information;
- (c) Pools and gases, and activities listed in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70, which have been included in FREL/FRLs and the reasons for omitting a pool and/or activity from the construction of FREL/FRLs, noting that significant pools and/or activities should not be excluded;
- (d) The definition of forest used in the construction of FREL/FRLs and, if appropriate, in case there is a difference with the definition of forest used in the national greenhouse gas inventory or in reporting to other international organizations, an explanation of why and how the definition used in the construction of FREL/FRLs was chosen.

#### *Reporting on implementation of REDD+ activities*

The Warsaw Framework on REDD+ established reporting requirements for developing countries seeking to obtain and receive payments for results-based REDD+ actions in Decision 14/CP.19. Specifically, countries<sup>34</sup> (on a voluntary basis) should provide, in their BURs, a technical annex that contains the information listed in Box 6.3.

Anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, and forest carbon stock and forest-area changes are to be consistent with the GPG-LULUCF and any guidance on the MRV of NAMAs by developing countries. The data and information used by developing countries in the estimation of anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, and forest carbon stock and forest-area changes, should be transparent, and consistent over time and with the established FREL/FRLs. The results of the implementation of REDD+ activities should be measured against the FREL/FRLs and should be expressed in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>eq per year.

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<sup>34</sup> Additional flexibility given to the least developed countries and small island developing states.

### Box 6.3 Guidelines for elements to be included in a technical annex to a BUR

1. Summary information from the final report containing each corresponding assessed FREL/FRL, which includes:
  - (a) The assessed forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year (CO<sub>2</sub> eq);
  - (b) The activity or activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70, included in the forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level;
  - (c) The territorial forest area covered;
  - (d) The date of the forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level submission and the date of the final technical assessment report;
  - (e) The period (in years) of the assessed forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level.
2. Results in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> eq per year, consistent with the assessed forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level.
3. Demonstration that the methodologies used to produce the results referred to in decision 14/CP.19, paragraph 2, are consistent with those used to establish the assessed forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level.
4. A description of national forest monitoring systems and the institutional roles and responsibilities for measuring, reporting and verifying the results.
5. Necessary information that allows for the reconstruction of the results.
6. A description of how the elements contained in decision 4/CP.15, paragraph 1(c) and (d), have been taken into account.

#### *Reporting on safeguards*

Decision 12/CP.17 provides guidance relating to the provision of information on how safeguards are addressed and respected (see Box 6.4). Specifically, it stipulates that systems for providing information on how the safeguards are addressed and respected should:

- Be consistent with the guidance identified in decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, paragraph 1;
- Provide transparent and consistent information that is accessible by all relevant stakeholders and updated on a regular basis;
- Be transparent and flexible to allow for improvements over time;
- Provide information on how all of the safeguards referred to in appendix I to decision 1/CP.16 are being addressed and respected;
- Be country-driven and implemented at the national level; and
- Build upon existing systems, as appropriate.

It was also agreed that developing countries undertaking REDD+ activities should provide a summary of information on how all of the safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of the activities. The summary of information should be provided periodically and be included in national communications, or other communication channels agreed to by the COP.



#### **Box 6.4 Safeguards that should be promoted and supported when REDD+ activities are implemented**

Actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements.

Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty.

Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities, in the actions referred to in Decision I/CP.16, paragraphs 70 and 72.

Actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the actions referred to in decision I/CP.16, paragraph 70, are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits.

Actions to address the risks of reversals.

Actions to reduce displacement of emissions.

Decision 12/CP.19 of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ reiterates the above provisions and further stipulates that the summary of information referred to above could also be provided, on a voluntary basis, via the web platform on the UNFCCC website.

### **6.2.3 Reporting provisions of the GPG-LULUCF**

According to the GPG-LULUCF, information should be reported in an inventory of emissions and removals that is typically divided into two parts: reporting tables and an inventory report. The GPG-LULUCF contains worksheets that can be used to perform the actual calculations of emissions and removals and could be included in the inventory to improve transparency.

#### *Worksheets*

The GPG-LULUCF worksheets are presented in different modules. Each module corresponds to a specific land-use category<sup>35</sup>. A module is divided into two sub-modules to distinguish between those lands that remain in the same land-use category and those lands converted to other land-use categories. Each sub-module is further divided into four worksheet groups covering: living biomass; dead organic matter; soils (further sub-grouped into mineral soils and organic soils); and non- CO<sub>2</sub> GHG emissions. While the worksheets are largely based on Tier 1 methods, they are supplemented with higher tier methods where appropriate.

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<sup>35</sup> Example worksheet: [http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpglulucf/gpglulucf\\_files/Chp3/Anx\\_3A\\_2\\_Reporting\\_Tables.pdf](http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpglulucf/gpglulucf_files/Chp3/Anx_3A_2_Reporting_Tables.pdf)

In general, worksheets contain the following information:

- *Initial and final land-use category.* Additional stratification is encouraged (in a separate column for subdivisions) according to criteria such as climate zone, management system, soil type, vegetation type, tree species, ecological zones, national land classification or other factors;
- *Activity data.* Areas of land, in thousands of hectares, subjected to gross deforestation, degradation and management of forests;
- *Emission factors.* Carbon-stock changes per unit area deforested or degraded or *managed*, separated for each carbon pool;
- *Total change in carbon stock.* Obtained by multiplying each activity data by the relevant emission carbon stock change factor; and
- *Total emissions.* Expressed in physical units (e.g., Gg) or in CO<sub>2</sub>eq.

An example of a compilation worksheet is shown in Figure 6.2.

### *Reporting tables*

Two types of reporting tables are provided in the GPG-LULUCF. The first represents a matrix of the area of all land that was converted to another category and the associated emissions. Though this Manual focuses on forest monitoring, this table is provided as an example. The second type of table is a subset of the first type, and results from the first table because it reflects the resultant change in carbon stock due to activities. It also reports the emissions and removals of CO<sub>2</sub> and non-CO<sub>2</sub> GHGs due to conversion of the six categories to any other land-use categories. All reporting tables are included in Annex A3.2 of the GPG-LULUCF.<sup>36</sup> For illustration, the summary reporting table is reproduced in Figure 6.3 (two parts).

To ensure the completeness of an inventory, it is important to fill in information for all entries of the reporting tables. If actual emission and removal quantities have not been estimated or cannot otherwise be reported in the tables, the inventory compiler should use qualitative “notation keys” provided by the IPCC Guidelines and GPG (see Table 6.2), along with supporting documentation. For example, if a country decides that a disproportionate amount of effort would be required to collect data for a pool from a specific category that is not a key category in terms of the overall level and trend in national emission, the country should list all gases/pools excluded on these grounds, together with a justification for exclusion, and use the notation key “NE” (Not Estimated) in the reporting tables. Furthermore, the reporting tables are generally complemented by a documentation, which should be used to provide references to relevant sections of the inventory report if any additional information is needed.

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<sup>36</sup> [http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpglulucf/gpglulucf\\_files/Chp3/Anx\\_3A\\_2\\_Reporting\\_Tables.pdf](http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpglulucf/gpglulucf_files/Chp3/Anx_3A_2_Reporting_Tables.pdf)

TABLE 3A.2.2A COMPILATION WORKSHEETS FOR REPORTING CO <sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS AND REMOVALS <sup>1</sup>											
Land-use Category <sup>2</sup>		Land Area (ha)	Living Biomass			Dead Organic Matter			Soils <sup>3</sup>		
Initial Land-use	Land-use during reporting Year		Annual increase in carbon stocks (tonnes C yr <sup>-1</sup> )	Annual decrease in carbon stocks (tonnes C yr <sup>-1</sup> )	Annual change in carbon stocks (Gg CO <sub>2</sub> yr <sup>-1</sup> ) $C = (A-B) \bullet 10^{-3} \bullet 44/12$	Carbon stock change in dead wood (tonnes C yr <sup>-1</sup> )	Carbon stock change in litter (tonnes C yr <sup>-1</sup> )	Annual change in carbon stock (Gg CO <sub>2</sub> yr <sup>-1</sup> ) $F = (D+E) \bullet 10^{-3} \bullet 44/12$	Carbon stock change in mineral soils (tonnes C yr <sup>-1</sup> )	Carbon stock change in organic soils (tonnes C yr <sup>-1</sup> )	Annual change in carbon stock (Gg CO <sub>2</sub> yr <sup>-1</sup> ) $I = (G+H) \bullet 10^{-3} \bullet 44/12$
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Forest Land	Forest Land										
Cropland	Forest Land		$\Delta C_{LFG}$ <sup>4</sup>	$\Delta C_{LFL}$	$\Delta C_{LFB}$	$\Delta C_{LFDW}$	$\Delta C_{LFL}$	$\Delta C_{LFDOM}$	$\Delta C_{LMineral}$	$\Delta C_{LFOrganic}$	$\Delta C_{LSoils}$
Grassland	Forest Land										
Wetlands	Forest Land										
Settlements	Forest Land										
Other Land	Forest Land										
	<b>Sub-total for Forest Land</b>										
Cropland	Cropland										
Forest Land	Cropland										
Grassland	Cropland										
Wetlands	Cropland										
Settlements	Cropland										
Other Land	Cropland										
	<b>Sub-total for Cropland</b>										
Grassland	Grassland										
Forest Land	Grassland										
Cropland	Grassland										
Wetlands	Grassland										
Settlements	Grassland										
Other Land	Grassland										
	<b>Sub-total for Grassland</b>										
Wetlands	Wetlands										
Forest Land	Wetlands										
Cropland	Wetlands										
Grassland	Wetlands										
Settlements	Wetlands										
Other Land	Wetlands										
	<b>Sub-total for Wetlands</b>										

Figure 6.2: Reproduction of a compilation worksheet for reporting emissions and removals

Other tables that may also be incorporated in a report include:

- Tables with emission trends, including data from previous inventory years; and
- Tables for illustrating the results of the key category analysis, the completeness of the reporting and eventual re-calculations.

A key category is one that is prioritized within a national inventory system because its estimate has a significant influence on a country's total inventory of GHG in terms of the absolute level of emissions and removals, the trend in emissions and removals, or uncertainty in emissions or removals. Whenever the term key category is used, it includes both source and sink categories.

### *Inventory report*

The other part of a national inventory is an inventory report that contains comprehensive and transparent information. Typical sections of the inventory report are:

- An overview of trends for aggregated GHG emissions/removals by gas and by category;
- A description of the methodologies used in compiling the inventory, the assumptions, data sources and rationale for their selection, and an indication of the level of complexity (IPCC tiers) applied. In the context of REDD+ reporting, appropriate information on land-use definitions, land area representation and land-use databases are likely to be required;
- A description of the key categories, including information on the level of category disaggregation used and its rationale, the methodology used for identifying key categories, and if necessary, explanations for why the IPCC-recommended tiers have not been applied;
- Information on uncertainties (i.e., methods used and underlying assumptions), time-series consistency, recalculations (with justification for providing new estimates), QA/QC procedures and archiving of data;

- A description of the institutional arrangements for inventory planning, preparation and management; and
- Information on planned improvements.

Notation key	Explanation
NE (Not estimated)	Emissions and/or removals occur but have not been estimated or reported.
IE (Included elsewhere)	Emissions and/or removals for this activity or category are estimated and included in the inventory but not presented separately for this category. The category where these emissions and removals are included should be indicated (for example in the documentation box in the correspondent table).
C (Confidential information)	Emissions and/or removals are aggregated and included elsewhere in the inventory because reporting at a disaggregated level could lead to disclosure of confidential information.
NA (Not Applicable)	The activity of category exists but relevant emissions and removals are considered never to occur. Such cells are normally shaded in the reporting tables.
NO (Not Occurring)	An activity or process does not occur within a country.

Table 6.2: Notation keys for use in GHG-reporting tables<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, all of the relevant inventory information should be compiled and archived, including all disaggregated emission factors, activity data and documentation on how these factors and data were generated and aggregated for reporting. This information should allow for reconstruction of the inventory by experts not involved in its preparation.

<sup>37</sup> [www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl/pdf/1\\_volume1/V1\\_8\\_ch8\\_Reporting\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl/pdf/1_volume1/V1_8_ch8_Reporting_Guidance.pdf)

TABLE 3A.2.1A										
REPORTING TABLE FOR EMISSIONS AND REMOVALS OF CO <sub>2</sub> AND NON-CO <sub>2</sub> GASES FROM LULUCF IN THE REPORTING YEAR										
Land-use Category		IPCC Guidelines <sup>1</sup>	Annual change in carbon stocks, Gg CO <sub>2</sub>				CH <sub>4</sub> (Gg)	N <sub>2</sub> O (Gg)	NO <sub>x</sub> <sup>3</sup> (Gg)	CO <sup>3</sup> (Gg)
Initial Land-use	Land-use during reporting Year		Living Biomass  A	Dead Organic Matter  B	Soils  C	CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions/ Removals <sup>2</sup>  D = (A+B+C) • (-1)  D				
Forest Land	Forest Land	5A								
Cropland	Forest Land	5A, 5C, 5D	ΔC <sub>LF<sub>LB</sub></sub> <sup>5</sup>	ΔC <sub>LF<sub>DOM</sub></sub>	ΔC <sub>LF<sub>SOM</sub></sub>					
Grassland	Forest Land	5A, 5C, 5D								
Wetlands	Forest Land	5A, 5C, 5D								
Settlements	Forest Land	5A, 5C, 5D								
Other Land	Forest Land	5A, 5C, 5D								
Sub-Total for Forest Land										
Cropland	Cropland	5A, 5D								
Forest Land	Cropland	5B, 5D								
Grassland	Cropland	5B, 5D								
Wetlands	Cropland	5D								
Settlements	Cropland	5D								
Other Land	Cropland	5D								
Sub-Total for Cropland										
Grassland	Grassland	5A, 5D								
Forest Land	Grassland	5B, 5D								
Cropland	Grassland	5C, 5D								
Wetlands	Grassland	5C, 5D								
Settlements	Grassland	5C, 5D								
Other Land	Grassland	5C, 5D								
Sub-Total for Grassland										
Wetlands	Wetlands	5A, 5E								
Forest Land	Wetlands	5B								
Cropland	Wetlands	5E								
Grassland	Wetlands	5B								
Settlements	Wetlands	5E								
Other Land	Wetlands	5E								
Sub-Total for Wetlands										

TABLE 3A.2.1A (CONTINUED)										
REPORTING TABLE FOR EMISSIONS AND REMOVALS OF CO <sub>2</sub> AND NON-CO <sub>2</sub> GASES FROM LULUCF IN THE REPORTING YEAR										
Land-use Category		IPCC Guidelines <sup>1</sup>	Annual change in carbon stocks, Gg CO <sub>2</sub>				CH <sub>4</sub> (Gg)	N <sub>2</sub> O (Gg)	NO <sub>x</sub> <sup>3</sup> (Gg)	CO <sup>3</sup> (Gg)
Initial Land-use	Land-use during reporting Year		Living Biomass  A	Dead Organic Matter  B	Soils  C	CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions/ Removals <sup>2</sup>  D = (A+B+C) • (-1)  D				
Settlements	Settlements	5A								
Forest Land	Settlements	5B								
Cropland	Settlements	5E								
Grassland	Settlements	5B								
Wetlands	Settlements	5E								
Other Land	Settlements	5E								
Sub-Total for Settlements										
Other Land	Other Land	5A								
Forest Land	Other Land	5B								
Cropland	Other Land	5E								
Grassland	Other Land	5B								
Wetlands	Other Land	5E								
Settlements	Other Land	5E								
Sub-Total for Other Land										
Other <sup>4</sup> (pls. specify)										
Sub-Total for Other										
Total										

<sup>1</sup> Headings from the *IPCC Guidelines* Reporting Instructions p.1.14 - 1.16: 5A - Changes in Forest and Other Woody Biomass Stocks; 5B - Forest and Grassland Conversion; 5C - Abandonment of Managed Lands; 5D - Emissions and Removals from Soils, and 5E - Other.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of reporting, it is necessary to reverse the sign so that the resulting value is expressed as (-) for removal or uptake and (+) for emission. Thus, negative 1 is multiplied to the resulting CO<sub>2</sub> emission or removal.

<sup>3</sup> The *IPCC Guidelines* and this report provide methodology to estimate NO<sub>x</sub> and CO emissions for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry for emissions from fires only. If you have reported additional data, you should provide additional information (method, activity data, and emission factors) used to make these estimates.

<sup>4</sup> This may include other non-specified sources or sinks such as HWP, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Symbols are provided to show the relationship among the worksheets, compilation worksheets, reporting table, and the equations in the main body of the report. Please note that symbols are provided for only one land-use category as an example.

Figure 6.3: Reproduction of summary reporting tables

### *Software for reporting*

The UNFCCC has developed an online software tool,<sup>38</sup> where activity data (AD) and emission/removal factors data are used as input to obtain net annual carbon uptake/release. There are several key features or limitations in using the software, such as:

- The names or type of forest/plantation category in a country may differ from the categories defined in the UNFCCC software;
- The UNFCCC software can be changed to nationally relevant categories (e.g., Acacia species can be changed to another species);
- Names of categories used in the column are not included in the calculation procedure of the worksheets and thus can be easily changed; and
- Forest/plantation categories: option exists for 18 categories, which is a limitation if a country has more than 18 categories. There are two options if the number of forest/plantation categories is more than provided: i) Insert additional rows only if the inventory expert has capacity to modify the “macros”; or ii) merge smaller or homogeneous categories such that the total number of rows (or categories) is not larger than 18.

The IPCC task force on GHG Inventories has also released an Inventory Software tool<sup>39</sup> to help countries estimate and report GHG emissions and removals; this software is compatible with the 2006 IPCC Guidelines (IPCC, 2006b).

Another software tool is the Agriculture and Land Use GHG Inventory Software<sup>40</sup> which guides inventory compilers through the process of estimating GHG emissions and removals related to agricultural and forestry activities (ALU Software, 2013). The software simplifies the process of conducting the inventory by dividing the inventory analysis into steps to facilitate the compilation of AD, assignment of emission factors and completion of the calculations. The software also has internal checks to ensure data integrity. Many governments also have an interest in mitigating GHG emissions from agriculture and forestry. Determining mitigation potential requires an understanding of both current emission trends and the influence of alternative land use and management practices on future emissions.

## **6.3 VERIFICATION**

According to the GPG-LULUCF (IPCC, 2003), the “purpose of verifying national GHG inventories is to establish their reliability and to check the accuracy of the reported numbers by independent means. Verification can be performed at several levels: project, national and international.” The IPCC has also stipulated that the overall goals of verification are to provide inputs to improve GHG inventories, build confidence on estimates and trends, and to help to improve scientific understanding. These goals can be achieved through:

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<sup>38</sup> [http://unfccc.int/national\\_reports/non-annex\\_i\\_national\\_communications/non-annex\\_i\\_inventory\\_software/items/7627.php](http://unfccc.int/national_reports/non-annex_i_national_communications/non-annex_i_inventory_software/items/7627.php)

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/software/index.html>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.nrel.colostate.edu/projects/ALUsoftware/index.html>

- Internal checks, which are performed by the organizations, agencies or individuals responsible for the compilation of the inventory; and
- External checks, which are performed by other bodies not directly involved with the preparation of the GHG inventory (e.g., other government agencies, private companies, research consortiums, independent scientists, non-governmental organizations).

