



Implications of a potential REDD+ mechanism in Suriname

Forests have different values to different people. To some it is their home and supermarket, to others, a source of income. Putting a price tag on forests just for existing, might interest a wide range of people. Destruction of forests contributes to about 15% of global CO₂ emissions, but forests also act as carbon sink and storage. Hence, the concept became that forests should be worth more standing than cut down and REDD+ was born. REDD+ is a payment-based mechanism for *Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, plus the enhancement of forest carbon stocks, conservation and sustainable forest management*. Suriname with its large forest area might be eligible to receive payments through REDD+. At least, funding for readiness activities will probably result in significant capacity building and increased knowledge and expertise. This is one conclusion from MSc research by Lisa Best, Environmental Sciences student (Wageningen University). Facilitated by Tropenbos International Suriname in the first half of 2011, this study looked at implications of a potential REDD+ mechanism in Suriname.

Suriname is a High Forest cover, Low Deforestation rate (HF/LD) country, meaning that it is in the early stage of forest transition (see Figure 1). For such countries it is not entirely clear whether or how REDD+ can be as beneficial as for HFHD countries.

Suriname is still in the early phase of preparing for REDD+, and steps have been taken towards a national REDD+ strategy. A draft Readiness Preparation Proposal or R-PP has been prepared by Suriname and

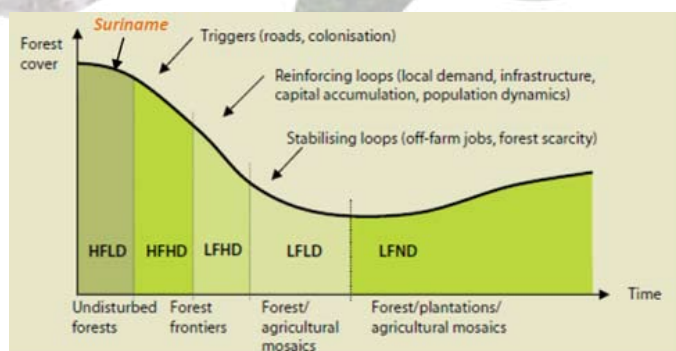


Figure 1. Forest transition curve

submitted in 2009 to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) in order to get a grant for readiness activities. There have also been information sessions and seminars on reference emission levels and Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV). At the end of 2010 a Forest Carbon Assessment project started, led by the Ministry of Physical Planning, Land and Forest Management, to determine national forest carbon stocks (see also TBI information sheet nr 04 FAM02 on Forest Carbon Stock Assessment in Suriname).

REDD+ elements in Suriname

The main recurring concepts of REDD+ design are *deforestation rates, forest carbon stock, additionality and leakage*. Additionality means that the reduced deforestation should be greater with a project than without it. Leakage refers to deforestation activities and emissions shifting to outside the implementation area. Some scientists and policy makers believe that to be beneficial, the scope of the current REDD+ design, should be more comprehensive, also including

- a strong legal framework;
- tenure clarity;
- recognition of local rights and land claims;
- domestic stakeholder engagement; and
- conservation synergies potential.

For Suriname assessing the status for each of these factors could help to identify focus areas that might enhance preparations for REDD+.

The *deforestation rate* refers to the loss of forest area per year. In Suriname this is estimated at between

0.02 – 0.07 % per year which is low compared to the global average deforestation rate (0.33 % per year). This indicates that Suriname has no historical reference for deforestation and thus requires a different type of reference level providing incentives for maintaining a low deforestation rate. At a seminar organized in April 2011 by the Ministry of RGB together with Conservation International Suriname, three reference level designs for Suriname were presented.

Forest carbon stock refers to the amount of carbon the forest holds. Suriname has a forest cover of about 14.8 million ha (90 % of its total surface) holding about 2583 Mt of Carbon. Though this is a rough estimate, other sources estimated the carbon stock of Suriname between 663 – 3165 Mt C. Based on future plans for development of timber production, mining, infrastructure and a business as usual scenario, potential REDD+ projects in Suriname will likely be **additional**.

Since there is a large forested area with a significant carbon stock and development in this area is expected, the **potential for leakage** is significant.

Legislation and stakeholders

In the context of REDD+, **a strong legal framework** implies good legal compliance and governance of forest related issues. Suriname is part of international conventions such as CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species), ITTA (International Tropical Timber Agreement), UNCBD (UN Convention on Biodiversity) and UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change). Regional treaties and national legislation are also relevant for a potential REDD+ mechanism. However, an institutional framework and environmental legislation are lacking and some laws are outdated.

Tenure clarity is one of the institutional bottlenecks. This becomes an issue for example, when it comes to sharing REDD+ benefits. Forest communities' problems revolve around tenure, because their land is owned by the state. There is insufficient **legal recognition of local land rights** and by sharing experiences on the international level, forest communities are more skeptic of REDD+. There are many concerns about solving the land rights problems and about whether REDD+ will benefit the people. Part of the MSC research focusing on a case-study in the Amerindian villages of Pierre Kondre, Redi Doti and Cassipora found that also at local scale development is expected.

In addition, not just legal issues have to be resolved, but also some capacity issues and improvement of approaches to involve forest communities.

On a national level it is also important to establish broad-based support for REDD+. In the **domestic stakeholder** arena all relevant Ministries, their subdivisions, research institutes, NGO's, CBO's and the private sector are represented. However, some stakeholders claim that not all groups are sufficiently represented or involved in the REDD+ developments. Another part of the MSc research focused on the institutional, financial and MRV (Monitoring, Reporting and Verification) capacity in Suriname by interviewing stakeholders. This gives an impression of the capacity from a stakeholder perspective. **Conservation synergies potential** arises when policies and measures affect multiple (conservation) goals. When it comes to the conservation synergies, there is large potential in terms of biodiversity in tropical rainforests and the mangrove coastal areas of Suriname. Conserving these areas can be directly linked to conserving the habitat of many plant and animal species.

What comes next?

As can be seen there are still some issues that have to be resolved to enhance the REDD+ approach in Suriname. Analyses of the REDD+ elements show that there is still a need for:

- *studying different reference levels;*
- *developing a payment scheme which is fair to all stakeholders;*
- *strengthening of the legal framework; and*
- *recognizing and defining the role of forest communities.*

Meanwhile at the international level, methods, safeguards and protocols on these issues are still being developed, making it more difficult for countries such as Suriname to move forward. It is however important, nationally and locally, to work on capacity building and training in, for example, MRV. The stakeholder and capacity analysis showed that there is room for improvement of the involvement and representation of stakeholders, communication between/within groups and transparency in the development of REDD+ in Suriname.

Regardless of whether REDD+ will be implemented, if done in the right way, readiness activities in Suriname can lead to many benefits for the country.

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