# ‘Ever-green’ and REDD+ in the forests of Oceania

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**Abstract**

# See -Protecting carbon to destroy forests: Land enclosures and REDD+

The report points out that rather than putting pressure on corporations to clean up their acts or support local struggles, REDD,

gives forest destroyers a way to legitimize their actions as environmentally ‘friendly’ or ‘carbon neutral’.

# <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2013/05/06/protecting-carbon-to-destroy-forests-land-enclosures-and-redd/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Redd-monitor+%28REDD-Monitor%29>

# Add in : ITS Global Feb 2012 - Consensus statement confirms deforestation emissions overstated

<http://forestryanddevelopment.com/site/2013/01/15/consensus-statement-confirms-deforestation-emissions-overstated/#more-1711>

Colin Hunt’s data on REDD and deforestation <http://www.colinhunt.com.au/files/3713/3790/3646/Hunt_Report_PNG_of_15_April_2010.pdf>

Global climate change initiatives to reduce emissions from avoided deforestation and degradation (REDD) represent both a threat and opportunity for the Malaysian logging corporation ‘Rimbunan Hijau’, the largest forestry operator in Papua New Guinea. Although Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries is first and foremost a climate change mitigation option, it also has the potential to generate benefits for indigenous and local communities (UNEP 2010). Realising the potential benefits will require cooperative relations between key actors at local, national and international levels.

This paper highlights various ways that Rimbunan Hijau (Bahasa term for Evergreen) is responding to the terms of emerging carbon sequestration initiative known as REDD-plus. I first situate the idea of climate change within the immense institutional, managerial, and surveillance apparatus focused on the regulation of atmospheric emissions. I then discuss how the ‘triple-interface’ (Boykoff 2010:397) of science, policy, and media is being utilized by governments, industry and corporate interests to leverage support for developmental objectives. Finally, using data from my PhD research I outline Rimbunan Hijau’s responses to climate capitalism and highlight recent controversies surrounding its expansion plans in Papua New Guinea.

**Forests, Conversions, and Climate Change**

Any global agreement on climate change will impact on how we manage our forestry operations. If we are to sustain our industry into the future, we must stay alert and aware of these developments. Most importantly, we must respond by making our case to Governments and business partners around the world. If we don’t the future of our industry will be in peril (Speech by Tiong Hiew King, *Chairman of Rimbunan Hijau and Director of World Forestry Centre*, 19 October 2008).

Throughout most of industrialised history, forests have been worth more felled than standing. Countries in the developed world, including Australia, New Zealand, United States, Canada, and Europe have clear-felled around half of the world’s primary forests to plant agricultural crops, create urban cities, extract wood for construction, or burn timber as fuel. In response to the international demand for timber and timber products, most deforestation in the 20th century has occurred in developing countries which collectively harbor around half of the world’s remaining natural forest. In the 21st century, predictions of global warming have led to a new way of seeing forests as repositories of carbon.

In the climate change ‘crisis’, the maintenance of existing forests as well as increasing forest coverage is expected to make an important contribution to the mitigation of global warming, but this potential is yet to be realized (Capoor and Ambrosi 2007; Nabuurs et al. 2007). From a governance perspective, the international climate regime is playing a dominant role in influencing all environmental and developmental policy internationally (Maguire 2010:5).

### The *idea* of climate change

The ecological problem of industrialization is not new; its negative effects on nature have been debated for the last 150 years. Icons of the ecological dilemmas facing the world have ranged from deforestation in European countries in the 19th century, wilderness conservation at the beginning of the 20th century, and resource depletion in the 1970s (Hajer 1996:247). What is new in the 21st century is the positioning of global warming as ‘the greatest known challenge facing the world’ (Hunt 2009:1). As repositories of carbon, forests are seen as timely assets (Ferry and Limbert 2008) that can save the world from ‘apocalyptic collapse’ (*Ecological Internet*, 25 May 2011).

Climate change is an idea that has served many purposes and continues to do so (Hulme 2009). The idea of scientific mastery over climate for the global goodfirst appeared in the closing paragraph of Ellsworth Huntington’s 1915 book ‘*Civilisation and Climate’*. In reflecting the scientific ideals of the Enlightenment, Huntington wrote – ‘If we can conquer climate, the whole world will become stronger and nobler’ (Hulme 2009:21). Decades earlier, the first official explanation of how carbon dioxide can act as a greenhouse gas was provided in 1896 by the Swedish scientist, Svante Arrhenius. It wasn’t until the mid-twentieth century that the first monitoring of increasing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere began, followed by a series of studies carried out by the U.S. Department of Energy in the 1970s raising concerns about possible global warming (Lohmann 2006:35). This marked the beginning of the discursive construction of global climate change.