In relation to internal verification, information is provided in section 5.7 of the GPG-LULUCF<sup>41</sup>. This information may facilitate verification activities at the project or national level, and is most relevant for REDD+ activities. In some instances, text is quoted verbatim from the IPCC document, in other instances changes have been made to reflect specific REDD+ aspects.

Governments reached agreement regarding external verification requirements and procedures for REDD+ as part of the negotiations at COP19 in Warsaw, Poland, November 2013. The resulting “Warsaw Framework for REDD+”<sup>42</sup> includes two decisions relating to international-level verification. Specifically:

- Decision 13/CP.19 on guidelines and procedures for the technical assessment of submissions from Parties on proposed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels; and
- Decision 14/CP.19 on modalities for measuring, reporting and verifying.

The provisions of these two decisions will be discussed below in section 6.3.3.

### 6.3.1 Approaches to project or national internal verification

According to the GPG-LULUCF, the uniqueness of estimation methods required for forestry-related activities has led to the conclusion that verification “would be based on complete accounting of emissions and removals at the national scale, measured by independent methods at different levels, and possibly complemented by top-down approaches based on atmospheric measurements.” A complete verification process would require cross-checking of the results at different scales (sub-national and national), depending on a country’s national circumstances.

At the same time, the IPCC has recognized that “such verification would be complex and resource intensive, and possibly performed by research consortiums and/or programs”. Furthermore, cross-checking requires considerable time and it is likely to be implemented over multiple years, rather than on a single year basis.”

The five main approaches to verification currently included in the GPG-LULUCF are:

- 1) Comparison to other information, such as independent inventories and international programs and datasets;
- 2) Application of higher tier methods;
- 3) Direct measurement of emissions and removals of GHGs;
- 4) Remote sensing; and
- 5) Using models.

In addition to these five approaches, the following may be included: peer and public review; examination of specific aspects of the inventory, such as underlying data (collection, transcription, and analysis); emission

<sup>41</sup> [http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpglulucf/gpglulucf\\_files/Chp5/Chp5\\_7\\_Verification.pdf](http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpglulucf/gpglulucf_files/Chp5/Chp5_7_Verification.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> COP 19 agreed that decisions 9/CP.19, 10/CP.19, 11/CP.19, 12/CP.19, 13/CP.19, 14/CP.19 and 15/CP.19 be designated as the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ (see paragraph 44 of the COP19 report, available at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2013/cop19/eng/10.pdf>).

factors; AD assumptions; rules used for the calculations (suitability and application of methods, including models); and upscaling procedures. No matter which verification approaches are used or what aspects of the inventory are verified, verification should be conducted using data and methods that are independent from those used to prepare the inventory.

The criteria for selecting verification approaches includes: scale of interest, costs, desired level of accuracy and precision, complexity of design and implementation of the verification approaches, and the required level of expertise needed to verify.

Section 5.7, Verification, of the GPG-LULUCF<sup>43</sup> provides a technical description for each approach, with reference to its applicability (e.g., for a particular category, types of data). The IPCC guidance also provides an information table, Figure 6.4 below, to assist in identifying the most suitable approaches for particular categories or inputs.

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<sup>43</sup> [http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpplulucf/gpplulucf\\_files/Chp5/Chp5\\_7\\_Verification.pdf](http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpplulucf/gpplulucf_files/Chp5/Chp5_7_Verification.pdf)



<b>TABLE 5.7.1</b> <b>APPLICABILITY OF VERIFICATION APPROACHES FOR LAND AREA IDENTIFICATION</b> <b>AND FOR CARBON POOLS AND NON-CO<sub>2</sub> GREENHOUSE GASES</b>					
	<b>Approach 1</b> <b>Comparison</b> <b>with other</b> <b>inventories and</b> <b>other</b> <b>independent</b> <b>datasets</b>	<b>Approach 2</b> <b>Applying</b> <b>higher tier</b> <b>methods</b>	<b>Approach 3</b> <b>Direct</b> <b>measurement</b>	<b>Approach 4</b> <b>Remote</b> <b>sensing</b>	<b>Approach 5</b> <b>Modelling</b>
<b>Land area</b>	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable, if data are available	Not applicable	Suitable	Not applicable
<b>Carbon pools</b>					
Aboveground biomass	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable (resource-intensive)	Suitable (ground data needed)	Suitable (regression, ecosystem and growth models)
Belowground biomass	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable (resource-intensive)	Not applicable	Suitable, (regression, ecosystem and growth models)
Dead wood	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable (resource-intensive)	Not applicable	Applicable (ecosystem and inventory-based models)
Litter	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable (resource-intensive)	Not applicable	Applicable (ecosystem and inventory-based models)
Soil organic matter	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable (resource-intensive)	Not applicable	Suitable (ecosystem and inventory-based models)
<b>Non-CO<sub>2</sub> greenhouse gases</b>	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable (resource-intensive)	Not applicable	Suitable (ecosystem models)
<b>Emission factors</b>	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable (resource-intensive)	Not applicable	Suitable (ecosystem models)
<b>Activity/land-based report</b>					
Forest, grassland, cropland, other land uses	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable (resource-intensive)	Suitable, particularly to identify land cover/land use and their changes	Suitable, Data-intensive, Can be an alternative approach when estimates from direct measurements and remote sensing are not available
Afforestation, Reforestation, Deforestation, projects	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable, if data are available	Suitable (resource-intensive)	Suitable, particularly to identify land cover/land use and their changes	Not practical

Figure 6.4: Reproduction of the table for general applicability of verification approaches

### 6.3.2 General guidance for internal verification

According to the GPG- LULUCF, there are two key considerations for an inventory agency in its efforts to develop a verification plan:

- **Identify the criteria for selecting the inventory elements for verification.** For example, key source/sink categories should be given priority for verification. At the same time, non-key categories can also be selected for verification if they are of particular relevance to mitigation efforts, or their uncertainty is high or they are expected to change significantly over the inventory reporting period.
- **Decide how the inventory elements will be verified.** In addition to the suitability/availability of a particular verification approach, other criteria to be used for selecting a particular approach include: the type of data to be verified; the spatial scale of the inventory coverage; the quantity and quality of the data to be verified; and the accuracy, precision and cost of the approach itself.

The GPG-LULUCF stipulates that “if a country undertakes internal verification of its inventory, it should ensure that:

- Sufficient independent expertise is available;
- Documentation of the verification is included in the inventory report;
- Uncertainty estimates and QA/QC documentation is included in the report;
- Other available national verification activities are described;
- Applied verification methods are transparent, rigorous and scientifically sound;
- Verification results are reasonable and well-explained; and
- Final calculations can be reasonably linked to underlying data and assumption.”

Some of the checks and comparisons that can be used for internal verification of the LULUCF sector are summarized in Box 5.7.3<sup>44</sup> of the GPG-LULUCF (reproduced below). These checks and comparison are essential, and ideally they should have been conducted as a part of QA/QC.

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<sup>44</sup> [http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpglulucf/gpglulucf\\_files/Chp5/Chp5\\_7\\_Verification.pdf](http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpglulucf/gpglulucf_files/Chp5/Chp5_7_Verification.pdf)

### BOX 5.7.3

#### VERIFICATION OF INVENTORY OF LULUCF SECTOR IN A NATIONAL INVENTORY

##### A. Checks:

Does the inventory of the LULUCF sector document the data and assumptions used for estimating emissions and removals for all IPCC source/sink categories?

Have all important carbon pools been included in the inventory?

If some LULUCF emission/removal categories have been omitted, does the report explain why?

Are emissions and removals reported as *positive* and *negative* terms, respectively?

For the total area of the inventory of the LULUCF sector, are the overall changes in land-use for the inventory year equal to zero within the confidence limit?

Are any discontinuities in trends from base year to end year evaluated and explained?

##### B. Comparisons of emissions and removals from LULUCF:

Compare the inventory of the LULUCF sector with independently prepared national inventories for the **same** country or compare regional sub-sets of the national inventory with independently prepared inventories for those regions. (Table 5.7.1, Approach 1).

Compare the inventory of the LULUCF sector with national inventories for a **different**, but similar country (Table 5.7.1, Approach 1).

Compare activity data and/or emission factors of the inventory of the LULUCF sector with independent international databases and/or other countries. For example, compare Biomass Expansion Factors of similar species with data from countries with similar forest conditions (Table 5.7.1, Approach 1).

Compare the inventory of the LULUCF sector with results calculated using another tier methodology, including defaults (Table 5.7.1, Approach 2).

Compare the inventory of the LULUCF sector with available high-intensity studies and experiments (Table 5.7.1, Approach 1-3).

Compare land areas and biomass stocks used in the inventory with remote sensing (Table 5.7.1, Approach 4).

Compare the inventory of the LULUCF sector with models (Table 5.7.1, Approach 5).

##### C. Comparisons of uncertainties:

Compare uncertainty estimates with uncertainty reported in the literature.

Compare uncertainty estimates with those from other countries and the IPCC default values.

##### D. Direct measurements:

Carry out direct measurements (such as local forest inventory, detailed growth measurements and/or ecosystem fluxes of greenhouse gases, Table 5.7.1, Approach 3).

Figure 6.5: Box 5.7.3 of the GPG LULUCF

Country-specific circumstances and availability of resources are key to selecting appropriate verification approaches. In general, “Approaches 1, 2 and 3 are feasible for verifying several components of the inventory. Approaches 1 and 2 can be easily implemented by an inventory agency with low to moderate resources. Remote sensing is the most suitable method for the verification of land areas. Direct measurements are relevant, although this approach can be resource-intensive, and, on a large scale, costs may

be a constraint. Models can be used as an alternative when direct measurements combined with remote sensing is not feasible.”

### 6.3.3 International verification-related provisions resulting from the Warsaw Framework for REDD+

As discussed above in section 6.2.2, developing countries interested in implementing REDD+ activities for results-based payments are required to submit information to the UNFCCC secretariat on:

1. Their proposed FREL/FRL; and
2. Data and information used in the estimation of anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, and forest carbon stock and forest-area changes after implementation of REDD+ activities has started (see Box 6.5).

Both data sets will be subject to a technical assessment or analysis.

#### **Box 6.5. Guidelines for elements to be included in the technical annex referred to in decision 14/CP.19, Modalities for measuring, reporting and verifying, paragraph 7**

1. Summary information from the final report containing each corresponding assessed FREL &/or FRL, which includes:
  - (a) The assessed forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year (CO<sub>2</sub> eq);
  - (b) The activity or activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70, included in the forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level;
  - (c) The territorial forest area covered;
  - (d) The date of the forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level submission and the date of the final technical assessment report;
  - (e) The period (in years) of the assessed forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level.
2. Results in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> eq per year, consistent with the assessed forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level.
3. Demonstration that the methodologies used to produce the results referred to in paragraph 2 above are consistent with those used to establish the assessed forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level.
4. A description of national forest monitoring systems and the institutional roles and responsibilities for measuring, reporting and verifying the results.
5. Necessary information that allows for the reconstruction of the results.
6. A description of how the elements contained in decision 4/CP.15, paragraph 1(c) and (d), have been taken into account.

#### *Technical assessment of forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels (Decision 13/CP.19)*

In accordance with decision 12/CP.17, developing countries may submit a proposed FREL/FRL that will be subject to a technical assessment. Each submission will be assessed by two land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) experts selected from the UNFCCC roster of experts, one from a developed country and one from a developing country. The objectives of the technical assessment are:

- To assess the degree to which the information provided is in accordance with the guidelines for submissions of information on FREL/FRL (annex to decision 12/CP.17) for the construction of the FREL/FRL;
- To offer a facilitative, non-intrusive, technical exchange of information on the construction of FRELs/FRLs with a view to supporting the capacity of developing countries for the construction and future improvements, as appropriate, of their FRELs/FRLs subject to national capabilities and policy.

The technical assessment of the data, methodologies, and procedures used in the construction of FREL/FRL will assess the following:

- The extent to which the FREL/FRL maintains consistency with corresponding anthropogenic forest-related GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks as contained in the national GHG inventories;
- How historical data have been taken into account in the establishment of the FREL/FRL;
- The extent to which the information provided was transparent, complete, consistent and accurate, including methodological information, description of data sets, approaches, methods, models (if applicable) assumptions used and whether the FRELs/FRLs are national or cover less than the entire national territory of forest area;
- Whether a description of relevant policies and plans has been provided, as appropriate;
- If applicable, whether descriptions of changes to previously submitted FRELs/FRLs have been provided, taking into account the stepwise approach;
- Pools and gases, and activities included in the FREL/FRL, and justification of why omitted pools and/or activities were not deemed significant;
- Whether the definition of forest used in the construction of the FREL/FRL has been provided and, if it is different from the one used in the national GHG inventory or from the one reported to other international organizations, why and how the definition used was chosen;
- Whether assumptions about future changes to domestic policies have been included in the construction of the FREL/FRL;
- The extent to which the FREL/FRL value is consistent with the information and descriptions provided by the country.

As part of the technical assessment process, areas for technical improvement may be identified and these areas and capacity-building needs for the construction of future FRELs/FRLs may be noted by the country concerned. Given the facultative nature of the assessment, the assessment team is to refrain from making any judgment on domestic policies taken into account in the construction of FRELs/FRLs. The decision also contains provisions relating to general procedures and the timing (see Figure 6.6 for timeline) of the technical assessment.

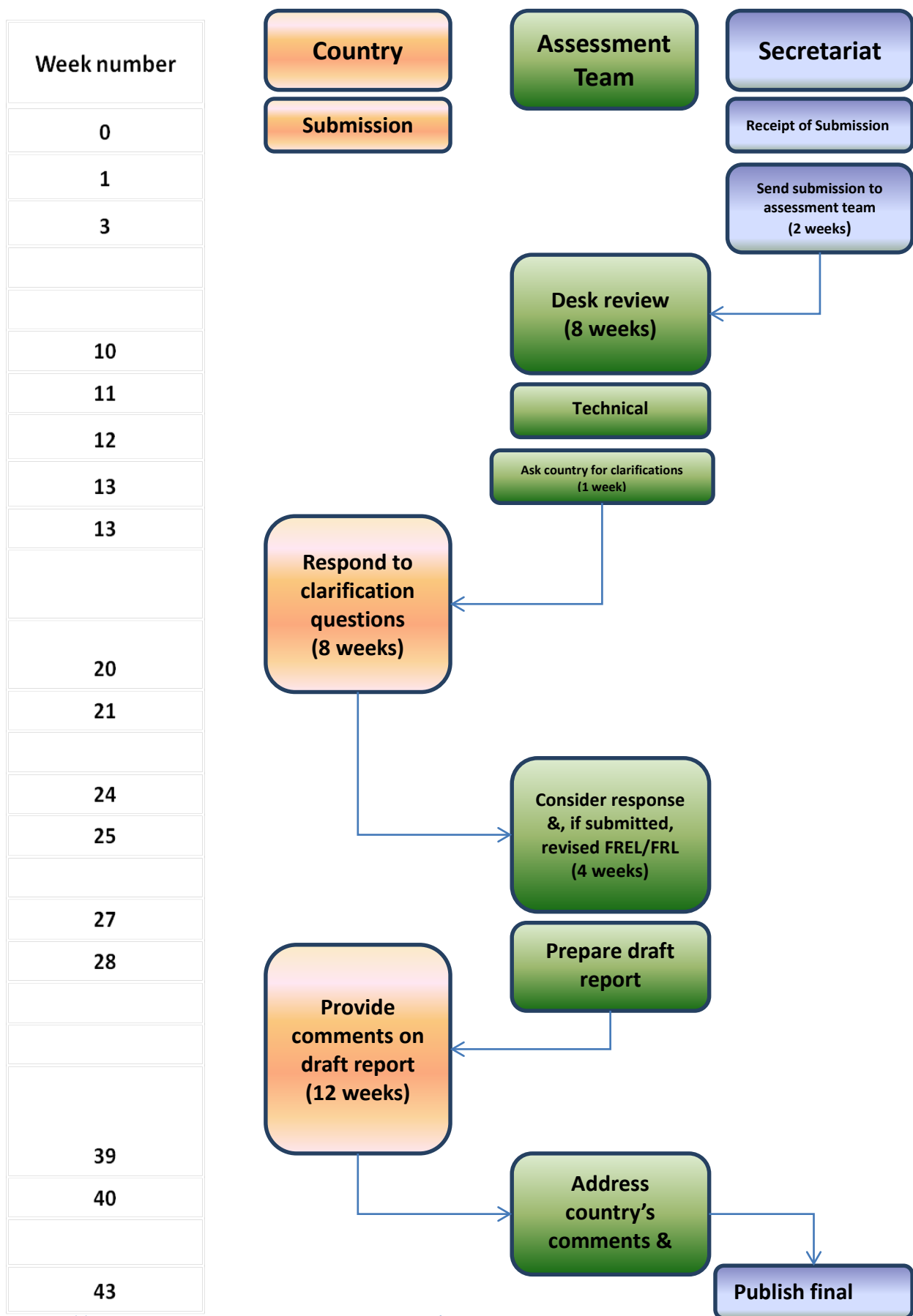


Figure 6.6: Timeline for the technical assessment of FRELs/FRLs

*Technical analysis of data and information for results-based payments (Decision 14/CP.19)*

Upon the request of the developing country seeking to obtain and receive payments for results-based actions, two LULUCF experts from the UNFCCC roster of experts, one each from a developing country and a developed country, will be included among the members selected for the technical team of experts. As part of the technical analysis referred to in decision 2/CP.17, annex IV, paragraph 4, the technical team of experts shall analyse the extent to which:

- (a) There is consistency in methodologies, definitions, comprehensiveness and the information provided between the assessed reference level and the results of the implementation of the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70;
- (b) The data and information provided in the technical annex is transparent, consistent, complete and accurate;
- (c) The data and information provided in the technical annex is consistent with the relevant guidelines; and
- (d) The results are accurate, to the extent possible;

The developing country that submitted the technical annex has the possibility to interact with the technical team of experts during the analysis of its technical annex to provide clarifications and additional information to facilitate the analysis by the technical team of experts. The two LULUCF experts may seek clarifications on the technical annex and the country should provide clarifications to the extent possible, in accordance with national circumstances and taking into account national capabilities.

The LULUCF experts will develop, under their collective responsibility, a technical report to be published by the secretariat via the web platform on the UNFCCC website, containing:

- (a) The technical annex;
- (b) The analysis of the technical annex;
- (c) Areas for technical improvement identified, as appropriate; and
- (d) Any comments and/or responses by the developing country concerned, including areas for further improvement and capacity-building needs, if noted by the country concerned, as appropriate.

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# 7.0 THEMATIC REVIEWS

## 7.1 HISTORY OF REDD+ UNDER THE UNFCCC

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### 7.1.1 Introduction

This thematic review provides an overview of negotiations on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, plus the role of conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the role that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has played in providing methodological guidance to Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF). This review provides additional context, whereas the current reporting guidance under the UNFCCC is discussed in Chapter 6.

Informed decision-making and successful implementation of international agreements on climate change (such as the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol) rely on the availability of accurate and reliable information on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and removals. The realization by the international community of the urgency to address REDD+ has prompted decisions that emphasize the importance of Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) of GHG emissions and removals as well as their role in global mitigation efforts to address the impacts of anthropogenic climate change.

