



CHANGE THE FORECAST FOR WILDLIFE
SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL WARMING

From Source to Sink: Reducing Commodity Agriculture's Pressure on Natural Lands

It is now understood that any long-term plan to reduce the threat of dangerous global warming must account for the use of land. Deforestation and other land use changes are believed to account for more than 17% of global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). Agricultural practices that reduce soil carbon content may account for another 14% or more. Meanwhile, demand for agricultural, livestock, and tropical wood products by the world's largest economies is projected to increase significantly. Historically this demand has been met through clearing of additional land, and in recent decades this continues primarily in developing countries. In a world of accelerating climate change and increasing pressures on land for all uses, this can no longer be seen as a low cost option. But as yet the mechanisms for translating the costs to society into operational incentives to influence land use decisions are few and of limited effectiveness. A successful climate change treaty, with a recognized price for carbon emissions and sequestration, could change this situation completely. But it may be some time before the complexities of including the agriculture and forest sectors in such a system are resolved.

In the interim, there is considerable scope for other measures to reduce the pace of deforestation. National Wildlife Federation has initiated a two-year dialogue and collaborative research effort with its partners and with leaders of major commodity industries to understand and offer alternatives to tropical deforestation related to agriculture and livestock. The aim of the project is to identify potential avenues for reducing the "climate change footprint" of key commodities markets.

We will develop several white papers, or "think pieces" to share information, lessons learned, and ideas gathered. The first of the "think pieces" will: give a brief summary of the state of play concerning the role of commodity agriculture production in deforestation and the resulting GHG emissions; review existing sustainability standards relating to agricultural commodities and livestock; and outline suggestions for different and/or more focused approaches to reduce deforestation and GHG emissions.

There are currently a number of sustainability "roundtables" in place or under development for many of the large agricultural commodities responsible for much of the deforestation yet globally, forest destruction has continued and appears to be accelerating as of late. One component of National Wildlife Federation's work will look into how members of the commodities roundtables might work together to concentrate their joint efforts on reducing agricultural pressure to deforest in specific regions. The project will foster a dialogue about reducing deforestation among the major actors in the roundtables that impact on tropical forests, (such as soy, palm oil, biofuels, wood/paper) as well as some key commodities interests that may not yet be in roundtables (such as livestock and animal feed). We seek in particular to tease out a range of innovative and effective actions by companies and other significant actors in sustainable commodities production and procurement. We would then link this discussion, and the resulting policy recommendations, with the REDD negotiations under the UNFCCC, as appropriate.

The initiative will include pilot projects in the field to demonstrate the potential of the "sustainable commodities" markets to reduce agricultural impact on tropical deforestation, and foster best practices. We will also work with expert modelers to analyze the relationship between increased productivity on existing farms and the pace of deforestation.

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