



Summary - Climate Chance Talk 3

"LAND USE"

Speakers:

- **Marie-Ange Kalenga**, Forests, Governance & Development Policy Advisor, FERN
- **Angelina Davydova**, Director of the Office of Environmental Information (Russia)
- **Florence Palla**, Project coordinator of the Reinforcement and institutionalisation of the Observatory for Central African Forests (RIOFAC) project and the Observatory for Central African Forests (OFAC)
- **Roman De Rafael**, Research Manager Carbon Markets, EcoAct

Moderated by Aude Valade, Scientist at the Centre for International Cooperation in Agronomic Research (CIRAD) and co-author of the Land Use Section.

The **Global Synthesis Report on Climate Action by Sector** was released on the first week of December and is available in both [English](#) and [French](#). A series of "**Climate Chance Talks**" dedicated to the key trends of each sector took place from December 1st – 4th 2020, all the recordings are available to watch [here](#).

Please find the pages related to the Land-Use Sector from pages 212 to 241.

Key points highlighted by speakers:

The Climate Chance Observatory shows that the zero-deforestation commitments for 2020 have not been achieved. However, community management of forests have proved effective in reduction in reducing soil degradation and deforestation.

Angelina Davydova painted a picture of the forestry sector and carbon sequestration in Russia, while also discussing carbon compensation, and the role of private actors – where there is a risk of greenwashing. The need to rethink forestry policies, and also look at natural biodiversity, human settlements and planting practices was highlighted.

Roman de Rafael talked about the impact of the pandemic on the carbon offset targets of the aviation sector and about the voluntary market dynamics. Further details of carbon offsetting and compensation, with specific relation to the forests and biodiversity were also discussed. Roman stressed on the importance of multi-stakeholder approaches.

Marie-Ange Kalenga spoke about the impacts of the Covid crisis on forests, especially in Central Africa, and shed light on the importance of participatory, community approaches to forestry. While nature-based approaches and conservation spaces are important, they must be inclusive, and not a monopolisation of forests.

Florence Palla insisted on the alignment of climate, biodiversity and desertification agendas. She also highlighted the role played by local communities.



Summary

Key Takeaways of the Land-Use Section, highlighted by Aude Valade from CIRAD, author of the analysis:



LAND USE

- 1** All of the progress reports come to the same conclusion: the zero-deforestation commitments set for 2020 have not been achieved and emission indicators for the sector are in the red: 6.2 GtCO₂ were emitted by land use in 2019 compared to an average 5.5±2.7 GtCO₂ from 2009-2018. Rather than halving levels by 2020, as set out in the New York Declaration, deforestation went up by 44% from 2014 to 2018. In the Sahel, the Great Green Wall project launched in 2007 is a long way from its objectives and has had to alter its approach.
- 2** Forest cover continues to be threatened in a number of ways: primary tropical rainforests were subject to the third most destructive year since 2000, combined with record forest fires in 2019, emitting up to 6.7 GtCO₂ or 15% of global annual emissions. Natural forest regeneration is diminishing faced with the anthropization of forests and plantations of alien species.
- 3** 40% of the most influential companies from sectors at risk of deforestation, and 68% from the financial sector, have made no commitments concerning deforestation, and voluntary commitments have generated disappointing results. Around the world, companies, local and even national governments (Turkey, the US, Armenia, Pakistan, etc.) see reforestation and afforestation as a means to compensate their emissions to move towards carbon neutrality. But the effectiveness of these sometimes colossal projects relies on effective long-term management of the species planted, as illustrated by the failure of the Turkish project.
- 4** In contrast, community management of land and forests has proved effective in reducing soil degradation and illegal deforestation, while involving local crops and practices in forest protection objectives. Indigenous communities, like in Ecuador, have pursued successful legal action to stop major projects that contribute to the artificialization of land.
- 5** The Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly disorganized efforts to protect forests, and testimonials point to a sharp increase in illegal logging everywhere. The zoonotic nature of the Covid-19 virus, which points to a breakdown in natural barriers between species, has however contributed to putting the One Health concept at the forefront of reflections on a convergence between the agendas of climate, biodiversity and desertification conventions that regulate international cooperation on the environment..



