

Workshop on the Enhancing Sustainability of Forestry Practices on Peatlands
27-28 June 2012, Bogor, Indonesia
Summary statement

The workshop on Enhancing Sustainability of Forestry Practices on Peatlands was held from 27-28 June in Bogor, Indonesia and attended by more than 100 participants from six countries. The meeting was organised by the Global Environment Centre, ASEAN Secretariat and the Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Indonesia. The meeting was undertaken in the framework of the ASEAN Peatland Forest project (APFP) and the SEApeat Project, and supported by IFAD-GEF, and European Union. The meeting was officiated by Ir Arief Yuwono MA, Deputy Minister of the Environment of the Republic of Indonesia.

A total of 21 presentations were made on a various topics including forest and plantation management on peatlands as well as rehabilitation of Peat Swamp Forest and certification of forestry activities on peatlands. Breakout groups discussed forest management/rehabilitation and plantation management on peat.

Conclusions

The main conclusions from the workshop included:

- Peat swamp forest is the main wetland forest type in SE Asia – originally covering about 25 million ha and provides many benefits for water resource management, climate regulation, biodiversity conservation, production of timber and non-timber forest products and support for local livelihoods.
- The area of peat swamp forest in South East Asia has been significantly reduced in the last 30 years and it is estimated that less than 34% remains in relatively intact condition in the western part of the region with 20% converted to plantations and the remaining 50% in degraded or fragmented situation. Contributing factors include; forest encroachment, heavy forest harvesting rates and poor recovery; conversion and degradation from fires especially in periods of drought. The sustainability of the remaining peatland forests (both primary & secondary forests) is critically threatened.
- Clear and strong policies for peatland protection and sustainable use are needed and the meeting supported and encouraged others to follow the action taken by the Indonesian Government to impose a moratorium on further development of plantation on peatlands and primary forest areas and put in place various regulations especially related to enhanced water management and conversion of peat swamp forest.
- Over the past 15 years, nearly one million ha of former peat swamp forests have been converted into industrial tree plantations for the pulp and paper industry in the region – mainly using *Acacia crassicaarpa*. Various enhanced management practices have been developed in particular related to water management and land preparation – but further work is needed to sustain productivity of forest plantations. Plantation companies have also worked to maintain and rehabilitate adjacent peat swamp forests as well as work with local communities to enhance livelihood and prevent fires. Some plantations have been successfully developed through serious investment, on severely degraded and burnt peatlands- by focusing on good water management, appropriate silvicultural practices, fire prevention, and partnership with local communities.
- Significant experiences have been gained in recent years on the rehabilitation of peatlands with indigenous tree species including some with potentially high economic and environmental values and this

has potential for both enhancing the forest as well as bringing benefits to local communities.

- Water management is the most critical issue for the sustainable management for peatlands: further drainage of natural forest should not be allowed and existing drains blocked; the water level in plantation areas should be maintained as high as possible to reduce the rate of subsidence and optimise production and prevent fires in the plantation and adjacent areas.

Recommendations

Given the serious recent decline in peat swamp forests, the meeting urged immediate action by the governments and other stakeholders to:

1. Protect all remaining intact peat swamp forests in South East Asia and not allow further conversion for agriculture or plantation purposes. Remaining Peat Swamp Forests should be protected or rehabilitated as necessary and either conserved or managed according to Sustainable Forestry Management principles and practices.
2. Manage remaining peat swamp forests in the context of environmentally sound and sustainable development to maintain their natural roles and functions as well as ensure equitable allocation of benefits to key stakeholders including local communities.
3. Any future plantation development in peatland shall be prioritised on severely degraded areas and such development shall contribute to enhancing the quality of the hydrological landscape.
4. Manage all peatlands in an integrated manner for each complete hydrological unit with water management enhanced to reduce subsidence and GHG emissions and fire risk.
5. Develop practical guidelines and best practice manuals for the sustainable management of peat swamp forests; the rehabilitation of peat swamp forests with indigenous species; and the operation of existing industrial tree plantations on peat. These should be supported with appropriate certification standards, safeguards or regulations.
6. Strengthen the implementation of the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy and associated National Action Plans including development of incentives and financing mechanisms.
7. The private sector especially those companies involved in managing of peat swamp forests and forest plantations in peatland areas should increase their support for the conservation of peat swamp forests by supporting conservation and rehabilitation measures and development of appropriate integrated multi-stakeholder management mechanisms.
8. Undertake further action to enhance the protection and sustainable use of the Tasik Besar Serkap landscape (Kampar Peninsula) and the Giam Siak Kecil Biosphere Reserve in Riau province, and other significant similar hydrological landscapes elsewhere in the region, through integrated management and enhanced partnership between the Government, local communities and private sector.
9. Key stakeholders including national and local Government agencies, private sector, research institutes and civil society organisations need to work actively together to enhance the level of protection and rehabilitation of remaining peat swamp forest.
10. Maintain and enhance regional and national cooperation and exchange among related stakeholders to advance the sustainability of forestry practices on peatlands.

Some additional specific recommendations were made on rehabilitation and forest and plantation, management.