According to the decisions adopted by governments working under the aegis of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC, developing countries willing to take action on REDD+ have to establish a National Forest Monitoring System to assess anthropogenic forest-related GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks. As REDD+ actions should be results-based, developing countries will have to demonstrate that they are reducing emissions from deforestation, compared to a business-as-usual scenario, or Forest Reference Emission Levels or Forest Reference Levels (FREL/FRLs).

### 7.1.2 Overview of REDD+ negotiations under the UNFCCC

Forestry has been recognized as one of the key sectors to be addressed in the broader context of GHG mitigation under the UNFCCC. The principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” of the Convention (1992), Article 4, paragraph 1 (c) stipulates that all countries must “promote and cooperate in the development, application and diffusion, including transfer, of technologies, practices and processes that control, reduce or prevent anthropogenic emissions of GHGs not controlled by the Montreal Protocol in all relevant sectors, including the energy, transport, industry, agriculture, forestry and waste management sectors.”

Also included in Article 4 are commitments for all countries to “promote sustainable management, and promote and cooperate in the conservation and enhancement of sinks and reservoirs of all GHGs not included in the Montreal Protocol, including biomass, forests and oceans as well as other terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems” (Article 4, paragraph 1 (d)).

The complexity of the sector, however, has posed a number of challenges, which have postponed decisions on how to address the reduction of GHG emissions from forestry activities, especially in developing countries. Figure 7.1 outlines the REDD+ discussion progress from COP11 – COP19.

<b>COP11: 2005, Montreal</b>	Agreement for the consideration of <b>reducing emissions from deforestation</b> , including scientific, technical and methodological issues, policy approaches and positive incentives
<b>COP13: 2007, Bali</b>	Adoption of the <b>Bali Action Plan</b> (Decision 1/CP.13) which includes REDD+ as one of the key elements of enhanced national/international action on mitigation of climate change; (Decision 2/CP.13) encourages actions on REDD+ including: capacity building, technology transfer, demonstration activities and mobilization of resources
<b>COP15: 2009, Copenhagen</b>	Agreement on methodological guidance (Decision 4/CP.15) including elements of NFMSs for implementing activities relating to Decision 2/CP.13
<b>COP16: 2010, Cancun</b>	Adoption of the <b>Cancun Agreements</b> (Decision 1/CP.16) recognizing that developing countries should aim to: i) slow/halt/reverse forest cover & carbon loss; ii) contribute to mitigation actions in forest sector; and iii) develop a national strategy/action plan, national FRLs or sub-national RLs, NFMS, system for providing information on safeguards.
<b>COP17: 2011, Durban</b>	Adoption of Decision 12/CP. 17 that includes guidance on providing information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected; and elaborates modalities relating to FRELs\FRLs.
<b>COP18: 2012, Doha</b>	Adoption of Decision 1/CP.18 with agreement to initiate a work-programme on results-based finance for REDD+.
<b>COP19: 2013, Warsaw</b>	Adoption of the <b>Warsaw Framework for REDD-plus</b> . Seven decisions (Decisions 9/CP.19 to 15/CP.19) that address: financing; coordination of support; modalities NFMSs; safeguards; FRELs/FRLs; modalities for MRV; drivers of deforestation & forest degradation.

Figure 7.1: REDD+ discussions from COP11-COP19

### *COP11*

This dynamic changed at the 11th Meeting of the COP (COP11) in Montreal, Canada in 2005, when Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica, with support from eight other countries, proposed a mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries. The proposal received wide support and the COP began a two year process to explore options for REDD with the participation of both governments and observer organizations submitting proposals and recommendations on how to reduce GHG emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

## *COP13*

At COP13, governments agreed on the Bali Road Map, which defined a broader scope for future global action. The Bali Action Plan (Decision 1/CP.13) signaled the beginning of a new global process through long-term cooperative action on all aspects of climate change, namely mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance. A key element of the international negotiations was the role of developing countries in national and international efforts to mitigate climate change. The Bali Action Plan included considerations on the following actions:

- Nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) by developing country Parties in the context of sustainable development, supported and enabled by technology, financing and capacity-building, in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner (sub-paragraph 1 (b) (ii) of Decision 1/CP.13); and
- Policy approaches and positive incentives on issues relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (sub-paragraph 1 (b) (iii) of Decision 1/CP.13).

These provisions bring together national mitigation efforts, REDD+, sustainable development, technology, finance and MRV. Initiating negotiations on future action, however, does not mean that current mitigation efforts should be discounted or discontinued, as the negotiations process is to be informed by “... the best available scientific information, experience in implementation of the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol, and processes there under, outputs from other relevant intergovernmental processes and insights from the business and research communities and civil society.”<sup>45</sup> The intention is that lessons learned from current efforts will guide the intergovernmental process as it defines a new way forward.

COP13 also adopted Decision 2/CP.13 on “reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries: approaches to stimulate action.” Through this decision, the COP encouraged capacity-building activities, technical assistance, the facilitation of technology transfer and the development of demonstration activities. The decision also requested advancement of relevant methodological work by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).<sup>46</sup>

## *COP14*

One year later, at COP14 in Poznan, Poland in 2008, the SBSTA reached agreement on a number of issues relating to REDD+, including:

- The organization of an experts meeting on: methodological issues relating to Reference Emission Levels (RELs) for deforestation and degradation; the relationship among the RELs and other relevant reference levels (RLs); and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, changes in forest cover and associated carbon stocks and GHG emissions and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks to enhance action on climate change mitigation;
- A recommendation on methodological guidance noting the importance of, inter alia, promoting readiness of developing countries, and further mobilization of resources, in relation to decision 2/CP.13, as well as recognizing the need to promote the full and effective participation of indigenous

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<sup>45</sup> Paragraph 11 of Decision 1/CP.13

<sup>46</sup> The SBSTA is a permanent subsidiary body under the UNFCCC. It supports the work of the COP and the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) through the provision of timely information and advice on scientific and technological matters as they relate to the Convention and the Protocol.

people and local communities, taking into account national circumstances and relevant international agreements; and

- A recommendation on the use of the Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines for National GHG Inventories, and encouragement to use the IPCC Good Practice Guidance for LULUCF (GPG-LULUCF), as appropriate.

It is important to note that in climate negotiations, the terms RL and REL refer to a business-as-usual baseline that can be developed by taking into account historic data. These terms have not been defined by the UNFCCC or IPCC, and while sometimes used interchangeably, they usually differ in use. RLs refer to the amount of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the amount of removals from sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. RELs refer only to the amount of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

### *COP15*

Significant progress was made in REDD+ negotiations leading up to COP15 in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2009. Despite the difficulties in reaching agreement on an overall package as a result of COP15, the negotiations on REDD+ culminated in the adoption of Decision 4/CP.15 which addressed issues such as scope, guiding principles, safeguards and a phased approach to REDD+. Specifically, through Decision 4/CP.15, the COP, among other things:

- Requested developing countries to, inter alia, identify drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, and to use the most recent IPCC guidance to estimate emissions and establish NFMS;
- Encouraged capacity-building support from all able parties for capacity building in developing countries;
- Encouraged development of guidance for Indigenous Peoples and local community engagement;
- Recognized that FRELs should take into account historic data, and adjust for national circumstances; and
- Urged coordination of efforts.

### *COP16*

The outcome of COP16 in Cancun, Mexico in 2010 was a milestone for REDD+ because many of the key decisions adopted at previous sessions (Bali, Poznan and Copenhagen) were consolidated as part of the Cancun Agreements (Decision 1/CP.16). In particular, the COP affirmed that, provided adequate and predictable support is forthcoming, developing countries should aim to slow, halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss. The COP also encouraged developing country parties to contribute to mitigation actions in the forest sector through actions in the five specific areas listed in Box 7.1.

Developing countries were requested to develop a national strategy or action plan, national FRLs or sub-national RLs as an interim measure, a robust and transparent NFMS and a system for providing information on how the safeguards listed in Appendix I to Decision 1/CP.16 (see Box 7.2) would be addressed throughout implementation.

The COP also requested that the SBSTA develop a work program to identify, among other issues, drivers of deforestation and degradation, and methodologies for estimating emissions and removals from these activities. The work program was to develop modalities for MRV of emissions by sources and removals by sinks resulting from these activities, consistent with MRV of NAMAs for consideration at COP18. The Ad-

Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) was requested to explore financing options for the full implementation of results-based actions and to report on this at COP17.

Following the successful outcome of Cancun, governments continued to work throughout 2011 in preparation for COP17 in Durban, South Africa in 2011. Earlier in the year, at the SBSTA34 meeting in Bonn, Germany, work continued on technical guidance for MRV, including principles that should be followed when designing MRV systems; These discussions have continued at subsequent SBSTAs.

### *COP17*

The negotiations during COP17 focused on two groups of issues relating to REDD+:

- Sources of financing for REDD+, the role of markets and non-markets and the potential use of offsets; and
- Guidance on systems for providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected, modalities for FREL/FRLs and MRV.
- As part of the outcome of COP17 (Decision 2/CP.17), the COP agreed, among other things:
- Regardless of the source or type of financing, the activities referred to in paragraph 70 of Decision 1/CP.16 (see Box 7.1) should be consistent with the relevant provisions included in Decision 1/CP.16, including the safeguards in its Appendix I (see Box 7.2);
- Results-based finance provided to developing countries that is new, additional and predictable may come from a wide variety of sources, including public and private, bilateral and multilateral; and
- In light of the experience gained from current and future demonstration activities, appropriate market-based approaches could be developed by the COP to support results-based actions in developing countries.

#### **Box 7.1: Paragraph 70 of Decision 1/CP.16**

The Conference of the Parties,

...

70. Encourages developing country Parties to contribute to mitigation actions in the forest sector by undertaking the following activities, as deemed appropriate by each Party and in accordance with their respective capabilities and national circumstances:

- (a) Reducing emissions from deforestation;
- (b) Reducing emissions from forest degradation;
- (c) Conservation of forest carbon stocks;
- (d) Sustainable management of forests;
- (e) Enhancement of forest carbon stocks;

In Decision 12/CP.17, the COP noted that guidance on systems for providing safeguards information should be consistent with national sovereignty, legislation and circumstances. Under the section on providing information on how safeguards are addressed and respected, the COP, inter alia:

- Noted that the implementation of safeguards and information on how these safeguards are being addressed and respected should support national strategies or action plans and be included in all phases of implementation, as appropriate;
- Agreed that the systems for providing information on how the safeguards are addressed and respected should, among other things: provide transparent and consistent information that is accessible by all relevant stakeholders and updated on a regular basis, be country-driven and implemented at the country level, and build upon existing systems, as appropriate;
- Agreed that developing countries undertaking these activities, should provide a summary of information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout implementation;
- Decided that the summary of information referred to should be provided periodically and included in national communications, consistent with relevant COP decisions on non-Annex I Parties' national communications, or communication channels agreed by the COP; and
- Requested SBSTA 36 to consider the timing of the first presentation and the frequency of subsequent presentations of the summary of information to be considered by COP18, and the need for further guidance to the COP.

### **Box 7.2: Safeguards for REDD+ activities (paragraph 2 of Appendix I to Decision I/CP.16)**

2. When undertaking the activities referred to in paragraph 70 of Decision I/CP.16, the following safeguards should be promoted and supported:

- (a) That actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements;
- (b) Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;
- (c) Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- (d) The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities, in the actions referred to in paragraphs 70 and 72 of Decision I/CP.16;
- (e) That actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the actions referred to in paragraph 70 of Decision I/CP.16 are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits;\*
- (f) Actions to address the risks of reversals;
- (g) Actions to reduce displacement of emissions.

\*Taking into account the need for sustainable livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities and their interdependence on forests in most countries, reflected in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the International Mother Earth Day.

Under modalities for REL/RLs, the COP, inter alia:

- Agreed that REL/RLs are benchmarks for assessing each country's performance in implementing the referred activities;
- Decided that these shall be established considering Decision 4/CP.15, paragraph 7 and consistent with anthropogenic forest-related GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks in a country's GHG inventories;
- Invited developing countries to submit information and rationale on the development of their REL/RLs including details of national circumstances, and if adjusted to national circumstances, including details in accordance with the guidelines contained in the annex to Decision 2/CP.17 (see Box 7.3);
- Acknowledged that sub-national REL/RLs may be elaborated as an interim measure, while transitioning to a national level, and that interim RLs may cover less than the national territory of forest area;
- Agreed that developing countries should update REL/RLs periodically, as appropriate, taking into account new knowledge, trends and any modification of scope and methodologies; and
- Agreed to a process enabling technical assessment of the proposed RLs when submitted or updated by parties in accordance with guidance to be developed by SBSTA 36.

The UNFCCC has also addressed countries' needs to set RELs. REL/RLs represent benchmarks for assessing a country's performance in implementing REDD+ activities. Countries implementing REDD+ activities under the UNFCCC will need to develop their RELs and submit them to the UNFCCC. The emissions estimates from these will then be compared with those estimated via MRV, and the difference between the two will be used to measure the effectiveness of each country's policies and measures related to REDD+.

The first UNFCCC guidance on RELs was provided in Decision 4/CP.15, which recognized that RELs should be established transparently, should take into account historical trends, and could be adjusted for national circumstances. Decision 1/CP.16 then defined RELs/RLs as one of the elements Parties aiming to undertake REDD+ activities should develop, in accordance with national circumstances, and that sub-national RELs could be used as an interim measure. The most recent guidance on RELs emerged from COP17, indicating that Parties should: i) establish RELs maintaining consistency with forest emissions and removals as contained in countries' national GHG inventories; ii) submit information/rationale on the development of their RELs, including how national circumstances were considered; iii) consider a step-wise approach to the development of RELs to enable the incorporation of improved data and methodologies; and iv) update RELs periodically to account for new knowledge and trends. The cumulative guidance indicates that RELs should be developed with strong links to the design of the national MRV system, ensuring consistency in the approaches to data collection and use.

### *COP19*

COP19, held in Warsaw, Poland in 2013 resulted in the adoption of seven decisions collectively known as the Warsaw Framework for REDD-plus. These decisions covered a range of topics including financing, institutional arrangements, NFMS, safeguards, FRELS, MRV, and drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. The decisions are outlined below. Box 7.3 includes the UNFCCC's overview<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> <http://unfccc.int/methods/redd/items/8180.php>

- **Decision 9/CP.19:** Work programme on results-based finance to progress the full implementation of the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70
- **Decision 10/CP.19:** Coordination of support for the implementation of activities in relation to mitigation actions in the forest sector by developing countries, including institutional arrangements
- **Decision 11/CP.19:** Modalities for national forest monitoring systems
- **Decision 12/CP.19:** The timing and the frequency of presentations of the summary of information on how all the safeguards referred to in decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, are being addressed and respected
- **Decision 13/CP.19:** Guidelines and procedures for the technical assessment of submissions from Parties on proposed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels
- **Decision 14/CP.19:** Modalities for measuring, reporting and verifying
- **Decision 15/CP.19:** Addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation



### Box 7.3: UNFCCC's overview of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+

Decision 9/CP.19: Work programme on results-based finance to progress the full implementation of the activities referred to in Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70. The COP in this decision, inter alia:

- Reaffirms that results-based finance may come from a wide variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including alternative sources
- Encourages financing entities, including the Green Climate Fund in a key role, to channel adequate and predictable results-based finance in a fair and balanced manner, and to work with a view to increasing the number of countries that are in a position to obtain and receive payments for results-based actions
- Decides to establish an information hub on the REDD Web Platform, to publish information on the results and corresponding results-based payments
- Requests the Standing Committee on Finance to consider the issue of financing for forests in its work on coherence and coordination
- Recognizes the importance of incentivizing non-carbon benefits for the long-term sustainability of the implementation of the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70

Decision 10/CP.19: Coordination of support for the implementation of activities in relation to mitigation actions in the forest sector by developing countries, including institutional arrangements. The COP in this decision, inter alia:

- Invites interested Parties to designate a national entity or focal point to serve as liaison with the secretariat and bodies under the Convention, on coordination of support, and may also be nominated to receive and obtain results-based payments
- Recognizes that in order to address issues related to the coordination of support, a number of needs and functions were identified
- Encourages national entities/focal points, Parties and relevant entities financing REDD-plus to meet, on a voluntary basis, to discuss the needs and functions identified to address issues relating to coordination of support; with the first meeting to be held in conjunction with SBI 41 (December 2014)
- Requests the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, at the latest, at its forty-seventh session (November-December 2017) to review the outcomes of these meetings

Decision 11/CP.19: Modalities for national forest monitoring systems. The COP in this decision, inter alia:

- Affirms that the activities referred to in this decision are undertaken in the context of the provision of adequate and predictable support to developing country Parties
- Decides national forest monitoring systems should be guided by the most recent IPCC guidance and guidelines, as adopted or encouraged by the COP
- Also decides that national forest monitoring systems should provide data and information that are transparent, consistent over time, suitable for MRV, and build upon existing systems while being flexible and allowing for improvement

Decision 12: CP.19: The timing and the frequency of presentations of the summary of information on how all the safeguards referred to in decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, are being addressed and respected. The COP in this decision, inter alia:

- Agrees that the summary of information on how all of the safeguards referred to in decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70, could also be provided, on a voluntary basis, via the REDD Web Platform
- Decides that developing country Parties should start providing the summary of information after the start of the implementation of activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70
- Also decides that the frequency for subsequent presentations of the summary of information should be consistent with the provisions for submissions of national communications and, on a voluntary basis, via the REDD Web Platform

Decision 13: CP.19: Guidelines and procedures for the technical assessment of submissions from Parties on proposed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels. The COP in this decision, inter alia:

- Decides that each submission of forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels shall be subject to a technical assessment
- Invites Parties and relevant international organizations to support capacity-building for development and assessment of forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels
- Adopts the guidelines and procedures for the technical assessment, as contained in the annex to this decision

Decision 14: CP.19: Modalities for measuring, reporting and verifying. The COP in this decision, inter alia:

- Decides that measuring, reporting and verifying anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, and forest carbon stock and forest-area changes is to be consistent with the methodological guidance provided in decision 4/CP.15, and any guidance on the measurement, reporting and verification of nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing country Parties as agreed by the COP
- Decides that data and information should be provided through a technical annex to the biennial update reports, underlining that the submission of the technical annex is voluntary and in the context of results-based payments
- Further decides to include two additional LULUCF experts in the technical team of experts for the international consultation and analysis of results-based actions reported in a technical annex to the biennial update reports, and agrees that these LULUCF experts will develop a technical report on their analysis of the technical annex and identified areas for technical improvement
- Also agrees that results-based actions that may be eligible to appropriate market-based approaches that could be developed by the COP may be subject to any further specific modalities for verification

Decision 15: CP.19: Addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. The COP in this decision, inter alia:

- Encourages Parties, organizations and the private sector to take action to reduce the drivers
- Also encourages to continue work to address drivers, and to share information
- Further encourages developing country Parties to take note of the information shared

The Warsaw Framework for REDD-plus represented another milestone for REDD as it identified options for financing and highlighted support coordination. Further, the Framework more clearly addressed several NFMS activities, provided guidance on safeguards, and addressed drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Two major pending issues that will be discussed at COP20 to be held in Lima, Peru (December 2014) include the need to fully incentivize the non-carbon benefits of REDD+ and emphasize the benefits of REDD+ in terms of both mitigation and adaptation.