In 1988, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 45/53 on the ‘Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind’ (Lutken and Michaelowa 2008:1) which led to the formation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC) - the largest international scientific assessment of climate change. Although the IPPC argue that the ‘science is settled’ on global warming (IPCC First Assessment 2007) its critics regard the science advice of the IPCC as ‘politically cast’ and thereby fundamentally flawed (Carter 2010:26). The United Nations Framework on the Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC) formalized the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, which is due to expire in 2012. The Protocol’s core aim is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere in order to ‘prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system’ (UNFCCC 2008:3). Under the terms of the Protocol, industrialized countries with emission reduction commitments (referred to as Annex I countries) may include in their reduction target, emissions and removals from certain direct human-induced land-use change and forestry activities such as afforestation (defined as planting of new forests on lands that have not been forested for a period of at least 50 years) and reforestation (limited in the first commitment period to those lands that did not contain forest on 31 December 1989); emissions from deforestation; and possible emissions and removals from forest management, cropland management, grazing land management, and re-vegetation (CIFOR 4 December 2011).

As a regulatory mechanism, the Protocol not only created the justification for the commodification of the atmosphere, but also inspired new forms of activism as well as sites of scientific, economic, social, and political conflict.

### ‘Air Money’, ‘REDD’ and ‘REDD-plus’

The Melanesian term ‘air money’ or ‘sky money’ has come to symbolize the mystique of capturing carbon dioxide (Wood 2011). Mystique is also attributed to the ways in which anthropogenic contributions to climate change have been calculated (Kellow 2007:47), with computer models predicting future climate scenarios according to the assumptions programmed into them (Carter 2010:21). These predictions have generated detailed economic forecasting and policy creation around the role of forests in reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD). Under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) forests are both sinks and sources of emissions, and all countries are expected to count their emissions and removals from land use change and forestry in national inventories.

REDD first emerged in the UNFCCC negotiations over accounting rules for the impact on carbon sinks of changes in land use, particularly afforestation, reforestation, deforestation and forest management (Articles 3.3 and 3.4 of the Kyoto Protocol). In the Kyoto Protocol a decision was made to exclude carbon emissions from tropical deforestation. Countries met their Kyoto targets primarily through national measures, but were also offered an additional means of meeting targets by way of three market-based ‘[emissions trading](http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/mechanisms/emissions_trading/items/2731.php)’ – known as the carbon market; ‘[clean development mechanism’ (CDM)](http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/mechanisms/clean_development_mechanism/items/2718.php); and ‘[joint implementation (JI)](http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/mechanisms/joint_implementation/items/1674.php).

The mechanism known as joint implementation (JI) refers to projects undertaken jointly by two Annex I countries units (ERUs) involving an emission-reduction or emission removal project (UNFCCC 2010).[[1]](#footnote-1) Credits from avoided deforestation were excluded due to the challenges and uncertainties of quantifying forest sector emissions (‘leakage’), which could potentially weaken the overall strength of the climate regime. Moreover, developing countries were concerned that a plan to reduce deforestation would threaten their sovereignty over land use decisions and right to develop. An eligibility criterion was ‘additionality’, which required that reductions in emissions must be additional to any that would occur in the absence of the certified project activity (Kyoto Protocol, Article 12[5]).

All projects undertaken in developing countries fell under the Clean Development Mechanism. The CDM allowed industrialized countries to earn carbon credits from reforestation and afforestation projects in developing countries. The idea encapsulated in the CDM is that carbon markets will provide an efficient system for reducing global emissions and drive investment toward the cheapest reductions. By 2008, this mechanism had not greatly favoured forestry projects and only one afforestation project had been approved out of the 1,016 CDM projects, but approximately 100 more were in preparation ([UNFCCC 2008](http://cdm.unfccc.int/index.html)). By 2010 there were 5,600 projects in the CDM pipeline, of which 2,801 were registered and 56 others awaiting registration (UNFCCC 2011). Of these, only 14 are afforestation and reforestation projects, with another 2 seeking registration. To date, only one CDM project combines carbon emissions credits with reforestation (Ibid).[[2]](#footnote-2) ‘Free-trade’ advocates believe that the responsibility for the effective failure of CDM in facilitating afforestation and reforestation projects lies primarily with the rules for ‘additionality’, which they argue diminishes financial incentives for undertaking CDM projects (World Growth 2010a).