- **Angelina Davydova**, Office of Environmental Information

Question: Carbon offsetting has gained popularity lately. The private sector is showing signs of commitment, but is struggling to turn words into action. How can we ensure that carbon offsetting does not fall into greenwashing?

In Russia, there have been decreasing emissions over the last 20 years, mainly due to decline in industry. Russia joined the Paris Agreement last year, and its first and only NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution) is non-ambitious. In fact, it projects growth of emissions - it would cut emissions by 30% compared to 1990, but considering the changes in emissions since then and the role of the LULUCF (Land Use, Land-Use Change, Forestry) sector, this would be a net increase in emissions.

The Forestry and LULUCF sector plays a very important role, sequestering 20% of overall emissions.

Real challenges for the forest sector: forest fires, and illegal logging. In the private sector, not many Russian companies have made commitments, there is no domestic carbon regulation, the legislation will probably only be there next year. Forestry companies have some targets: many of them work for certifications like FSC. Most of these seem to be more sustainable now than before. But illegal logging is a problem - often from smaller companies or individual loggers: estimating figures is hard.

Offsetting emissions through reforestation is gaining popularity, and there is a risk of greenwashing. For instance, some companies try to influence the methodology for counting of forest emissions.

- **Roman De Rafael**, EcoAct

Question: The aviation sector, which was beginning to make numerous carbon offsetting commitments, was severely impacted by the health crisis. How has this changed the offset market?

Looking at aviation, the sector had set itself objectives through the Corsia programme. The decline of almost 80% of passenger transport at some airports shows that an environmental transition has to be prepared. Before Covid, Aviation had decided to create a regulated carbon compensation system, with very clear norms and international certification standards. Its objective was to offset all additional emissions from its reference scenario (2020) onwards. The ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) modified the reference scenario by postponing by 3 years the demand for carbon credits from this sector, which was going to be significant and had the merit of being able to trigger and finance projects on the ground, despite having not very restrictive objectives. So, this is a step backward.

At the contrary, for other sectors, the voluntary markets dynamic is important and continues, unlike after the 2008 crisis. Moreover, some mechanisms, with emissions quotas are put in place in some countries (Colombia, Canada, China, etc.) where companies can reduce their taxes by buying credits issued by concrete certified projects. We are perhaps at the tipping point that will allow these mechanisms to be taken up on a large scale. For now, 160 million dollars for the offset market is far too little.



- **Marie-Ange Kalenga**, FERN

Question: How can the potential of community forest management be multiplied?

The Covid crisis showed some vulnerability of the forest management. In Central Africa, there was a kind of rush to the forests, with more pressure from illegal logging activities.

Concretely, examples of community forest management can be found in Tanzania, in Guatemala or Nepal. There is a will to increase the efforts, like in the Congo Basin where all the countries have shown a political will to increase this community mode of management of forestry projects, by including it in some NDCs, in certain partnership contracts with the EU, or even in the "Brazzaville roadmap" for participatory forestation to increase funding and technical support for community forestry tenfold.

There are obstacles, including governance, and legislations which sometimes contains gaps. For example, In Central African Republic, all the land is used for logging or for conservation: there is not much left for the communities.

Moreover, many countries have committed to use community forestry to alleviate poverty. But this has to be accompanied by investments, for example from the EU or other countries that have partnerships with developing countries. In these developing countries, land is mainly occupied by indigenous communities but without security of tenure: post-Covid green recovery packages need to incorporate elements to build community resilience and livelihoods, and address first and foremost the issue of customary land and property rights.



"We will not be able to develop community management without overcoming its obstacles related to governance and legislation that gives little land to communities and little protection to indigenous people owned-land."

In Central Africa, the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) intends to accompany governments in more integrated and sustainable land planning: local communities are part of this initiative.

NGOs not only have an accompanying role, but also a monitoring role to ensure that legislation is respected so that community forest law does not remain a dead letter and becomes a reality.

Question: Can initiatives such as CAFI or the Great Green Wall help attract investors and enable forest action to scale up?