### 7.1.3 Methodological work of the IPCC on GHG inventories

The IPCC is a scientific body of the United Nations that was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Its mandate is to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of climate change knowledge and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts. To do this, the IPCC reviews and assesses the most recent scientific, technical and socio-economic research produced worldwide. It does not conduct any research nor does it monitor climate related data or parameters.

To accomplish its work, the IPCC is organized into three working groups (WGs) responsible for assessing: the Physical Science Basis (WG1); the Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability (WG2); and the Mitigation of Climate Change (WG3). A schematic on the structure of the IPCC is shown in Figure 7.2. Other ad-hoc task groups and steering groups may be established to consider specific topics or questions.

In addition to the three WGs, the IPCC has established the Task Force on National GHG Inventories to oversee the IPCC National GHG Inventories Program (NGGIP). Its core activity is to develop and refine internationally agreed-upon methodologies and a software program for the calculation and reporting of national GHG emissions and removals, and to encourage its use by countries participating in the IPCC and by the Parties to the UNFCCC. The NGGIP also established and maintains the IPCC Emission Factor Database (EFDB) discussed in Chapter 3.

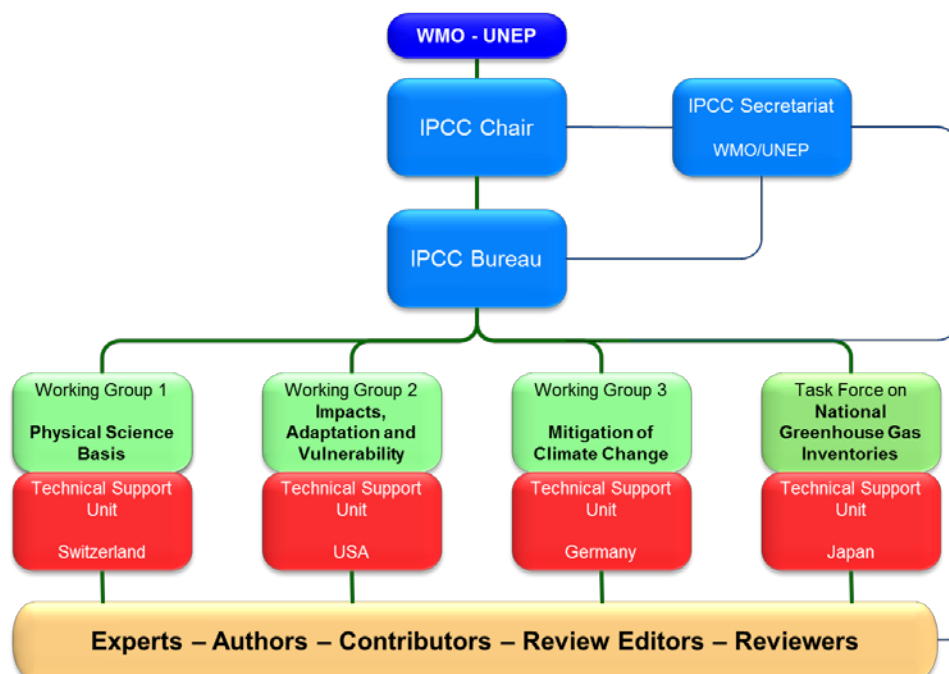


Figure 7.2: IPCC structure and functions (source: IPCC TFI)

#### 7.1.4 History of IPCC methodological guidelines and guidance

Since its inception in the early 1990s, the IPCC has played a key role in the development of methodological guidelines and guidance that, over the years, have become the cornerstone for all work on GHG inventories. Specifically:

- In November 1994, the IPCC approved the first version of the IPCC Guidelines for National GHG Inventories. This was the first internationally accepted methodology that became the basis for the development of national GHG inventories under the UNFCCC;
- The Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines for National GHG Inventories include revised methodologies and default data for six main sectors: Energy; Industrial Processes; Solvents and Other Product Use; Agriculture; LULUCF; and Waste. In addition, methodologies were included for the estimation of halofluorocarbons, perfluorinated hydrocarbons, sulphur hexafluoride, ozone and aerosol precursors, and direct GHGs (CO<sub>2</sub>, methane [CH<sub>4</sub>], nitrogen dioxide [N<sub>2</sub>O]);
- In response to requests by the UNFCCC, the IPCC developed the Good Practice Guidance and Uncertainty Management in National GHG Inventories (GPG 2000), which addressed all sectors mentioned above except for land-use change and forestry, and the GPG-LULUCF in 2000 and 2003, respectively. These two documents do not replace, but supplement the information in the Revised 1996 Guidelines and provide good practice guidance on choice of estimation methodology, improvements of the methods and advice on cross-cutting issues, including estimation of uncertainties, time series consistency and quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC).
- The 2006 IPCC Guidelines on National GHG Inventories are an evolutionary development starting from the Revised 1996 Guidelines, the GPG 2000, and the GPG-LULUCF. The most significant changes occur in Volume 4, which consolidates the approach to LULUCF in the GPG-LULUCF and the Agriculture sector in GPG2000 into a single Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) Volume.

#### **Box 7.4: Guidelines for submissions of information on reference levels (Annex to decision 12/CP.17)**

Each developing country Party aiming to undertake the actions listed in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70, should include in its submission information that is transparent, complete<sup>(1)</sup>, consistent with guidance agreed by the Conference of the Parties (COP) and accurate information for the purpose of allowing a technical assessment of the data, methodologies and procedures used in the construction of a forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level. The information provided should be guided by the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change guidance and guidelines, as adopted or encouraged by the COP, as appropriate, and include:

- (a) Information that was used by Parties in constructing a forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level, including historical data, in a comprehensive and transparent way;
- (b) Transparent, complete, consistent and accurate information, including methodological information, used at the time of construction of forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels, including, inter alia, as appropriate, a description of data sets, approaches, methods, models, if applicable and assumptions used, descriptions of relevant policies and plans, and descriptions of changes from previously submitted information;
- (c) Pools and gases, and activities listed in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70, which have been included in forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels and the reasons for omitting a pool and/or activity from the construction of forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels, noting that significant pools and/or activities should not be excluded;
- (d) The definition of forest used in the construction of forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels and, if appropriate, in case there is a difference with the definition of forest used in the national greenhouse gas inventory or in reporting to other international organizations, an explanation of why and how the definition used in the construction of forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels was chosen.

(1) Complete here means the provision of information that allows for the reconstruction of forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels.

The LULUCF sector has evolved significantly between the Revised 1996 Guidelines and the 2006 IPCC Guidelines (see Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3). These changes are a result of better understanding of the sector and the availability of more scientific research.

#### **7.1.5 Other non-UN processes**

In addition to countries preparing for national implementation of REDD+, advances have been made at the sub-national level in the context of voluntary carbon markets and bilateral agreements. Sub-national implementation has mostly been at the site level. However, there has been some progress at the sub-national jurisdiction level. In some cases, site-level activities are being developed within jurisdictions that are also developing their own broader REDD+ strategies. This requires the development of a “nested” approach to REDD+ strategies, accounting of emission reductions and distribution of emissions-reduction credits.

These sub-national REDD+ efforts look to separate groups to provide guidance on setting RLs and aspects of MRV. Two groups providing guidance are the Voluntary Carbon Standards group (VCS) and the American Carbon Registry (ACR) (ACR, 2013; VCS, 2013). Both have provided technical methodologies recommended

for sub-national REDD+ RLs and MRV. They tend to defer to the IPCC, for example in carbon-stock assessments and fundamental concerns such as transparency and replicability. Both efforts seek to align with existing UNFCCC guidance on REDD+ and are intended to follow and support additional UNFCCC REDD+ guidance as it emerges. These efforts have also helped provide guidance on how to approach issues particular to jurisdictional and nested REDD+.

For example, within the guidance of both the VCS and the ACR, a jurisdiction is any politically defined region delineated for the purposes of tracking carbon stocks, deforestation rates and GHG reductions through REDD+ project activities. A jurisdiction may be a national or sub-national political entity (nation, state, province, district, etc.), though other ways of defining jurisdictional boundaries are also possible. A nested REDD+ project is one that is accounted and monitored in reference to the jurisdictional accounting framework (baseline, leakage assessment, monitoring requirements) in which the project takes place. This can have the benefit of reducing transaction costs for projects, allowing them to use the baseline and other requirements developed by the jurisdiction, rather than having to develop these at the project level, while also helping to attract private capital for REDD+.

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## 7.2 COMMUNITY-BASED MONITORING

*Authors: Kemen Austin and Fred Stolle*

The objective of this thematic review is to highlight the potential benefits and required processes for incorporating community-based monitoring into a national REDD+ monitoring initiative. We examine relevant literature and case studies of community-based monitoring of biodiversity, water quality, and forest biomass, in order to identify common challenges and lessons for REDD+.

### 7.2.1 Definition of community-based monitoring

According to Fernandez-Gimenez *et al.* (2008), “Community-based monitoring implies the direct involvement of community members in monitoring, either through their participation in collaborative monitoring efforts, or by training and contracting community members to carry out monitoring projects.” In this review, a community member is defined as a resident in or near an area of interest, and differentiates community members from external consultants who live in another city, province, or country. Additionally, this study recognizes that community-based monitoring can be initiated by community members to evaluate community initiatives such as forest management, or by external entities to evaluate larger landscape or regional-scale projects.

Community-based monitoring has been used to examine a number of forest elements including biodiversity, carbon stocks, cultural and religious points of interest, illegal extraction rates and timber and non-timber products (Effah *et al.*, 2011). Additionally it is broadly recognized that REDD+, as well as many other domestic policy initiatives, will require monitoring of non-carbon elements such as social safeguards (UNFCCC, 2010). These may include land tenure conflicts, respect for human rights, benefit sharing, and mechanisms to ensure participation. This review focuses principally on how communities can participate in the collection of biophysical data, while acknowledging other areas in which community members can contribute valuable information.

### 7.2.2 Community-based monitoring in the context of REDD+

As discussed in earlier chapters, the range of MRV systems and forest monitoring systems that are being developed for REDD+ will likely require monitoring of forest changes, forest carbon stocks, and ‘safeguards’ for biodiversity conservation and livelihood support (Danielsen and Theilade, 2011).

Community-based monitoring can be incorporated into these monitoring systems, and the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities is explicitly referred to in the UNFCCC Cancun Agreement (UNFCCC, 2010). However, the mechanisms by which communities will be involved in forest monitoring have not received much attention in the UNFCCC context. The potential roles that community-based monitoring can contribute to a national REDD+ monitoring system are outlined in Table 7.1, and will depend on a variety of factors including: forest tenure and resource use by the community, drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and policy and institutional frameworks.

Component of Monitoring System	Monitoring Options at the National Level	Potential Contribution of Community- Based Monitoring
<b>Forest Mapping and Stratification</b>	Map forests based on biophysical indicators and some broad management regimes	Map forests based on community tenure or site specific management
<b>Monitoring deforestation and reforestation</b>	Conduct remote sensing Carry out national forest inventory Collect data from forestry companies Calibrate or validate satellite imagery, and derived maps, with field crews	Observe the location, time, area and type of change events (in near real-time)  Collect regular measurements on the ground in near real-time  Calibrate or validate maps, and provide independent verification information
<b>Monitoring degradation, enhancement of forest carbon stocks</b>	Analyze historical data if available Conduct surveys on fuelwood and non-timber forest product (NTFP) use Carry out national forest inventory	Collect regular ground-based measurements of forest carbon stocks, and provide information on local forest timber/non-timber uses and activities
<b>Estimation of emission factors</b>	Deploy field crews to collect data Rely on research projects	Collect field data regularly over time
<b>Identification of drivers of change</b>	Make inferences regarding patterns of change and likely cause	Track types and patterns of local activities that cause change  Map tenure, management and land-use plans
<b>Data analysis and reporting</b>	Collect and standardize data from national and sub-national sources  Provide data to the public	Provide independent validation data for national reporting  Use data for local purposes

Table 7.1: Potential role for community-based monitoring in national monitoring systems (adapted from Pratihast and Herold, 2011)

### 7.2.3 Rationale for community-based monitoring for REDD+

While remote sensing is considered the most promising method for national scale assessments of forest change (Patenaude *et al.*, 2005; DeFries *et al.*, 2007; GOFC-GOLD, 2013), limitations exist that will require the use of many ground-based methods to accurately report on emissions from forest change and emission reductions from a REDD+ program. Remote sensing-based methods will need to be supplemented with a range of local-level monitoring for calibration and validation (Schelhas *et al.*, 2010) to develop emission factors and collect information on social and cultural indicators.

#### *Reliability*

The use of international teams of specialized personnel in the collection of ground-based data represents an expensive process, and approaches that involve local people can reduce costs, increase frequency of monitoring, provide benefits such as training and salaries, and facilitate the collection of information on difficult-to-observe metrics.



Recent studies have used community members and external consultants to quantify forest carbon stocks to compare the accuracy of community-based monitoring against a 'best practice' alternative (Van Laake, 2011). Results from 30 projects in 7 countries demonstrate that there is no significant difference in the accuracy between these two groups, once the community members have been trained in the required methods (Van Laake, 2011).

However, these studies also estimate that data collected by community members can have higher variability and lower precision than data collected by external counterparts experienced in forest inventories (Skutsch and McCall, 2011). This may be the result of the participating community members having expert knowledge of their own environment and resources, but generally less sophisticated data collection expertise (Skutsch and McCall, 2011).

#### *Cost Effectiveness*

Forest monitoring is one of the largest costs associated with REDD+ in developing countries and, therefore, identifying ways to reduce costs is vital (Skutsch *et al.*, 2011). A study by Larrazábal *et al.* (2011) estimated the costs of community-based monitoring to be one-third to half the cost of monitoring conducted by external consultants (including training costs). Other studies estimate that in the long run, costs of community-based monitoring are much lower compared to the costs associated with travel and salaries for external consultants (Rist *et al.*, 2010; Topp-Jørgensen *et al.*, 2005; Danielsen *et al.*, 2011). However, the monitoring costs depend on many factors, including the frequency and scale of monitoring and the opportunity costs for monitors.

Importantly, many of the costs associated with community monitoring occur in the initial stages of the project or initiative (Effah *et al.*, 2011). These costs include purchasing of equipment, setting up permanent sample plots, and training. Therefore, because these costs are constant and independent of the size or timeframe of the project, community monitoring is most cost effective for larger areas and projects that aim to monitor over at least several years (Effah *et al.*, 2011). One study suggests that a minimum size of 100 hectares is required to break even, relative to the transaction costs of setting up a community monitoring system (Danielsen *et al.*, 2011).

#### *Frequency*

Forest monitoring for REDD+ will require periodic collection of information, at intervals appropriate for the forest type and management regime. Community members located in and around areas of interest are well positioned to monitor over longer periods of time and with higher frequency than several other options, such as a national forest service entity or visiting technical consultants (Rist *et al.*, 2010). More frequent monitoring of forest conditions and changes can improve the statistical and scientific reliability of the resulting data, particularly in forests undergoing rapid change (Danielsen *et al.*, 2011).

#### *Sensitivity to local context*

Community members can have detailed knowledge of their local surroundings including an awareness of small scale variations in management (Dalle *et al.*, 2006). Additionally, community members are often knowledgeable regarding drivers of local forest changes (Van Laake, 2011). As a result, communities are well positioned to observe the impacts of human use on forest and forest carbon and gauge the influence of management or policy implementation.

#### *Understanding of social and cultural impacts*

The success of REDD+ will depend on both accurate and transparent forest monitoring of carbon emissions and removals and on non-carbon elements such as the safeguards outlined in the Cancun Agreements (UNFCCC, 2010). Community members are well positioned to collect information on a broader range of metrics beyond carbon that may be needed for potential REDD+ or national forest management policy implementation (Pratihast and Herold, 2011). These metrics include socio-economic information (e.g.,



biomass energy use, food production), governance (e.g., benefit sharing processes, mechanisms for participation in decision making), and biodiversity (e.g., species observations, habitat changes).

#### *Provision of benefits to communities*

Involving local community members in forest monitoring can lead to additional benefits such as transparency, increased ownership of mitigation actions, improved social and environmental safeguards, cultural relevance of monitoring approaches, strengthened capacity of local institutions, access to resources, and employment opportunities (Danielson *et al.*, 2011). Thus, participation of community members can lead to the long-term sustainability of interventions and of monitoring initiatives. Table 7.2 discusses the comparative advantage of local communities in forest monitoring projects.

Monitoring Component	External Consultants	Local Community Members
<b>Costs</b>	High; includes professional fees, travel and accommodation costs	High initial set-up and training costs followed by relatively lower salary, travel and accommodation costs over time
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	Usually poor; local guides and translators usually needed	Good; residents typically know the area well in terms of access, logistics, local authorities, laws and species
<b>Data Quality</b>	Good	Good; dependent on appropriate training and data verification
<b>Consistency</b>	Potentially low if the same consultants cannot continue monitoring over the lifespan of the project, or the same methods are not adhered to	Potentially high if the same team members, or at least the same coordination, can be maintained
<b>Frequency and Intensity</b>	Usually low; it is very costly for external experts to spend long periods in the field, or return to carry out measurements frequently over time	High; even if sampling is done part-time, substantial travel and set-up time is saved and monitoring can be carried out frequently
<b>Additional benefits</b>	Low; usually limited to technical input	High; monitoring by locals creates ownership, adds to the capacity of local residents, and offers opportunities to improve management
<b>Management</b>	Expected to be good	Potential areas of concern in many communities
<b>Initial training</b>	Low; assumes that professional teams need little preparation	High; takes more time to identify, train and equip teams
<b>Collection of other data</b>	Generally poor; very challenging to understand local socio-economy and culture, time consuming to collect the data	Good; built-in knowledge of local economy and culture, easy to collect information and monitor changes

Table 7.2: Advantages and disadvantages of community-based and expert-based monitoring (from Knowles *et al.*, 2010; adapted from Larrazábal *et al.*, 2011)

### 7.2.4 Lessons from case studies

This section presents a synthesis of cases in which communities have been involved in forest monitoring, either for REDD+, or for other metrics that might be relevant to a REDD+ program. In addition, the common challenges and lessons for scaling up to the national level are discussed. The cases are also summarized in Table 7.3.

### *Locally driven versus externally driven monitoring*

Several of the studies examined the application of community-based monitoring where a community had set up (or was in the process of setting up) a system for managing common forest resources (Topp-Jørgensen *et al.*, 2005; Mukama *et al.*, 2012; Hartanto *et al.*, 2002). In this case, monitoring is used as a mechanism to track the performance of the management initiatives; this is also referred to as autonomous local monitoring (Danielsen *et al.*, 2008). The scope of local monitoring initiatives is tailored to local priorities and is usually not as in-depth as will be required for REDD+ monitoring (McCall, 2003). However, community-based monitoring could, with the right incentives and training, be extended to include collaborative monitoring of carbon stocks and fluxes that contribute to externally-driven REDD+ requirements (Lawrence and Elphick, 2002).

