

# REDD is ready to help save tropical forests, indigenous peoples—and the Earth's climate

3 reasons for REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation)

**D**estruction of tropical forests wipes out biodiversity, ravages the livelihoods of forest peoples and worsens global warming—three tragedies that can be reversed by REDD, a global policy to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

Cutting and burning trees adds more global warming pollution to the atmosphere than all the cars and trucks in the world, about 15 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions. Any realistic plan to reduce global warming pollution sufficiently—and in time—to avoid dangerous consequences must rely in part on preserving tropical forests.

Unfortunately, forests today are worth more dead than alive. Conservation costs money, while profits from timber, charcoal, pasture and cropland drive people to cut down forests.

REDD will provide economic incentives for forest conservation by placing a value on living forests and their ecosystems, recognizing the significant contribution they provide to the Earth's climate through carbon storage.

## How REDD works

In a national-level REDD program, a country that commits to reducing deforestation below an established baseline would receive valuable credits in carbon markets for reducing carbon emissions. Requiring a national baseline eliminates the shortcomings that critics have pointed out in a handful of local one-off forest projects. Independent satellite observations and spot ground inspections of forested areas would reliably verify that the national commitment is in fact being met.

Central to REDD's success are the indigenous peoples who inhabit and protect much of the world's tropical forested area. Their livelihoods and cultures are put at risk when forests are destroyed, so they have a great deal to gain from the REDD approach. Stopping tropical deforestation is urgent: 32 million acres per year were cut or burned between 2000 and 2009. Unless we change the present system that rewards forest destruction, forest clearing will put another 200 billion tons of carbon into the atmosphere in coming decades and devastate scores of indigenous populations.

In short, REDD is the best way to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation, contribute to sustainable livelihoods for indigenous peoples and conserve tropical biodiversity on a large scale. It must be implemented now, before the world's remaining tropical forests go up in smoke.



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Tropical forests often are cleared for timber, charcoal, pasture and cropland. But with REDD, a forest can be worth more alive than dead.

EDF is a leading U.S.-headquartered nonprofit organization with offices in China and Mexico and partnerships in Brazil, India, Russia and other countries.

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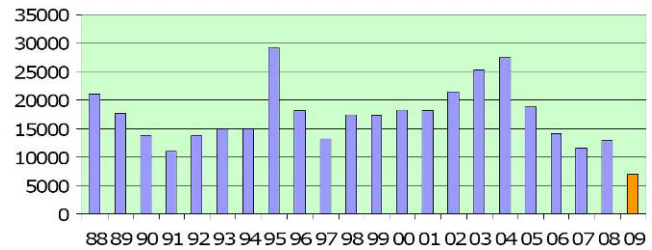
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EDF's economic and policy analysis demonstrates that REDD will produce the following benefits:

- **Cuts pollution substantially right away**, without waiting for new technologies. With the right economic incentives for forest protection, deforestation can be reduced drastically in the short term.
- **Provides more overall greenhouse gas reductions at a lower cost** than policies without REDD.
- **Creates positive incentives for major developing countries** to participate in global emissions reductions. The world's fourth largest overall emitter, Brazil, has already slowed its deforestation by 40% and has committed to an 80% reduction from the 1996–2005 average by 2020.

Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon, 1988-2009



Square kilometers deforested per year (1 sq km = 247 acres), 2009 estimated. Data source: National Institute for Space Research (INPE)

- **Ensures emissions reductions.** REDD reductions at the national level are far more certain than one-off “offsets” to achieve global emissions cuts, because REDD is tied to a national commitment to absolute reduction in a country’s overall emissions. (As critics have pointed out, local forest project “offsets” can be erased by increased emissions elsewhere, including in neighboring forests.)
- **Protects unique ecosystems.** Since tropical forests are home to at least half of all plant and animal species, deforestation threatens the biological diversity of the entire world.
- **Promotes development** by giving forest dwellers new sources of income to improve living standards while maintaining traditional ways of life. This is the soundest and most just route forward for the threatened indigenous peoples who inhabit the world’s remaining tropical forest lands.
- **Helps U.S. industries support climate change legislation**, since REDD would lower the costs of reducing emissions. Without REDD and other international credits, U.S. compliance costs would almost double, according to the U.S. EPA.<sup>1</sup>
- **Provides greater transparency.** Bringing efforts to stop deforestation into a global system and a soundly constructed global carbon market will provide greater transparency and protections at both local and national levels. Regulated markets demand the accurate, transparent monitoring and measurement that today’s satellite observing technology can deliver.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). 2010. *Supplemental EPA Analysis of the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 H.R. 2454 in the 111th Congress*. EPA Office of Atmospheric Programs. Washington, DC. [www.epa.gov/climatechange/economics/pdfs/HR2454\\_SupplementalAnalysis.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/economics/pdfs/HR2454_SupplementalAnalysis.pdf)