

## Problems measuring Australian deforestation emissions sends warning signal to the world

**A recently released report from the Australian National University's Centre for Climate Law and Policy cautions that the Australian experience with measurement and projection of deforestation emissions should send a warning signal to the world.**



Logging in karri forests.

Market-based instruments for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation – and for increasing forest sinks in developing countries – will almost certainly accompany any binding post-2012 international climate regime. These instruments, collectively known as REDD-plus, would support schemes in which countries would receive credits for reducing net deforestation emissions below a preset baseline. The credits could be sold in carbon markets and used by purchasing nations to meet their international mitigation obligations.

The report, authored by Andrew Macintosh, Associate Director of the Centre, claims that for the past 20 years, Australia has had the highest rate of deforestation in the developed world.

‘Three hundred and seventy thousand hectares of “Kyoto forests” were cleared annually between 1990 and 2007, resulting in the emission of ~80 MtCO<sub>2</sub>-e/year,’ says Macintosh. ‘Australia is also the only developed country that will rely on reduced deforestation emissions as the primary way of meeting its quantified emission reduction target under the Kyoto Protocol.’

Despite having one of the most advanced satellite-based monitoring systems in the world, and some of the world’s leading forest researchers, Australia has ‘struggled to measure and project deforestation emissions, both of which are vital to the operation of an international scheme,’ says Macintosh.

The report found a raft of pitfalls associated with the difficulties of measurements, including the potential for political

manipulation.

‘The Australian deforestation experience shows that there is a significant risk that, if deforestation baselines are negotiated, they will be manipulated to generate “hot-air” credits – credits that do not represent a reduction in emissions,’ says Macintosh.

‘If deforestation baselines for the REDD scheme are politically negotiated, the same thing could happen. Developing countries could negotiate overly generous baselines, leading to the issuing of hot-air credits that undermine the environmental credibility of the international climate regime.’

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