There are also cases where community-based monitoring is initiated for national inventories or national research purposes (Skutsch and Trines, 2011). This type of monitoring has also been termed “micro-macro monitoring” (Ojha and Bhattarai, 2003) and “externally driven monitoring with local data collection” (Danielsen *et al.*, 2008). Examples include the event-book system in Namibia (Stuart-Hill *et al.*, 2005) and bird censuses in Kenya (Bennun *et al.*, 2005). This type of monitoring will be important for REDD+, which will require monitoring forest area gain, loss, and stock change over large landscapes (Skutsch and Solis, 2011). However, in the case where community members are not already actively engaged in forest management, sufficient upfront resources and training may be necessary to effectively establish a community-based monitoring system.

### *Standards and Protocols*

Monitoring for REDD+ will necessitate consistent and comparable data collection across sub-national jurisdictions. To achieve robust and consistent data collection, clear standards and protocols must be developed that local communities can easily learn and implement. Stuart-Hill *et al.* (2005) present an example highlighting the successful harmonization of scaling up data collection. The authors present a case from Namibia where communities were provided adaptable but standardized data collection guidance. As participating communities used the same methods, the data could be aggregated and compared nationally.

### *Capacity building*

The literature on community-based monitoring demonstrates that community members can reliably collect data on forests once basic training is provided. This training may include forest inventory methods, data recording, and use of equipment (e.g., maps, Global Positioning System [GPS] units, cameras). The Kyoto: Think Global, Act Local (K:TGAL) research and capacity building program, for example, found that training can take place over a short period of time; even one week of field-based training can be sufficient to collect data for forest inventories (Skutsch *et al.*, 2009).

A review of literature by Effah *et al.* (2011) suggests that a phased approach to community monitoring may be most effective. Such a system would first build participant’s capacity for forest monitoring, through intensive training and ‘learning by doing’ in which external consultants demonstrate principles and tasks to community members. Consultants can then continue supervision and support of more challenging tasks, such as statistical sampling, using complex computer equipment, and setting up permanent sample plots (Skutsch and Trines, 2011).

### *Incentives*

Community-based monitoring is unlikely to be sustainable unless the benefits of participating in a monitoring program outweigh the costs (Skutsch *et al.*, 2011). External support in the form of salaries and skill building for employment will be necessary to incentivize forest monitoring (Evans and Guariguata, 2008; Rist *et al.*, 2010). The case studies examined here provided between \$1 and \$7 per day to participants. However, only two of the studies addressed whether these costs were sufficient to overcome the opportunity costs of lost wages, and both found that the amount provided were not sufficient (Andrianandrasana *et al.*, 2005; Mukama

*et al.*, 2012). This indicates that existing payment structures may not be sufficient to support community-based monitoring in the long-term.

#### *Technical systems and equipment*

All of the case studies examined employed some form of advanced technology such as GPS or computer software for collecting and storing data. McCall (2011) argues that these technologies put local knowledge ‘on par’ with knowledge from outside experts. Benefits of using these systems include increased accuracy, reduced data loss, systematic data collection, simplification of validation, capture of media such as photos or audio, skill development of participants, and easy data sharing (Parmer Fry, 2011).

Depending on the circumstances of the study area, such as access to electricity and internet or comfort level of community members with sophisticated software platforms, different approaches regarding the use of advanced technologies can be used. For example, the SocioBosque program in Ecuador addresses the issue of exposure to GPS-enabled cell phones by grouping forest guards, hunters, and a mix of youth and elders chosen by the community into monitoring teams. By including a cross section of the community, the respective knowledge and strengths of each participant are shared amongst the group. Forest guards are comfortable with the technology, younger participants learned to use the systems more readily, and elders and hunters have more experience with species identification and in-depth historical knowledge (Cerdeira, 2012).

#### *Quality assessment and control*

In order to incorporate forest monitoring into a national GHG inventory and reporting system, a quality control system should be put in place to assess the accuracy of data collected by local community members. For example, in the Scolel Tè project in Mexico, 10 percent of community-based monitoring is verified by project technical staff. If inconsistencies or inaccuracies are identified, additional training is provided (Scolel Tè, 2008).

#### *Data management and aggregation systems*

For data from local monitoring systems to be useful at larger geographic scales, a database system is needed that enables local data to be uploaded and shared (Pratihast and Herold, 2011). Effah *et al.* (2011) found that many projects demonstrate successful aggregation of data across sub-national jurisdictions into a central database. The Sofala Community Carbon Project in Mozambique, for example, will feed data on forest carbon stocks into Mozambique’s national GHG inventory (Envirotrade, 2010).

Additionally, data management systems should be designed to ensure that data collected by local community members is securely managed, and how the information collected will be used is clearly defined (CIGA-REDD, 2011). Further, data must be retained by community members so they can use it in their own decision-making processes (Stuart-Hill *et al.*, 2005). Data is frequently sent “upward” to be analyzed and used for management, but the results of this analysis and its broader implications are not communicated clearly to communities (Ojha and Bhattarai, 2003). Providing feedback knowledge will contribute to planning, allow communities to assess tradeoffs between alternative forest uses and enable the evaluation of management impacts on forest resources.

## **7.2.5 Conclusion**

Community-based monitoring has several potential roles in the future of REDD+, provided countries assess the rights, roles and relationships between communities and the broader social, cultural, and environmental context of communities and forests. Several considerations in designing community-based components of REDD+ monitoring include: consulting with communities on the purpose of monitoring for REDD+; developing clear processes for engaging communities; designing information sharing systems that integrate with REDD+ (social and environmental) safeguards processes; and the provision of capacity building on, and periodic quality assessment of, community-based monitoring activities.

As discussed above, recent research has demonstrated that data collected via community-based monitoring can be as reliable and policy-relevant as data collected by external technical consultants. In addition, monitoring carried out by community members enables and supports their participation in developing and implementing national REDD+ strategies, an explicit mandate of the Cancun Agreements (Paragraph 72). Finally, while community-based monitoring can contribute to a REDD+ MRV system at the national level, the system must be supported by appropriate incentives, standards, data aggregation systems and capacity building.

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Table 7.3: Case studies of community monitoring

Case Study	Location	What information was gathered?	Who conducted the monitoring?	What standards were used?	What equipment was used?	What training was provided to participants?	What incentives were provided to monitors?	Who conducted data compiling and analysis?	How was data aggregated at the national or regional level?	What was the cost of project?	Summary
Holck 2008	Uluguru North Forest Reserve, Tanzania	Tree diameter at breast height, basal area, disturbance (determined by burns, cuts, stumps)	Four elected participants from each village (two members of village environment committee, two members of WCS Tanzania)	Three methods of monitoring flora disturbance- the 20-tress methods, the Bitterlich gauge method and the Disturbance Checklist transect	Measuring tapes, pen and paper, Bitterlich gauge, ropes	Half-day and full day training and some follow-up supervision	Participants received approximately \$6.25 per day, additionally participation conferred knowledge and prestige	Study authors	No aggregation	Once training has been done, costs for monitoring forest disturbance are estimated to be between \$0.04 - \$0.12/ha/yr.	Participants with full day training and supervision collected data similar to 'expert' counterparts. costs of local monitoring would enable more frequent and sustainable data collection
Topp-Jørgensen <i>et al.</i> , 2005	Iringa District, Tanzania	Resource use, disturbance, abundance of indicator species, information on resource use, records of user permits and fees, records of meetings and trainings	Village Natural Resource Committees	Locally developed protocols	Not specified	Guidance in developing system provided by the District government and the Danish Assistance Program	Monitors paid ~ \$1/day. Other incentives include recognition of the value for water quality and increased prestige.	Village Natural Resource Committees	Monitoring data and local management decisions were reported monthly to higher administrative levels, and all records are kept publicly available at the village	Estimated \$3 million for the entire project- not specified which portion of this went to setting up the monitoring system	Village Natural Resource Committees managed monitoring and data analysis, and as a result were able to rapidly turn around quick management decisions based on this information

Danielsen <i>et al.</i> , 2000	Three protected areas- Northern Sierra Madre, Bataan, M. Kitanglad- Philippines	Change in number and frequency of sightings of listed designated species and resource use, change in size of vegetation types, change in perceived harvest volume in biodiversity impacting activities	Between 24 - 36 staff per park including the park superintendent, host NGOs, local forest guards and community members	Multiple methods developed- field diary, photo documentation, transect walk, focus group discussions. Standards and methods were developed through national collaborative process and field testing. A Manual for each field method and indicator was prepared.	Notebook, pen, field guide, binoculars, camera, compass, film, altimeter, GPS, paint, watch, data sheets, string, tape measure	Capacity built over a period of three years. Stakeholders involved in the development and testing of methodologies. Regular visits by outside experts were made for assistance and supervision	Salaries were paid to park staff, amount not specified	All park staff are involved in compiling the data. The head of the protected area gathers and analyzes the data, and directly makes management decisions based on this result	The system for monitoring protected areas was being scaled to other priority protected areas at the time of writing.	Not specified	Important that the staff responsible for monitoring are different from those responsible for enforcement (in order to engage local communities effectively).  Involvement of park staff throughout the development and testing of methodologies is key to buy in and long term capacity
Andrianandrasana <i>et al.</i> , 2005	Alaotra wetlands, Madagascar	Data on lemurs, waterbirds, fish catches, march areas, and hunting rates	Organized by Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust. Teams of 10 villagers and 7 technicians (from regional water and forest services, fishery service, and development NGOs)	Data collected via transects, interviews, catch observations, and species observation and identification. Standard methods were used across the 16 sites	Canoe, maps, binoculars, GPS, compass, bird field guide, weighing scales, site management plans, lemur field guide	Monitoring participants are trained upfront and then employed again in subsequent years. No further detail on the type of content of training provided	Participants earned ~ \$2/day. This is less than income from fishing- may have been attractive because the employment conferred special status as a technical expert	The information was presented to the general public through community meetings and on the radio	Monitoring data presented orally to the public and data sheets kept by local authorities.	All costs approximately \$5,000/yr. (\$0.21/ha/yr.)	Local authorities demonstrated adaptive response to information collected- for example marsh fires were reduced over the course of the project.



Bennun <i>et al.</i> , 2005	49 sites in Kenya	Effectiveness of IBA conservation areas via monitoring of populations of relevant species and threats to these species (including habitat area, deforestation, number of conservation staff)	Bird Life 'Site Support Group' staff- local autonomous partners of Bird Life International made up of government staff and 'other knowledgeable individuals'	IBAs provide forms with indicator (e.g. habitat quality, number of conservation staff) and space for scoring improvement or deterioration in that indicator. Additionally, detailed site-specific monitoring encouraged, where method varied by site	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified- some financial support provided to site support groups from Bird Life International	Central IBA unit compiles data, checks it, and adds other research to develop an overall score of improvement or deterioration of indicators	Bird Life International develops national IBA status reports using data from each IBA. Additionally Bird Life International forwards the country report to the international secretariat to compile in a world database.	Not specified	This method is subjective and difficult to standardize, something that Bird Life has recognized and is working to improve.
Poulsen and Luanglath, 2005	Xe Pian Biodiversity Conservation Area, Laos	Walk through focusing on list of priority species, villager interviews to determine perceptions of status and trends in hunted wildlife species and non-timber forest products, joint monitoring by villagers and protect area staff	Depending on the method teams of 2-6 villagers selected during village meeting, and protected area staff	Wildlife Conservation Society established, together with conservation area staff and villagers, a monitoring method, though standards were not strictly enforced and three main methods were used	Not specified	Conservation area staff were trained in biodiversity monitoring and awareness raising, and can use the main monitoring methods	Conservation area staff paid annual salary, external support provided for logistics and field allowances of \$5 per day. Villagers were not paid  Monitoring stopped once external funding stopped	Monitoring forms and reports filed at the Park Management Unit's office	Not specified	A week of monitoring, including 4-5 villages, costs approximately \$100. This equivalent to approximately \$0.017/ha/yr	A combination of various methods may be the best way to get a holistic representation of resource use and abundance  Strong relationships between villagers and park staff builds trust, leading to cooperation and improved co-management

Noss <i>et al.</i> , 2005	Kaa-lya del Gran Chaco National Park, Bolivia	Species abundance, catch per unit effort rates, catch size, weight and age	Wildlife Conservation Society organized and supported the project in collaboration with Park administration. Active hunters and community members conducted monitoring	Hunters carry data sheets with them on hunting excursions to record information. Community members also carry out line transect surveys of nine principal game species	Data sheets, pens, tape measures, spring scales. GPS used to record hunting locations	Training is provided, details not specified	Hunters initially participated on volunteer basis, after 6 months the program hired 7-10 individuals on a part time basis in each community	Community monitors analyze data monthly and summarize data every 6-12 months. Community meetings held to present the results and discuss possible interventions	Study authors use data to extrapolate from the number of hunters participating to the total number of hunters in the park	Approximately \$50,000 per year for salaries, supplies and transportation costs (\$0.015/ha/yr.)	
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Mukama <i>et al.</i> , 2012	Three villages within the Angai Villages Land Forest Reserve, Tanzania	Participator forest mapping, forest transect walks to stratify forest into vegetation types, permanent sample plots to measure biomass in trees over time	Eight villagers were selected in each community	Participatory Rural Appraisal to map forest area, group discussions to gauge communities willingness to be involved	Forest inventory equipment including diameter taps, tape measures, calipers, relascopes, GPS, hypsometers, also gumboots, transportation	Participatory rural appraisal and focus group discussion methods were used to introduce concepts and research objectives, and gauge interest. Training was provided on using GPS, establishing permanent sample plots, forest inventory methods, use of equipment	Approximately \$4/day ( this was not seen as sufficient to cover opportunity costs of participants-community members proposed ~ \$15/day for future work)	Calculations of tree volume and biomass using locally derived or generalized allometric equations completed by study authors	Not specified	\$0.56 - \$0.84/ha/monitoring event	<p>Challenges included using GPS to mark vegetation strata boundaries, calculating sample size requirements, and determining transect and permanent sample plot locations</p> <p>Some of these challenges could have been due to the short training time allocated</p> <p>Successful implementation will depend on collaboration between local communities and facilitating organizations for GIS and carbon data analysis</p>
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Hartanto <i>et al.</i> , 2002	San Rafael Tanabag and Concepcion Multipurpose Cooperative, Philippines	Information on social and environmental criteria, including education quality, income sources, strengthened organizations, and forest and coastal management	Monitoring framework developed during three workshops and discussions with local people's organization, village council representatives, and department of environment and natural resources officials. Local people's organizations conducted monitoring	Indicators developed for each criteria, for example number of pupils in school via school reports, monthly income via surveys, financial reports via organization record books, and number of trees via data reports	Not specified- varied by type of data collection	Participants involved in developing criteria and indicators, so awareness is high and methods in line with existing capabilities	Not specified	Monitoring results shared through monthly meetings, quarterly newsletters, and community bulletin boards. More training needed to gauge success of management	Not specified- primary goal is to feedback data to local communities, so aggregation not prioritized	Not specified	Wide range of required indicator data highlights needs for highly varied skill set for data collection
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Stuart-Hill 2005	30 community conservancies in six national parks, Namibia	Protocols for monitoring 21 themes have been developed, including for example rainfall, events of fire, poaching, wildlife mortalities, fish or predator abundance, etc., depending on community priorities	Field staff (conservancies members)	The communities involved decided what indicators to monitor (via community workshops), standards for monitoring 21 standard themes have been developed and kits containing tools for data collection, reporting and analysis of long term trends are made available to local communities	All forms are paper-based, and copied for archival in a storage box	Training is provided on data collection and reporting	Not specified	All data compilation and analysis is conducted by local communities. Each year totals are transferred to a form to evaluate long-term trends. Community rangers collect data, report this to natural resource supervisors, who in turn report to conservancy manager or elected chairman	Each year the data from each community is copied to a national monitoring and evaluation database belonging to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and used for strategic decision making such as quota setting, allocation of technical support, or compliance monitoring	Not specified	Traditionally there were long time lags before the results of data analysis was returned to communities, and the graphs and tables were not intuitively understood by community members  Where monitoring is driven by local priorities it may not be comprehensive; where society deems other indicators worth monitoring appropriate incentives must be provided
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## 7.3 NEAR-REAL TIME MONITORING AND ALERT SYSTEMS

*Author: John Musinsky*

### 7.3.1 Introduction

Near real-time (NRT) forest monitoring involves the tracking of forest threats or disturbances to minimize the lag time between monitoring observations and the dissemination of critical information necessary for responding, intervening and reducing the impacts of detected threats. By enabling a rapid response to deforestation, degradation, wildfire, and potentially other phenomena “in-action”, NRT forest monitoring can strengthen enforcement and governance at local levels. NRT alerts facilitate distribution of information in a streamlined user-customized form that can help overcome communication bottlenecks. Such monitoring increases transparency and may deter future activities that contribute to forest loss or degradation. NRT forest monitoring and the distribution of alerts, combined with community-based monitoring, facilitate effective forest management while ensuring local customs and rights are respected. Satellite and mobile technologies are also continually evolving, bringing new opportunities for employing multiple streams of NRT forest monitoring data for decision support and use in Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) systems.

NRT monitoring is not a requirement for national greenhouse gas (GHG) reporting or inclusion in a national MRV system, though there are significant benefits that can come from the application of NRT as part of MRV, and many countries are considering including NRT monitoring in the development of their National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS). NRT monitoring need not be part of the data analysis that produces quantitative estimates of forest cover and GHG emissions; instead, it represents an additional monitoring component that enables more efficient enforcement and governance, and more rapid adjustment of REDD+ strategies to changing circumstances. There is also much potential for linking NRT monitoring with community-based monitoring and community-based management, where local communities either receive NRT information, or contribute to NRT monitoring via analysis or confirmation. Many countries could benefit from the possibilities presented by NRT monitoring within their national forest management and monitoring strategies. This section summarizes the characteristics of NRT monitoring, and describes some of the more advanced satellite-based NRT applications and case studies.

### 7.3.2 Background

Remote sensing-based NRT forest monitoring and alert systems are among the most underutilized tools for helping manage and protect forest resources. A range of publically available satellite image resources exist that can be adapted to NRT analysis and reporting, providing a platform for NRT surveillance of forest resources. NRT forest monitoring complements the periodic (annual or decadal) remote sensing-based analysis of forest extent and change conducted as part of MRV. It provides an effective project implementation and adaptive management tool for responding to immediate forest threats, thus ensuring as much forest carbon is protected as possible.

In addition to the many REDD+-related benefits, NRT forest monitoring can provide multiple, indirect benefits due to its rapid-response nature. Public access to NRT information on the existence and rate of expansion of a deforestation or forest degradation activity increases transparency about the effectiveness of institutions responsible for controlling such activity, thus strengthening public pressure for improved governance and reform. Knowledge that illegal forest activity can be tracked in almost real-time helps deter future illegal activity when those involved realize that their assumed difficult-to-monitor practices can, in fact, be monitored and thwarted. Frequent NRT alerts that track and facilitate active reporting on patterns of new deforestation, encroachment, fire and logging throughout the year help institutions design management plans

that accommodate the intra- and inter-annual variability in spatial and temporal patterns of fire and associated deforestation and illegal logging activity. Finally, NRT forest monitoring helps address issues of sustainable commodity value chains by providing timely information, highlighting risks associated with supply chains of commercial crops such as palm oil.

### 7.3.3 Existing near real-time forest monitoring satellite technologies

There are a range of existing and planned satellite technologies that are uniquely suited to providing NRT information due to their spatial and temporal characteristics. Optical remote sensing data are generally the most suitable data for NRT monitoring because: i) moderately trained remote sensing analysts can readily detect and interpret changes to forest extent and structure when using optical data; ii) the individual image footprints from optical instruments are generally larger and have a shorter re-visit time, resulting in regular and more frequent image availability; iii) the image archives are spatially and temporally more complete; and 4) optical data are generally cheaper.