In December 2005, the ‘Coalition for Rainforest Nations’ (CfRN)[[3]](#footnote-3) led by Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica, proposed the inclusion of carbon finance for reducing national rates of deforestation at the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP11) in Montreal. The initial proposal was limited to reducing carbon emissions from deforestation (RED) but was expanded at Bali, in December 2006, to include forest degradation (REDD) (Karousakis and Corfee-Morlot 2007; Miles and Kapos 2008). Representing the members of the Coalition for Rainforest Nations, Kevin Conrad, described as a ‘hero of the environment’, tabled the idea of paying for the conservation of forests. Conrad issued a challenge to the United States: ‘If, for some reason, you're not willing to lead, leave it to the rest of us, and please get out of the way’ (*Time International* 2008*).*

In principle, REDD enables developing countries to receive financial payments from developed countries for reducing national deforestation rates below a baseline level prior to 1992. With little objection from the international community, REDD became the financial mechanism adopted at Bali to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. The inclusion of REDD in a post Kyoto framework was widely accepted by the international political community because it provided a way for developed countries to offset carbon emissions, and enabled developing countries with large forestry resources, such as Papua New Guinea, to receive payments for conservation.

Following the widespread acceptance of the principles of REDD as a carbon mitigation measure at Bali, the response of developing countries, including Africa and Malaysia, shifted toward a defensive attitude for their forestry industries. Africa demanded that REDD encompassed clear recognition of the role of commercial forestry in development and conservation (World Growth 2009a) while Malaysia’s Submission on REDD argued for a critical distinction to be made between ‘deforestation’ and ‘sustainable forest management’ (SFM):

Malaysia…feels that the definition of deforestation needs to be broad enough to cover the various levels and patterns of forest degradation. This is important as any level of degradation exists on the continuum between completely sound, protected forests and complete deforestation. As such, a pattern of continued forest degradation will contribute significantly to a net increase in emissions, eventually culminating in complete deforestation and should therefore be differentiated from sustainable forest management (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Malaysia; 23 February, 2007).

This emphasis on graduated deforestation seems to imply that anything less than complete deforestation may constitute SFM, however the ITTO[[4]](#footnote-4) principles for sustainable tropical forest management include the wider political, social and economic criteria without which sustainability is probably unattainable. Lobbying for SFM as a mode of carbon management was pursued by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), which issued a statement at Bali outlining its commitment to advancing as quickly as possible, the full implementation of SFM in the tropics ‘including reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, carbon sequestration through restoration, thus contributing to addressing the issue of climate change’ (ITTO 2007:2). As a result of industry lobbying and political pressure from developing countries such as Malaysia and Africa; the Bali Action Plan (BAP paragraph 1(b)(iii)) included the provision for the ‘sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks’ – this is the moment when REDD-plus emerged. The critical text for the ‘*plus*’ in the Bali Action Plan which attempted to bridge the long-standing tensions between conservation and development goals, appears after the semi-colon:

Policy approaches and positive incentives on issues relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (paragraph 1b (iii) Bali Action Plan 2007).

The inclusion of forest conservation in an international voluntary agreement to address the impacts of global warming was driven by estimates from British economist Lord Stern (2006), who attributed around 17 per cent of global carbon emissions to deforestation. According to ‘free-trade’ lobbyist, Alan Oxley of World Growth NGO (who works for ITS Global, Rimbunan Hijua’s public relations advisor), independent research by US -based Consultants Winrock International (commissioned by the World Bank) estimated that deforestation accounts for 6 to 8 per cent of global emissions (World Growth 2009a). Other research commissioned by the Government of Norway and the World Bank (Harris et al 2010) suggests that deforestation emissions contribute somewhere between 5 to 12 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions (ITS Global 2011b:45). The rate of deforestation cited in the IPPC reports has also been contested (Watson 2000). Recently, the FAO‘s ‘State of the World's Forest 2011’ (FAO 2011:3) shows that globally, the overall rate of deforestation is slowing down[[5]](#footnote-5), partly due to a transition from deforestation to afforestation in the Asia-Pacific region, where plantation forest area increased by 2.85 per cent annually over the last decade (Ibid:9)[[6]](#footnote-6). This has been accompanied by an increase of around 1.92 per cent (from 2000-2010) in the global area of forest designated primarily for the conservation of biological diversity (Ibid:10)[[7]](#footnote-7). These studies indicate that the science is far from settled, regarding the extent or contribution of deforestation to greenhouse gas emissions.

