

## REDD can only be successful with reforestation

Reforestation is the key to fighting deforestation in developing countries, writes Mads Asprem. Tree planting is a pre-requisite for the success of REDD, and carbon financing is needed to stimulate the expansion of industrial tree plantations in Africa.

Deforestation accounts for 17-20 per cent of all greenhouse gas emission in the world, more than the whole transport sector combined. Deforestation has received significant attention in recent years, and was a main focus during the **Copenhagen** climate conference, though with modest results. It is difficult to deal with deforestation, but it is crucially important because of its significant contribution to climate change and negative effects on the environment.

In **Tanzania**, according to **FAO**, 420,000 hectares of forest are lost annually. **TaTEDO**, the Tanzanian renewable energy NGO, claims that charcoal production accounts for the loss of more than 100,000 hectares forest every year. The importance of forest products to people in Tanzania cannot be overstated. Tanzania's **National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty** states that 90 per cent of the population depends on biomass energy for cooking. And forests provide 75 per cent of all construction material in the country.

While the main cause of deforestation in Asia and Latin America is agriculture, charcoal burning may be as significant as agriculture in Africa. Thus it is particularly important to create new and alternative supplies of sustainable timber, fuel wood and charcoal in Africa that ensure precious native forest can be protected. There are many ways to reduce the pressure on natural forests, but large-scale tree plantations are the most promising.

Moving agricultural practises away from slash and burn would probably have the largest effect on slowing deforestation in Africa and must be part of any deforestation strategy. However, this is very difficult to accomplish. More efficient use of fuelwood, through better cooking stoves or gas stoves in the cities, also represents interesting opportunities. A number of non-wood forest products receive a lot of attention as an alternative source of income for people living in and around

threatened forests. But the economic value of non-wood forest products - bushmeat, gum, honey, medicinal plants, nuts, oils - is limited. Eco-tourism is exciting, but has still created little employment in the developing world.

Sustainable harvesting and management of natural forest is another promising approach to creating alternative livelihoods from the forest. However, even done correctly, we think it is difficult to make sustainably managed **FSC**-certified natural forest profitable at today's low wood prices. What is more, sustainable natural forest harvests will often lead to less, rather than more employment and income, at least in the short run.

The police, army or guards may be able to protect the natural forest, but most people who depend on fuel and building materials will become poorer if they or their suppliers are denied forest access. If guards are set to protect the natural forest, many people will lose their work; fuelwood, if it remains available at all, will become more expensive.

Millions of Africans depend on charcoal production. The people engaged in this business, and those who rely on charcoal for cooking food, are among the poorest. Thus, if new forest is not established that can replace the harvest from natural forest, the poorest in Africa will suffer fuel shortages and building material, and become more impoverished.

For all of these reasons, there is a need for large-scale plantations to provide the wood and charcoal to supply Africa's subsistence demand requirements, and to supply the charcoal market if **REDD** is to be successful. Reforestation has huge benefits at the inception of projects because it creates plenty of new employment. Plantations are probably also the best long term solution for abating deforestation because they provide alternative wood supply that can take pressure



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off natural forests. Community forests, farmers and other small growers can play an important part in this effort. But the advantage with industrial-scale plantations is that they can make a major change quickly, and it is easier to control and measure their results.

Large-scale reforestation projects will have to play a key role if the main aim is to create more biomass for future use. **Green Resources**, which has planted 14,000 hectares of tree plantations in the last decade, estimates that less than 100,000 hectares of new forests have been established by private companies in East and Southern Africa in this period, and about 200,000 hectares in all of Africa. This is a drop in the ocean. It represents less than half Tanzania's annual forest loss. For all practical purposes, there is very little reforestation or afforestation in Africa.

Africa could restore forest cover to millions of hectares of heavily degraded land where forest was previously found, and which has been left largely redundant. Governments stopped expanding forest plantations two decades ago as international funding for forestry projects dried up. No major international forest, energy or pulp and paper firms are establishing new plantations in Africa at the moment. The only companies planting new forests in Africa are a dozen or so small, dedicated private companies focusing on reforestation, mostly in East Africa. Few of them have any revenue, and all have difficulties raising financing. Thus, carbon finance is vital to stimulate an expansion of the reforestation activity in Africa.