Most satellite imagery used for forest monitoring in the tropics is acquired by sensors onboard polar-orbiting satellites such as Landsat, CBERS, Terra and Aqua, of which the latter two carry the MODIS instrument as a payload. And, while polar-orbiting satellites (orbiting at an altitude of less than 1000km) provide a cost-effective approach to gathering comprehensive, planet-wide imagery, one disadvantage of polar-orbiting satellites for NRT monitoring is the resultant temporal gaps in the data record. This is particularly true for instruments such as Landsat, CBERS, etc., with higher spatial resolutions, but lower temporal resolutions. An alternate source of NRT remote sensing data are geostationary satellites (satellites that hover continually over the same point on the ground as the earth revolves, providing uninterrupted observations of the ground). However, to maintain their geosynchronous orbits, most geostationary satellites are located at an altitude of around 35,000km, yielding coarse pixel resolution that limits their utility for monitoring small-scale forest disturbance like slash-and-burn deforestation or degradation. Geostationary satellite data are nevertheless useful for NRT detection of fires due to the thermal sensitivities of the detectors, and future geostationary satellites (e.g., GOES-R, FY-4) with 1km *visible* and *near-infrared* bands may be more suitable for uninterrupted NRT monitoring of moderate-scale forest activity.

Both RADAR and LiDAR data have unique attributes that may make them useful for NRT monitoring in certain circumstances; these include a RADAR instrument's ability to see through clouds -- a major advantage in perennially cloud-covered areas -- and the forest structure information provided by both RADAR and LiDAR instruments, which can be useful when monitoring subtle changes due to forest degradation. However, the technical challenges inherent in processing and interpreting RADAR data, the lack of frequent acquisition or comprehensive spatial coverage of LiDAR data, and the high cost of both RADAR and LiDAR mean these are currently not practical as NRT data sources.

### 7.3.4 Technical considerations for NRT monitoring systems

Effective NRT monitoring depends on the following conditions: i) access to frequent or continuous contaminant-free/cloud-free data for both automated and Manual interpretation; ii) data with adequate spatial resolution to enable the direct detection of a forest disturbance activity in progress (e.g., fire), or the indirect detection of disturbance post-activity in terms of altered physical forest structure or biomass lost; iii) minimal lag time between the disturbance and resultant detection to enable effective action; and iv) when monitoring represents part of a field-based response or enforcement, sufficient geographical precision to enable ground-based personnel to navigate to the location where the disturbance occurred. As part of this process, NRT monitoring data may be validated using independent, field-based information to determine its accuracy. Each condition is discussed in detail below.

### *Cloud-free data*

Cloud contamination represents one of the biggest challenges in using optical satellite imagery for NRT forest monitoring. To compensate for excessive cloud contamination or temporal gaps in the data records of high-resolution satellite data, alternative data acquisition and processing strategies may be used. For example, co-analysis may be performed using multiple data sources (such as Landsat with ASTER, CBERS or SPOT) over the same geographical areas and time frames. However, care must be used when co-analyzing multiple data sources with different spatial resolutions as certain small-scale activities may be detected in the higher resolution but not the lower resolution data. If, for example, recently acquired higher resolution data are co-analyzed with older, lower-resolution data, “false-positive” detections may result from what appears to be new activity that is, in fact, older disturbance.

### *Spatial resolution*

The spatial resolution of the satellite data must match the scale of the landuse or resource extraction activity contributing to deforestation or forest degradation. Generally, multiple pixels of optical data are required to effectively delineate features on the ground. For example, very small-scale activities require high-resolution satellite data such as RapidEye (6.5m), SPOT-5 (5-10m), SPOT-6 (1.5-6m), IKONOS (1-4m), Quickbird (0.7-2.4m) or GeoEye-1 (0.5-1.65m). Read (2003) and Read *et al.* (2003) used visual interpretation of 1m panchromatic and 4m multispectral IKONOS data, as well as merged products based on these data, to identify activities associated with Reduced Impact Logging (RIL), in Amazonas, Brazil. These activities included road openings and treefall gaps. Medium-scale imagery, such as 15m resolution pan-sharpened Landsat imagery can also be useful in detecting moderate-scale forest activities like slash-and-burn agriculture on the order of 0.25-0.50 hectares. 30m, i.e., native resolution, Landsat images can be used to classify patches of deforestation 0.75 hectares and larger.

The relationship between pixel size and an observed phenomenon is somewhat different for the detection of active fires. Thermal channels on many earth-observing satellite platforms are designed to accurately detect the large quantities of thermal radiation (heat) emitted from ground-fires. These thermal bands have pixels that cover much larger areas than the fires they are able to detect. For example, field studies in different environments and under different viewing conditions have shown that the 1km resolution thermal bands on MODIS are able to accurately detect open ground fires covering an area of only 100m<sup>2</sup> when their temperature is sufficiently high and where observing conditions are good (Giglio *et al.*, 2003).

### *Latency*

To effectively contribute to field-based responses to undesirable or illegal forest activity, including the deployment of environmental law enforcement officials or the coordination of community-based monitoring personnel, the satellite data used to detect forest activities must be acquired, interpreted, and reported with minimal time delay. Latency refers to the delay between satellite observation and product delivery to users. The National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA)’s Near Real Time Processing Effort (NRTPE) for Earth Observation System (EOS) products utilizes data with very short latencies, on the order of two to three hours for MODIS data (O’Neal, 2005). Landsat 8 images are available for download within 12 hours of acquisition, while Landsat 7 processing averages 1-3 days between image acquisition and distribution. ASTER scenes are only available to the user 7-10 days after acquisition. In addition to the satellite data latency, a time lag often exists between the actual forest activity and the moment the satellite observes the disturbance. Though this time lag may in theory be small – for example a maximum of four hours when using MODIS data to monitor fires or up to 21 days when using Landsat to monitor deforestation – in practice, the lag time may be substantially longer if cloud cover exists and additional satellite image acquisitions are required before cloud-free data are available. Finally, a lag exists during the image analysis phase and in distribution of data to end-users. This lag time may be very short when employing automated analytical processing systems, or considerably longer when the analysis is performed Manually (either through computer-assisted classifications or Manual digitizing). The sum of all these sources of delay is the functional latency of the NRT monitoring system.



In addition to spatial resolution, latency is one of the factors that will determine the effectiveness of the system. And as mentioned, there is a trade-off between spatial resolution and temporal resolution: the higher the spatial resolution, the lower the temporal resolution; the lower the temporal resolution, the longer the gaps between repeat data acquisitions; the longer the gaps, the greater the latency and the less effective the system will be for rapid response. Latency is particularly important when tracking forest degradation as the spectral signal can rapidly disappear due to vegetation regrowth. Nevertheless, a system can still be useful for guiding adaptive management activities even when latency is high.

#### *Precision and validation*

High-resolution satellite imagery such as Landsat are usually pre-processed by satellite data providers to a maximum root mean square (RMS) error of less than 50m, and the geographic locations of forest activity detected with these data are sufficiently precise that field personnel using a consumer-grade GPS can track and locate the activity based on the reported locations extracted from the imagery. In contrast, the geographic locations of active fire detections produced by MODIS are determined by the center point of the 1km<sup>2</sup> thermal channel pixel. The actual location of the fire detected by MODIS may be located up to 500m from the centerpoint of the pixel, complicating navigation to the reported fire activity.

The accuracy of many NRT forest monitoring products often lacks systematic validation. This is partly due to the nature of near real-time information where the primary concern is speed of data delivery. However, accuracy is a critical factor in building and sustaining user confidence in NRT products; if data accuracy is questionable, it can negatively impact the provider institution and, more broadly, undermine people's willingness to use NRT data as a source of information for decision making. In certain cases, governments have refused to use data from NRT forest monitoring systems that have not been officially vetted or designated as a certified data provider.

Given the prevalence worldwide of GPS-enabled mobile smart phone technology and data sharing through blogs and social networks, there is now ample opportunity for users to collect field observations (e.g., GPS-tagged photos) and provide feedback for validation of NRT forest monitoring data. Some existing NRT monitoring systems are being configured to capture this information via smart phone applications and blogs. Developing privacy safeguards and field data verification controls are a critical part of this process, both to guarantee the safety of individuals submitting information (e.g., reporting on illegal forest activity) and to ensure that field data are accurate.

### **7.3.5 Examples of existing NRT forest monitoring systems**

NRT monitoring with earth observation satellite data can help overcome many challenges associated with reducing illegal or undesirable forest activities and their impacts, while strengthening decision support activities aimed at prevention, preparedness, and response to deforestation, encroachment and fire related to REDD+. NRT monitoring plays a critical role in alerting park administrators, field-based forest managers, patrols, local NGOs and local communities of wildfire activity, and enhances the ability of national and sub-national governments to respond to threats in a strategic manner. Fire risk forecasts are important in facilitating advanced preparation aimed at averting, reducing and managing deforestation related to out-of-control wildfire. The monitoring of deforestation, encroachment, fire incidence and fire risk provides critical summary and trend data to help inform policy, planning and land management decisions. Several NRT monitoring systems are described below.

#### *CI Fire Alert / Fire Risk / Deforestation and Encroachment Alert Systems*

A partnership between Conservation International (CI), the University of Maryland (UMD) and host-country institutions enabled the development of a suite of NRT fire and deforestation monitoring and forecasting applications that channeled satellite observations directly to international users responsible for decision-making activities and actions related to wildfires. These applications included: the Fire Alert System (FAS), the Fire Risk System and the Deforestation and Encroachment Alert System. Operating from 2003-2013,

FAS was an automated and customizable alert delivery system based on MODIS active fire data generated by NASA that provided subscribers with a range of products tailored to their needs (Figure 7.3). The Fire Risk System was an automated daily risk model that estimated moisture fluctuations in litter fuels on the forest floor with daily inputs from MODIS and other weather satellites. The Deforestation and Encroachment Alert System was a NRT alert system founded on rapid analysis of Landsat and ASTER imagery. In 2014, these systems were integrated into a new, single monitoring, forecasting and alert system, Firecast<sup>48</sup>, described below.

With more than 1,300 subscribers from 45 countries, users of these monitoring systems developed critical applications for NRT data and alerts in forest law enforcement, protected areas management, REDD+ forest carbon projects, community education, and policy development related to conservation and sustainable development, among others (NASA 2010, Musinsky *et al.* 2013).

FAS began in 2002, delivering email alerts using MODIS active fire observations from UMD's Web Fire Mapper overlaid on all protected areas in Brazil, Bolivia, Madagascar, Namibia, Paraguay, South Africa and Tanzania. In 2007, an automated version of FAS for Madagascar began sending real-time data generated by MODIS RapidFire to field personnel and government agencies responsible for natural areas management, fire suppression, and forest conversion. FAS has since expanded to include Bolivia, Peru and the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Kalimantan. It also added public access to suspected illegal activity alerts generated for parks in Indonesia, and included email attachments with custom images, text files, GIS shapefiles and GoogleEarth KML files of fires occurring within user-defined areas of interest, with access to online reports and maps.

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<sup>48</sup> <http://firecast.conservation.org>

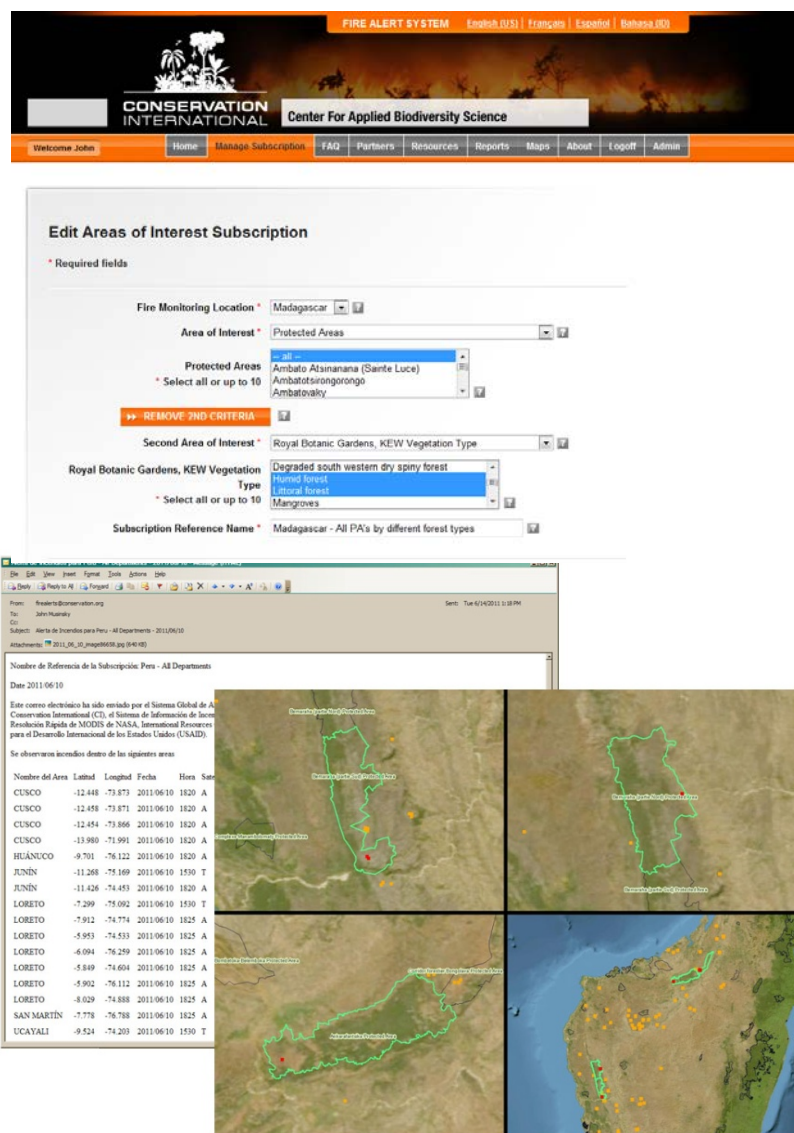


Figure 7.3. A subscription and user management page for a fire-alert system (top) and a sample email alert and jpg attachment notifying fire activity in a user-specified area of interest (bottom).

The Fire Risk System is an online application using satellite bioclimatology to model forest flammability (Steininger *et al.*, 2013). The model is based on the relationship between moisture content and flammability of fuels on the forest floor (i.e., litter and woody debris), and fuel moisture fluctuates with rainfall events, temperature and humidity. The model assumes that fuel is ignitable at moisture contents of 20 percent or less, based on decades of field experiments by the US Forest Service that quantitatively describe the relationship between fuel moisture and flammability risk. The Fire Risk System uses NRT satellite estimates as inputs to the US Forest Service Fire Danger Rating System equations for estimating the moisture content of fuels. Daily maps of forest flammability at 5km resolution are generated based on the previous day's fuel moisture content and the current day's air climate conditions and are distributed through FireCast (Figure 7.4).

The satellite observations used in this model represent rainfall duration from 'TRMM 3B42RT' and near-surface temperature and relative humidity from MODIS MOD07L2 Atmospheric Profiles. The model runs nightly and pulls MODIS and TRMM data to generate maps of fire risk, daily rainfall sum, days since last rainfall and the commonly used Keetch-Byram Drought Index. The model outputs are currently used by

Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza in Bolivia, and the Bolivian forestry department for district and community level communications.

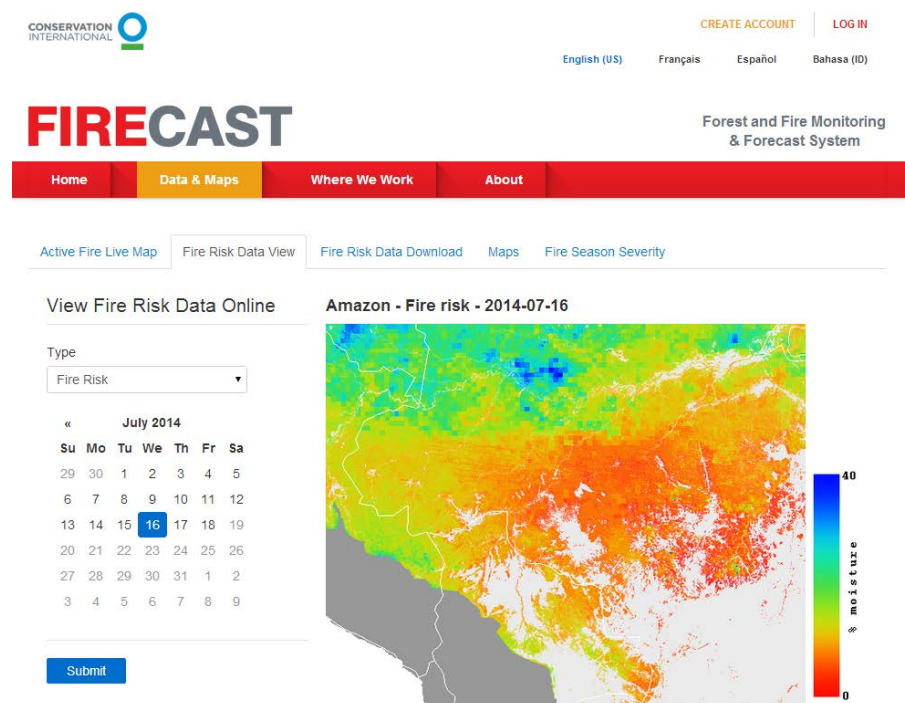


Figure 7.4. Example of forest flammability model outputs used in an alert system. Spatial patterns of daily moisture content for coarse fuels, a useful indicator of fire risk. Data are for July 16, 2014. Areas from yellow to red indicate moisture values of 20 percent or less, indicating increasing flammability. Light grey is non- forest (N), medium grey is forest above 500m ASL (F), and dark grey areas are water (W)<sup>49</sup>. The Deforestation and Encroachment Alert System used the same approach as that of FAS: NRT delivery of suspected illegal forest activity observations to a range of in-country stakeholders who utilize the information for rapid response. Landsat and ASTER satellite archives were continually surveyed, and as new data became available the images were downloaded and analyzed for evidence of encroachment occurring within 2.8 million hectares of protected areas and REDD+ sites in Indonesia and Madagascar. The deforestation and encroachment alerts (Figure 7.1) complemented the fire alerts; while the high-resolution data of Landsat and ASTER are characterized by much greater latency than MODIS imagery, they permitted delineation of deforested areas where fire activity had been detected by MODIS. Reports from counterparts in the field confirmed that the combination of both fire alert and encroachment alert systems catalyzed and guided numerous enforcement campaigns, leading to apprehension and deterrence of illegal forest activity within national parks.

A new integrated forest and fire monitoring and forecasting system for improved forest management in the tropics, based on the previous suite of NRT monitoring systems, called FIRECAST, is now under collaborative development by CI, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Ames and Goddard, with support from a NASA Wildland Fires grant. The Firecast prototype integrates CI's existing Fire Alert System and Fire Risk System into a more stable and flexible system built in the cloud. The fire risk model has been geographically expanded and enhanced in NASA's NEX, a supercomputing environment designed for model development and evaluation. A fire season forecast component developed by researchers at the University of California, Irvine and NASA, that warns of potential severe fire activity months in advance of a fire season, has also been included in the system (Chen *et al.*, 2011). More substantial system enhancements will be implemented in the coming years, including: i) delivery of new NRT earth observation products; ii) enhanced system functionality including user customization; iii) expansion to new geographies and sectors; and iv) online space for data sharing and collaboration among users.

