

Definitions in the Context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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Abstract

In relation to REDD+ implementation, two key steps are needed: (1) establishing a reference emission level or reference level (RL) and (2) monitoring performance against the RL. The RL is based on historic emissions and this can serve as a key starting point for designing any system for future monitoring. A monitoring system must be able to monitor the performance of implementing action plans to reduce emissions. Thus there is a need to know what actions are causing emissions. So designing a system for establishing the RL is the first step---need to know where, by which drivers, over what time frame, and the magnitude of the emissions for each driver. With regard to degradation, the IPCC provides a framework for accounting for such emissions--this is the change in carbon stocks of forests remaining forests. A common IPCC definition of forest degradation is: “A direct, human-induced, long-term loss (persisting for X years or more) of at least Y% of forest carbon stocks since time T and not qualifying as deforestation”. Attempts are made to define the magnitude of X, Y and T, but I argue that this is not needed in detail—suffice it to say that for REDD+ the key feature is the need for estimating the net emissions from anthropogenic-caused (i.e. direct human caused) changes in forests remaining forests. Many drivers causing different carbon impacts bring about forest degradation, thus no one monitoring system will fit all causes. And the emissions for all causes of degradation may not need to be included in a monitoring system—it will depend on their magnitude relative to other emission sources. An overview of a decision support tool was presented that provides guidance on how to decide which degrading activities to include.

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