Instruments such as the CAFI or the Great Green Wall can have political leverage, but also financial leverage since they are partnerships between governments from the North and the South. More binding mechanisms to combat deforestation are emerging abroad: the EU's green



pact, for example, aims to channel public and private energy to better protect nature abroad and reduce imported deforestation.

- **Roman De Rafael**, EcoAct

Question: Can these initiatives help attract investors and enable forest action to scale up?

"Carbon offsetting must not be a crutch for State commitment: reporting obligations on the value chain, standards on imported products, and such, must precede nature-based offsetting measures because the political context is often not simple."



Yes, carbon offsetting must not be a crutch for State commitment: reporting obligations on the value chain, standards on imported products, and such, must precede nature-based offsetting measures because the political context is often not simple.

REDD+ has entered into a jurisdictional logic to accompany and assure States and the private sector to make carbon offsetting; but other financing is expected on the ground, such as the Green Environmental Fund.

- **Florence Palla**, OFAC

Climate and biodiversity are at the heart of the RIOFAC project. The 2020 agenda is being pushed because of the pandemic, all this delay in the calendar makes realise that climate, biodiversity and desertification agendas to be achieved need to be aligned.

In Central Africa, transhumance issues illustrate the convergence between climate, biodiversity and desertification issues.

New programmes integrate climate and biodiversity issues (the European Green Deal for instance). The challenges are huge because the challenges related to finance are huge. States need to discuss and include these challenges in their strategic plans.

The pandemic has halted data collection, this is a brake to have an idea of the progresses made in the alignment between the agendas.

Local communities have a huge role to play – examples of Congo, Cameroon, to improve community and participatory management. Youth is mobilizing, and it's not just planting trees but a true mobilization.

If the post-2020 period allows for synergy between the climate and biodiversity agendas, we will be able to move forward.



- **Roman de Rafael**, EcoAct

Question: Does the synergy between the climate and biodiversity agendas appear in offset projects?

Yes. In compensation, the relationship between climate and biodiversity is essential, as is the inclusion of local populations in a multi-stakeholder approach: you cannot be certified without meeting a whole host of indicators in this respect.

The transparency of the projects allows to criticise them: the projects are online.

- **Angelina Davydova**, Office of Environmental Information

Question: What is the reaction to forest fires in Russia?



"The dramatic forest fires over the last 2 years had a major impact on the climate awareness in Russia. Climate Change is here, we also suffer from it. The images of Siberia burning changed a lot around the climate debate in the country- at the political level but also the level of the public."

The forest fires had a major impact on the climate awareness in Russia. The images of Siberia burning changed a lot around the climate debate in the country. Forest fires often take place where no-one lives, so if there is no threat to human settlements it's not dealt with in the same way.

Countries with boreal forests like Russia need to rethink forestry policy. How to fight fires even in uninhabited forest areas? Other cases - Australia and California or Southern Siberia- the fires are larger, more livelihoods lost - especially in areas with human intervention, artificial planting. There is a need to rethink forestry as a whole, what we plant, how close we live to these forests, and how international cooperation could play a role.

- **Marie-Ange Kalenga**, FERN

It has been found that the forests that are most resistant to fire are the oldest, those that contain the most biodiversity. While plantation forests are more vulnerable. And also that by associating communities, it is possible to implement means to better prevent these fires.

In Central Africa, there have also been many fires this year. Again, inclusive prevention and adaptation methods must emerge.



So, forest fires make it necessary to think about two aspects: prevention on the one hand, and adaptation on the other, but always in conjunction with local communities.

- **Florence Palla, Marie-Ange Kalenga**

The European Union's 2030 biodiversity strategy must enable it to achieve 30% conservation in its development programmes: but be careful that this does not rhyme with land grabbing by local populations who are both the least responsible for land degradation and the secular occupants. Nature-based solutions must not lead to the monopolisation of forest areas for compensation purposes: they must be inclusive and place human beings at the heart of the ecosystem.

"How to co-inhabit, in a context of conflict over land or space-use? Conservation practices must coexist with habitats and human activities: this is what the nature-based solution concept allows. In this sense, coexistence is the key word."