<sup>49</sup> From Steininger *et al.* (2013), <http://firecast.conservation.org/>



### Fire Information for Resource Management System (FIRMS)

The Fire Information for Resource Management System (FIRMS) is the most important and influential NRT fire monitoring system created to date. Developed by UMD in conjunction with NASA Goddard, FIRMS is now located at NASA EOSDIS (Earth Observing System Data and Information System)<sup>50</sup>. FIRMS has four components: Web Fire Mapper, an interactive web-based mapping system created in 2001; email alerts for protected areas; a data downloading tool that enables users to download MODIS active fire data based on date ranges; and access to daily MODIS image subsets (Figure 7.5) (Justice *et al.*, 2011; Davies *et al.*, 2009). The open source Web Fire Mapper application allows users to view and query active fire data for any specified date range, and view MODIS burned area images for the entire globe, one month at a time. FIRMS processes the NASA MODIS Level 3 Monthly Tiled 500m Burned Area Product<sup>51</sup> and makes it available in images displayed at resolutions of 8 km, 4 km, or 2 km.

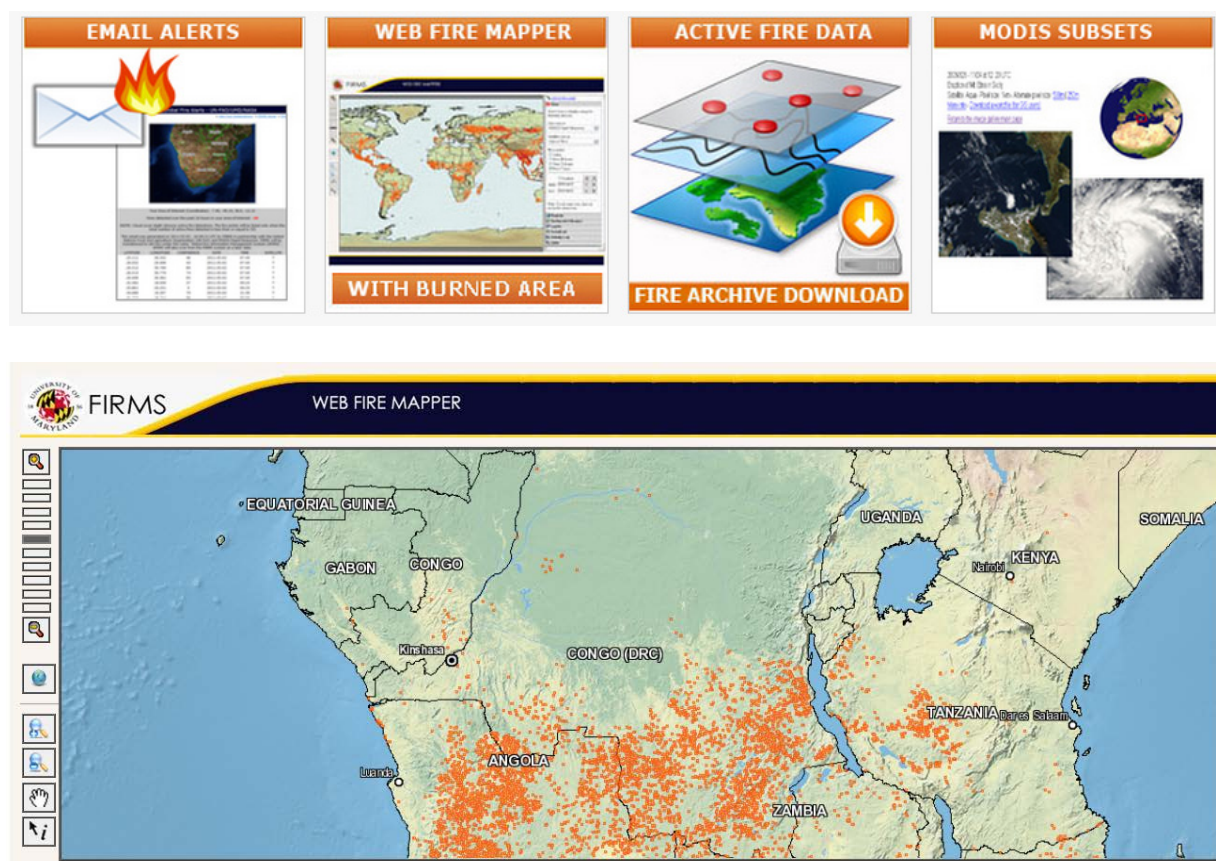


Figure 7.5. FIRMS Components (top) and Web Fire Mapper (bottom).

The email alerts messaging component of FIRMS delivers MODIS active fire information for specified protected areas or user-defined areas of interest, and allows subscribers to choose daily NRT alerts, or weekly summaries. Subscribers can specify any area for notification by selecting a rectangle on an interactive map, or selecting a specific country or protected area via drop down boxes. A buffer around the protected area can also be specified. The email alert system supports the option to include a map image and a Comma Separated Values (CSV) text file of fire coordinates. The map image enables users to readily visualize the exact location of the fire, and the CSV file can be ingested into a GIS for further analyses, or used to build up a local database of fires. MODIS active fire data are available through FIRMS in a range of easy-to-access data

<sup>50</sup> (<http://earthdata.nasa.gov/data/nrt-data/firms>)

<sup>51</sup> MOD45A1: <http://modis-fire.umd.edu>

formats, including CSV text files, ESRI Shapefiles, KML files, NASA World Wind files and Web Map Service (WMS) files. Distributing active fire information in vector format, such as an ESRI Shapefile, has the advantage of small file size and allows the option of querying attribute information.

#### *Global Fire Information Management System (GFIMS):*

The Global Fire Information Management System (GFIMS) integrates remote sensing and GIS technologies to deliver MODIS hotspot/fire locations and burned area information to natural resource managers and other stakeholders around the world. GFIMS is hosted at the Department of Natural Resources (NRD) of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and is based on FIRMS<sup>52</sup>. GFIMS complements existing NRT information systems that deliver data and services to ongoing monitoring and emergency response projects in FAO headquarters and field offices, in other UN organizations, and the general public. The Fire Email Alerts is the GFIMS open-source email alert service that notifies registered users of MODIS-derived active fires in a specified area of interest, and delivers an email alert directly to subscribers by reading a database of user-entered subscription information (user profiles). The user subscription information captures their area of interest, alert frequency, and email delivery preferences. The email alert includes a summary of the number of fires detected and an attached tabular list of fires with their attributes in CSV format. Daily and weekly fire alerts are sent from the GFIMS system, whereas NRT alerts are sent directly from the MODIS Rapid Response (MRR) facility to avoid potential delays caused by relaying the data from the MRR to the GFIMS servers.

#### *PROARCO, DETER and PRODES*

The Brazilian Space Research Agency (INPE) has developed multiple deforestation and fire monitoring tools. PROARCO is INPE's fire monitoring system<sup>53</sup>. PROARCO is a web-based mapping tool publishing daily active fire detections from MODIS, AVHRR and GOES. PROARCO is complemented by the Sistema de Detecção do Desmatamento em Tempo Real na Amazônia (DETER)<sup>54</sup>. DETER provides an online mapping interface for displaying historical and NRT data on deforestation and fire. DETER also produces monthly/bi-monthly Amazon deforestation alerts that facilitate effective control of forest clearing (Figure 7.6). DETER alerts are sent to Brazil's Institute of Environment and Natural Resources (IBAMA) and state government agencies responsible for enforcing forest legislation.

DETER data are based on MODIS, and deforestation events with an area larger than 25 hectares can be detected. The low spatial resolution used by DETER is compensated for by daily observations that are mosaicked into monthly wall-to-wall assessments of the entire legal Amazon. However, some deforested areas will remain undetected due to persistent cloud cover and relatively low spatial resolution (a limitation of all NRT deforestation monitoring systems based on MODIS). DETER provides an important source of data for control and enforcement due to the data's high temporal resolution. Both the DETER and PROARCO web mapping tools operate in Portuguese, Spanish and English. DETER is also complemented by annual monitoring of forest removal using INPE's Projeto de Monitoramento do Desmatamento na Amazônia Legal por Satélite (PRODES)<sup>55</sup>. The PRODES system is based on high resolution Landsat and CBERS imagery capable of detecting small-scale deforestation.

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.fao.org/nr/gfims/gf-home/en/>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.dpi.inpe.br/proarco/bdqueimadas/>

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.obt.inpe.br/deter/indexdeter>

<sup>55</sup> [www.obt.inpe.br/prodes](http://www.obt.inpe.br/prodes)

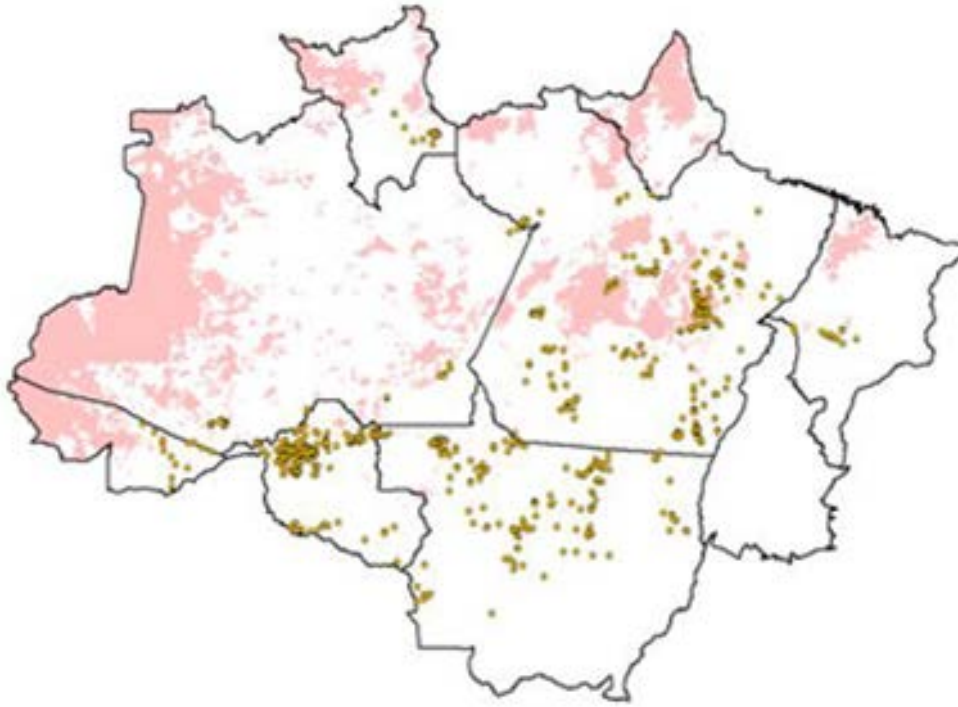


Figure 7.6 Yellow dots represent the location of deforestation in an alert issued by DETER.

#### *IMAZON Deforestation Alert System (SAD) and ImazonGeo*

The Deforestation Alert System (Sistema de Alertas de Desmatamento - SAD) is a satellite-based monitoring system operated by the Amazon Institute of People and the Environment (IMAZON), a national non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Belém, Brazil. SAD produces monthly and annual Forest Management Transparency bulletins and maps on deforestation and degradation in the legal Amazon that can be downloaded from the IMAZON web page and from ImazonGeo<sup>56</sup>. ImazonGeo<sup>56</sup> is an interactive web portal distributing spatial information on the status and threats to forests and protected areas in the Brazilian Amazon. Included in the web portal are deforestation data from SAD, DETER and PRODES, as well as 29 unique data streams of active fire data that increase the probability of acquiring cloudfree observations from the Terra, Aqua GOES and NOAA satellites for the Brazilian Amazon. The abundance of data streams on active fires is valuable in that it provides a more extensive temporal coverage and the opportunity for cross-validation among different data streams. For the deforestation/degradation products, the IMAZON SAD team creates a temporal mosaic of daily MODIS MOD09GQ and MOD09GA products, filters clouds, computes a resolution merge between the 500m multispectral and 250m visible bands, and produces a Normalized Difference Fraction Index (NDFI) image showing the relative abundance of green vegetation, soils, shade and non-photosynthetic vegetation components that are used by IMAZON to detect deforestation and degradation over time. These data are available for download as shapefiles from the ImazonGEO website. In addition to online maps, statistics and reports, ImazonGeo supports delivery of SAD text-based alerts via cellphone and email. SAD has been operating in the State of Mato Grosso since August 2006 and in the Amazon since April 2008, and is often used as a source of independent, corroborative measurement of Amazon deforestation statistics produced by INPE's PRODES program. ImazonGeo operates in Portuguese and English.

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.imazongeo.org.br>



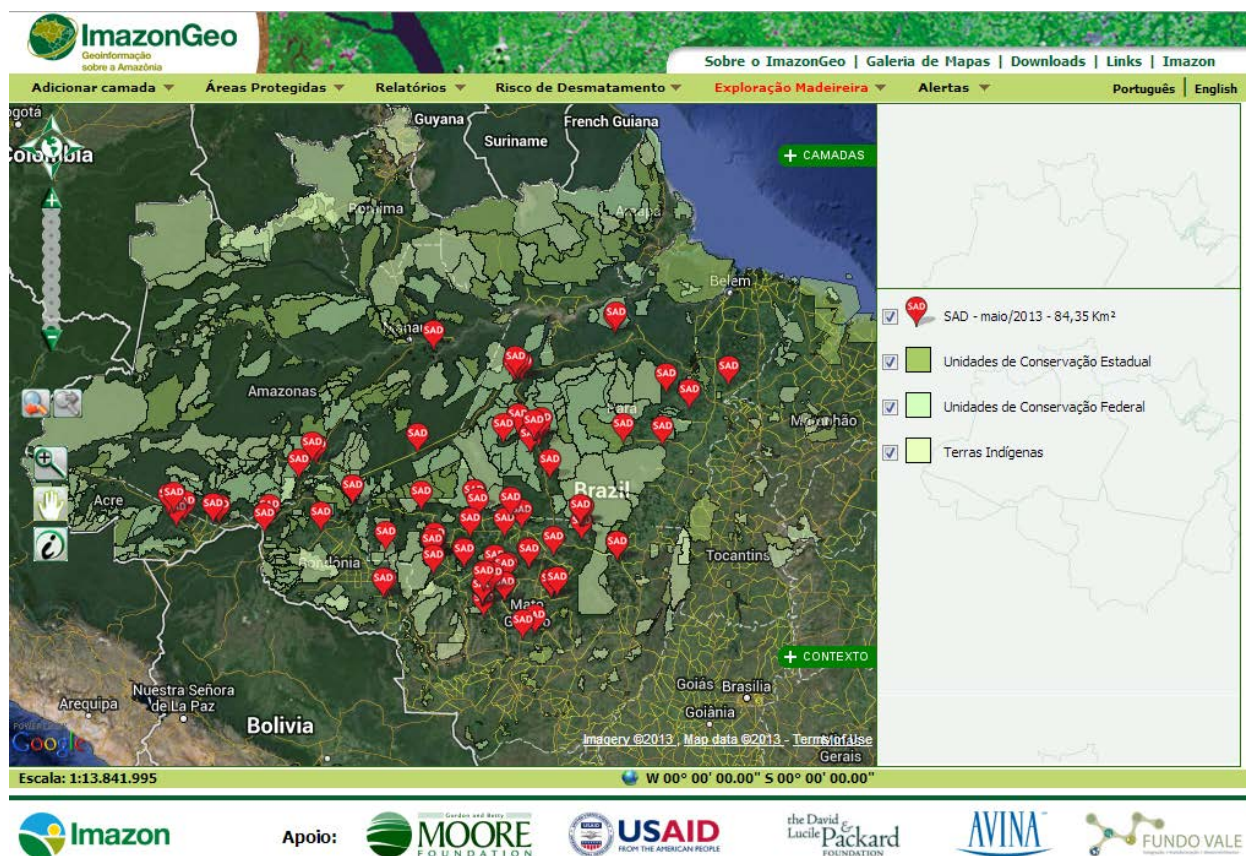


Figure 7.7 ImazonGeo.

#### *QUICC MODIS deforestation products and the Global Forest Disturbance Alert System (GloF-DAS)*

Investigators at NASA Ames Research Center and California State University (CSU) have developed a custom 5km resolution MODIS satellite product called the "Quarterly Indicator of Cover Change" (QUICC) for all forested areas of the globe. The global QUICC change product is based on a quarterly time-series comparison of MODIS daily vegetation index images at the same time each year (March, June, September, and December) for all forest and woodland areas that have lost at least 40% of their green vegetation cover during the previous year.

The QUICC products are distributed through multiple sources including: the GloF-DAS web portal<sup>57</sup> hosted by Mongabay.com; WRI's Global Forest Watch web page; and several other third-party data distribution systems (Figure 7.8). GloF-DAS is based on the NASA QUICC product and provides data on forest disturbance globally to map all large-scale forest cover change (including fire impacts) on a quarterly basis. The NASA Ames/CSU team updates and distributes its global QUICC products to GloF-DAS as soon as the most recent quarterly MODIS worldwide vegetation index image is available.

<sup>57</sup> <http://rainforests.mongabay.com/deforestation-tracker/>



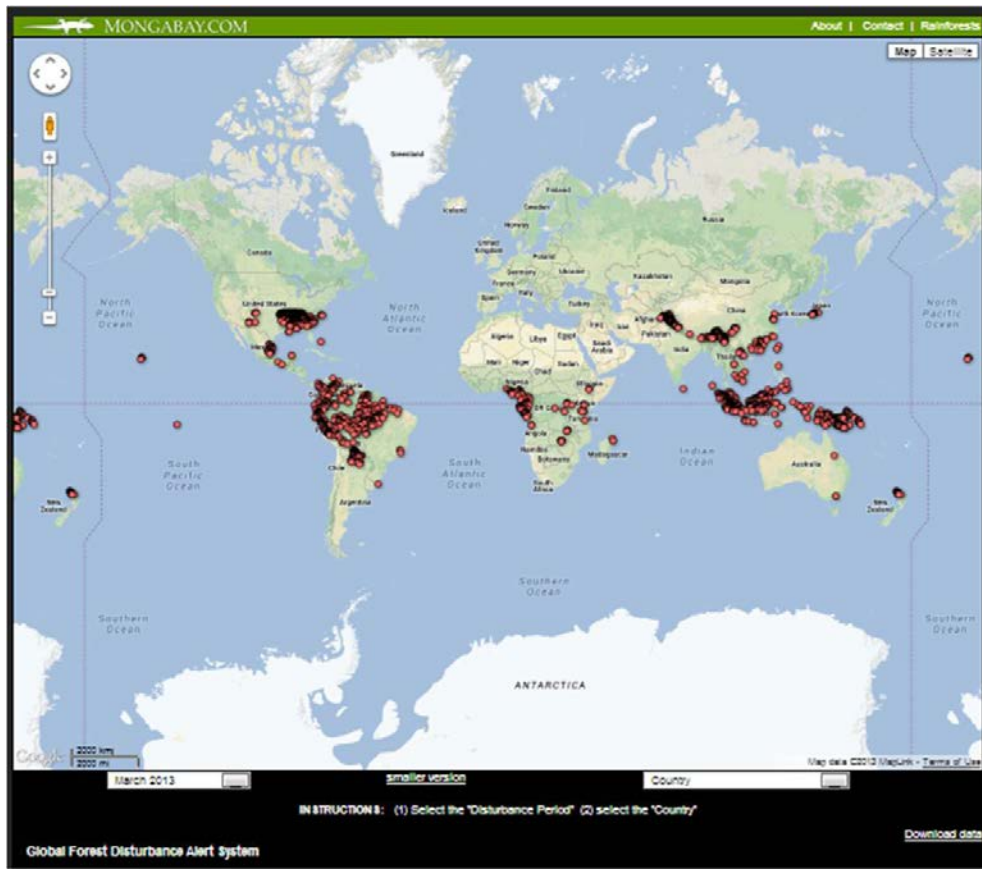


Figure 7.8 GloF-DAS

### *CIFOR Interactive Fire Risk Tool*

The Center for International Forest Research (CIFOR), based in Indonesia, has created a web-based fire risk mapping application<sup>58</sup>. This application allows users to overlay NRT satellite data on active fire locations from FIRMS and fire scars mapped by CIFOR from the most recent Landsat 8 imagery on peatlands, logging moratorium boundaries, timber and oil palm plantation concessions, and raw Landsat 8 images (before and after burns) (Figure 7.9). These data are useful for facilitating enforcement of environmental regulations established by the Indonesian national and provincial authorities, and as a tool suitable for the monitoring of commodity supply chains.

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.cifor.org/map/fire/>

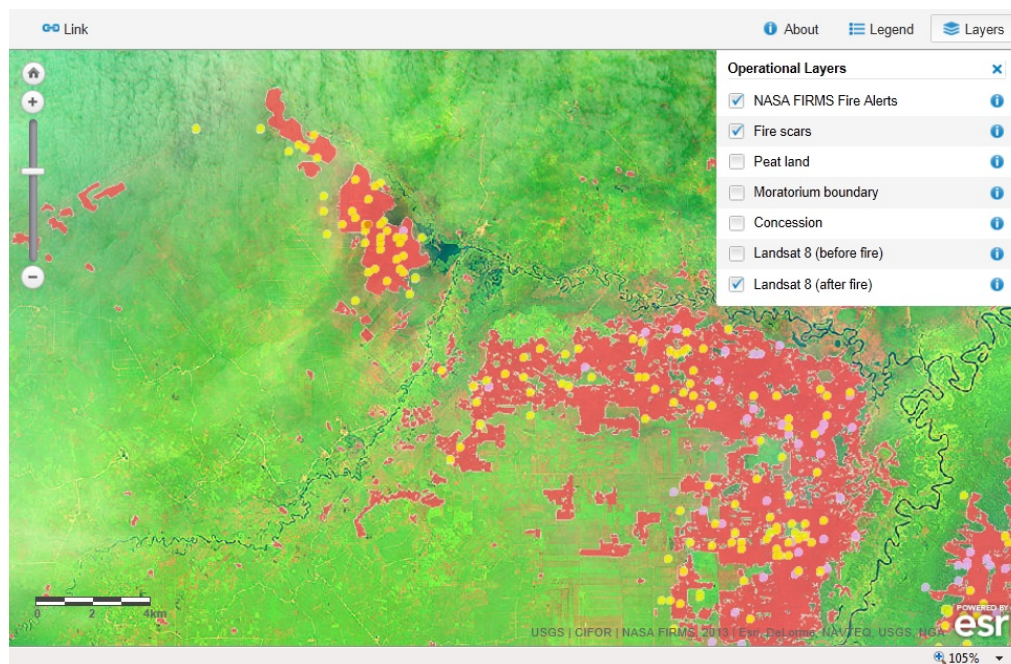


Figure 7.9 CIFOR Interactive Fire Risk Tool.

#### WRI's *Global Forest Watch 2.0*

The World Resources Institute's (WRI) Global Forest Watch (GFW) was established in 1997 to develop comprehensive information about forest resources and forest management in temperate and tropical countries through publication of the GFW Forest Atlases and State of the Forest reports series. GFW 2.0 was initiated in 2011 as a comprehensive online social networking, mapping and data distribution portal providing access to a range of NRT, historical forest change and fire products from a variety of internal and external sources (Table 7.4).

Data	Source	Frequency	Resolution	Geographic Extent
Tree Cover Loss and Gain	University of Maryland	Annually and 12-year	30m	Global
FORMA Probable Tree Cover Loss	World Resources Institute	Monthly	500m	Humid Tropics
SAD Deforestation and Degradation	IMAZON	Monthly	250m	Brazilian Amazon
QUICC vegetation cover loss (>40% per time period)	NASA	Quarterly	5km	Global
Active Fires	NASA	Daily	1km	Global

Table 7.4. Forest monitoring data available through the Global Forest Watch data portal and online mapping interface

The GFW 2.0 website – still in beta as of this writing – operates in seven languages and is divided into multiple pages. Each page covers a different theme or topic including: i) country-specific data and statistics; ii) online mapping; iii) data download; iv) stories; and v) a blog. The country page, for example, provides basic statistics for a user-specified country on a number of forest-related metrics. These include: employment and income generated from the forestry sector; relevant forestry legislation; carbon stocks and emissions; and relevant international conventions. The map interface displays each of the forest monitoring datasets over user-specified time periods for individual countries, publishing statistics for these time periods and enabling download of the selected data in a variety of GIS formats.

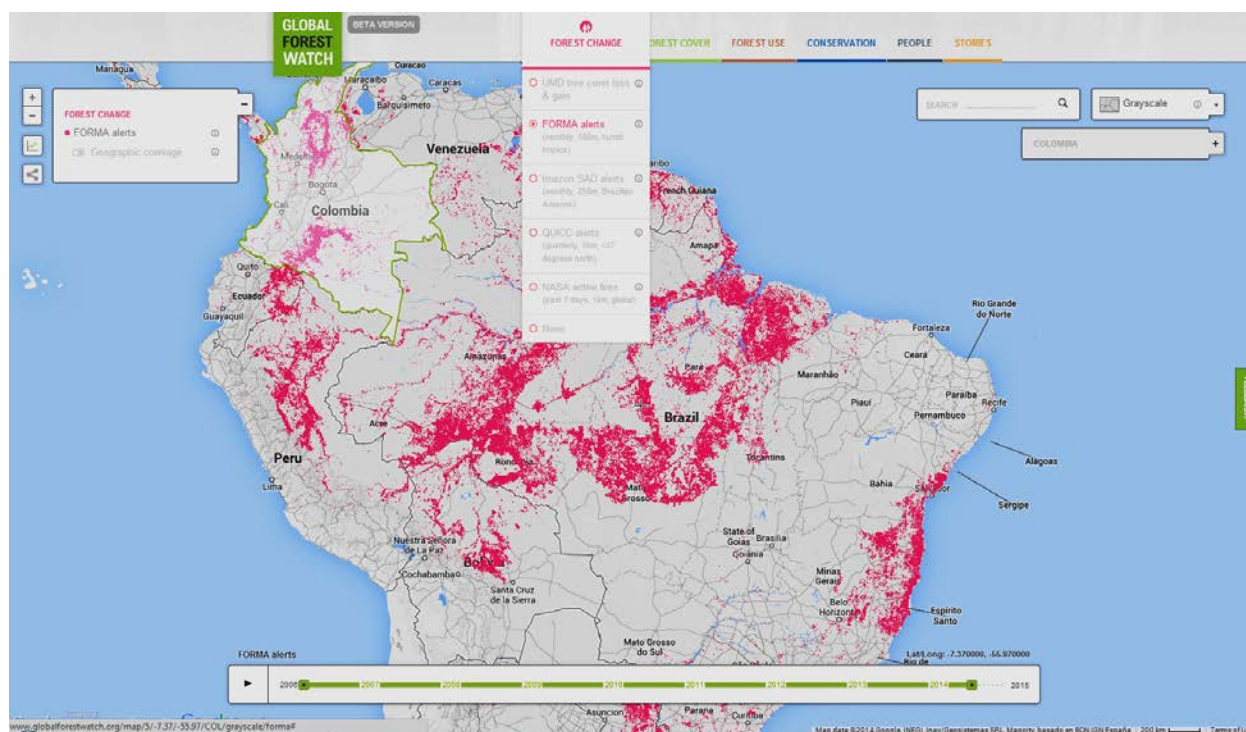


Figure 7.10. Global Forest Watch online mapping interface displaying one of five different types of forest monitoring data (FORMA probable deforestation events).

The data download page allows users to directly download data from – or subscribe to email alerts, if available – the source data projects’ website (e.g., NASA FIRMS, AmazonGEO, etc.); this page also links to a Google Groups discussion forum where users can interact with GFW staff to obtain assistance and technical information, or to discuss issues related to forest conservation and management in their countries. The stories page provides links to external forest- and conservation-related news reports, and the blog component is used by GFW staff to publish online articles on issues such as forest monitoring and technology.

GFW recently included another component in the portal. This site<sup>59</sup> focuses on the Southeast Asian region and enables the user to incorporate and analyze different data layers that facilitate the tracking of forest fires, haze and air quality. These variables can be analyzed for selected time periods, over selected districts/regions, and by selected commodities (including pulpwood and palm oil).

GFW currently represents the most data-rich website for accessing a diverse range of historical and NRT monitoring data on the state of forest resources at a global scale (Figure 7.10). GFW alerts are not actually active notifications sent out to users, rather they are viewable and downloadable data from the GFW interactive map. However, as noted in the sections on of AmazonGeo and FIRMS, some GFW data contributors do provide automatically delivered email or cellphone based alerts from their project websites.

#### *Terra-i*

Terra-i<sup>60</sup> provides online access to bi-monthly estimates of vegetation change over the entire Latin American continent, in English and Spanish. Using an approach similar to that of FORMA, discussed above, Terra-i produces 250m resolution “greenness anomalies” from a ten-year time series of 16-day MODIS NDVI composites, indicating where vegetation cover may have recently changed due to factors such as clear-cutting, burning and, dam construction. Data from the system (2004-2014) are available for online viewing via a map

<sup>59</sup> <http://fires.globalforestwatch.org>

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.terra-i.org>



interface (Figure 7.11) and for download in a range of GIS formats by country-specific areas of interest (ecoregions, protected areas, indigenous areas and political units). Annual and bi-monthly statistics can also be displayed on 2004-2014 vegetation change for each of these areas of interest.

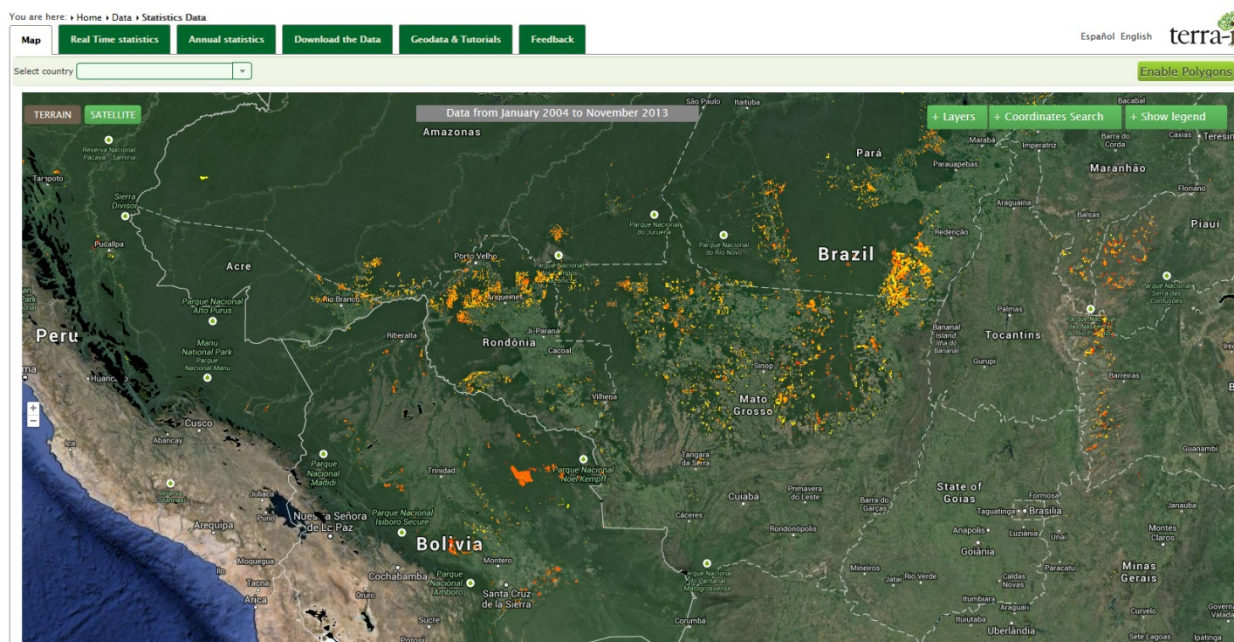


Figure 7.11. Terra-i online map interface showing NDVI greenness anomalies from 2004-2013

### 7.3.6 Utility of NRT monitoring systems

In November 2011, CI conducted a subscriber survey to collect feedback from users of CI's NRT monitoring and forecasting systems on the utility of fire and forest monitoring systems in developing-country contexts. In 2013, the survey was expanded to include in-depth interviews with users, as well as institutional assessments of NRT monitoring systems in Bolivia, Peru, Indonesia and Madagascar. The 118 respondents represented national NGOs (28 percent), international NGOs (22 percent), government agencies (20 percent), academic institutions and the press (20 percent), and the private sector (10 percent). The survey results provided information on how different institutions incorporate NRT data into their decision-making processes. Over 21 percent of the respondents were using the data to support forest surveillance and monitoring efforts; 19 percent for protected areas management; 17 percent to assist with policy development related to conservation and sustainable development; 13 percent for research; 12 percent for education and training; and 3 percent for social and public health-related activities. The fire data were perceived as having high intrinsic value, with 73 percent of respondents reporting that the fire alerts were very useful for their work or research. Respondents also indicated that NRT and seasonal fire risk forecasting information presented valuable contributions to their decision-making activities. The survey results confirmed numerous anecdotal reports from users in Madagascar, Indonesia, Peru and Bolivia about how forest and fire monitoring data facilitate conservation and management objectives, helping inform strategy, trigger official enforcement responses to deforestation and degradation, helping to build awareness, and enable fire control and prevention.

In Madagascar, for example, a series of meetings conducted as part of a mid-term project evaluation for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) revealed that fire monitoring data were being used for a broad range of applications. These applications included active fire suppression, fire control and prevention workshops, prioritizing resource management based on fire intensity and ecological vulnerability, improving protected areas and plantation forest management, and studying the influence of climate change on fire frequency.

### 7.3.7 Key Issues

In addition to the technical considerations associated with NRT forest monitoring data (e.g., the need for cloud-free imagery with minimum latency or adequate spatial resolution), several other key issues need to be investigated to ensure that a monitoring system adequately addresses both the needs and potential barriers that end-users face in accessing NRT data. As countries incorporate NRT monitoring into NFMS, they will need to assess the utility of NRT monitoring systems for their needs in terms of bandwidth demands, user-customization options, automated push-based data delivery systems versus Manual data access systems and local buy-in and ownership.

#### *Bandwidth demands*

Broadband internet access in many countries continues to be limited, particularly outside major urban centers. It is therefore critical that NRT data distribution systems be optimized so that users are able to access notifications (e.g., email alerts) on forest threats in a timely manner. Web-based, content-rich data portals with robust functionality, such as interactive mapping, may operate too slowly to be readily useful for institutions operating with low-bandwidth internet connections. Many users of NRT monitoring data also spend extended periods of time in remote field locations without access to computers and where communications are limited to cell phones. Distribution of NRT alerts to such users is best performed via text messages, email alerts, or – for those users operating smart phones – low-bandwidth web-based notifications and simple mapping applications.

#### *User-customization*

Providing precise geolocation information on forest threats can prove extremely beneficial to users engaged in actively responding to illegal forest activity, such as illegal logging or encroachment. Furthermore, NRT monitoring and data delivery systems that tailor both the analyses and subsequent notifications of illegal forest activity to an end-users' geographic area of interest (e.g., REDD+ project areas, conservation areas, administrative management units, vegetation types, etc.) may significantly enhance the value of NRT data in the context of decision making and response. Filtering out non-essential information and targeting only those areas that are relevant to a given end-user will reduce data volumes transferred (important for users who access data over low-bandwidth connections or via cell phones), decrease the frequency in which users receive alerts and increase in the likelihood that alerts will be given proper attention once they are received.

#### *Manual data access systems versus automated push-based data delivery systems*

Manual data access systems include data search-and-download portals and interactive mapping webpages that allow query-and-display of NRT monitoring data over a map background. Manual data access systems require end-users to logon to a website and search for the information in a web browser. The end-user explores the NRT data interactively across broad geographic areas, but these systems require the user to repeatedly access the website to obtain the latest information, resulting in significant lag times between publishing the data online and Manually accessing the data – when they are able to go online.

An important advance in the evolution of NRT monitoring was the development of automated “push”-based data delivery systems. An alert system that automatically generates and sends an email or text notification – along with map or shapefile/KML attachments – to users without requiring them to logon to a website means the data are accessed with minimum effort and delivered to the end-user with minimum latency. No-cost, subscription-based automated delivery systems further enable users to define customized alerts that target specific areas-of-interest, as described in the “User-Customization” section above.

Manual data access systems and automated push-based data delivery systems should be seen as complementary: one provides interactive access to multiple data streams across broad geographic areas, while the other provides access to NRT data with minimum latency and end-user effort. Some NRT monitoring systems, such as FIRMS and Firecast, provide both.

### *Trust, local buy-in and ownership*

One of the most significant barriers to wide-spread adoption and use of NRT monitoring data by host-country government agencies involved in REDD+ MRV is not technical in nature. Instead, it involves trust and ownership of data. Governments often prefer to control the generation and access to information, particularly if public dissemination carries legal or financial ramifications, and they are adverse to data and systems from foreign entities beyond a country's jurisdiction. Government agencies may prohibit official use of NRT monitoring data generated and supplied by non-official sources, and may ignore or suppress use of such data that they do receive. To overcome this potential barrier and obtain official buy-in for NRT data by government agencies, it is important to establish early, positive working relationships with the appropriate government counterparts and address their potential concerns (e.g., regarding accuracy of data). Furthermore, designers and managers of NRT monitoring systems may find it useful to explore government "ownership" of the systems, for example, by embedding the functionality of an interactive mapping web page streaming NRT data within a government agency website, or by rebranding the website and/or alert system and associated emails to host the respective government agency's logo.

### **7.3.8 Conclusion**

An ever-growing number of NRT forest monitoring systems focusing on active fire, fire risk, and large-scale deforestation are being created each year, and some existing systems are evolving to integrate more data streams and offer an expanding array of services, including social networking and mobile data exchange. As more satellite data options become available, and associated acquisitions become less costly, greater opportunities for NRT systems that can be incorporated into alert systems exist. Further, NRT systems represent a useful component to any MRV system. While such systems may not contribute directly to the required reporting, they provide a robust first look and increase the potential for countries and programs to improve adaptive forest management and enforcement capabilities.

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