### Climate Capitalism: From Bali to Durban

The Bali Roadmap (2007) steered negotiators through a progression of COP meetings (‘Conference of Parties’), from Poznan (2008) to Copenhagen (2009), Cancun (2010) and Durban (2011). Along the way, as the United Nations attempted to garner consensus for a replacement to the Kyoto Protocol, negotiators drafted and redrafted the policy text for reduced emissions from avoided degradation and deforestation (REDD). It was hoped that the COPs would produce a coherent vision for an ‘international community’ and generate a set of norms and practices that would govern national carbon emissions. But these forums also afforded opportunity for free-trade advocates and industry lobby groups to present arguments in support of the role of industrial forestry and plantation development in global warming solutions. under the current FAO definition of ‘forests’, industrial plantations qualify as forest conservation projects as long as they don’t contribute to a net increase in national carbon emissions. **Since Bali, various pilot projects have started, with funding provided by the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and Forest Investment Programme (FIP), the United Nations REDD Programme (UN REDD), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), and the REDD-plus Interim Partnership (UNEP, 20 September 2010).**[[8]](#footnote-8)

# Dichotomizing discourses between ‘conservation’ and ‘sustainable development’ defined the negotiations leading to the much anticipated Copenhagen Climate talks in 2009 (COP15). By this time, scientific uncertainty and conflicting value claims between developed and developing countries had generated irreconcilable differences. A leaked draft agreement from the European Union called for a total halt to deforestation by 2030, and anger from the tropical countries at the North’s failure to commit to dramatic emissions reductions resulted in the removal of all targets for deforestation and a much weakened language on safeguards. An earlier draft contained a target for reducing deforestation by at least 50 per cent by 2020, but as a result of the EU proposal, deforestation targets became removed from the negotiating text (REDD Monitor 2009). The result of the growing friction between developed and developing countries over the burden of responsibility for reducing global atmospheric emissions was the weak agreement known as the ‘Copenhagen Accord’. The Accord agreed that REDD-plus was to be included and SFM, consistent with long-term sustainable land management, should be promoted (CIFOR 2009). Governments of the world’s biggest palm oil producers, including Malaysia, rejected proposals put forward by environmental groups to exclude the expansion of oil palm plantations in REDD-plus projects.

The climate-change negotiations at Cancun, Mexico in December 2010 (COP16) endorsed the option for developing countries to conserve their forests and receive payments for avoided deforestation *and* enhanced carbon stocks (REDD-plus), as well as receiving credits for the use of ‘green technology’ through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). In addition to containing no binding commitments to curb deforestation, the inclusion of plantation forests as an internationally endorsed modality of Carbon Capture and Storage was one of the most controversial inclusions in the Cancun Agreement. The Agreement emphasized the need to ensure at national and community levels that REDD-plus ‘compliments restoration, poverty alleviation and adaptation’ and promotes and operationalizes safeguards and accountability’ (Ibid). Negotiations on a financial mechanism to compensate developing countries for recovery and maintenance of forest carbon stocks resulted in three categories for inclusion in a financing mechanism: reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD); conservation, sustainable management of forests, and stock enhancement in addition to REDD (REDD+); and all terrestrial carbon in addition to REDD+ (REDD++).

REDD+ involves performance-based payments for greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions and/or enhanced removals in the forest sector. Three principal categories for forest carbon accounting relevant to the framing of REDD+, developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) developed are:

1. Forest land converted to non-forest land (deforestation or avoiding deforestation).

2. Forest land remaining forest land (degradation or avoiding degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, or enhancement of forest carbon stocks).

3. Land converted to forest land (afforestation/reforestation).

When the negotiations reached Durban in 2011 (COP 17), the UNFCCC was under pressure to demonstrate that they were prepared to ‘walk the talk’ in tackling climate change. Certified emission reduction (CER) credits from a clean development mechanism (CDM) project in Johannesburg offset the estimated 1844 tons of GHG emissions generated by the travel of 398 UNFCCC Secretariat staff and 369 supported delegates to the conference (UNFCCC Press Release)[[9]](#footnote-9). Environmental NGOs were bitterly disappointed in the outcomes of the talks however, which were interpreted by many as a deal to agree to a deal. The main issue once again was equity between the developed and developing countries. In the final hours, India’s environmental minister (strongly backed by China’s minister) insisted that the basis of further negotiations needed to recognize developing countries' low responsibility for historic emissions, as well as their economic capabilities, with large populations still to be lifted out of poverty. In the midst of a widening gulf and frayed tempers, developed and developing countries agreed to work on an agreement to be legally binding on all parties, written by 2015 and to come into force after 2020 (*The Guardian* 12 December 2011).

Despondent with the likelihood that the Green Climate Fund would be unlikely to be able to fund conservation through a non-market mechanism, Friends of the Earth (FOE) twittered that ‘developed nations [led by the US] have reneged on their promises, weakened the rules on climate action and strengthened those that allow their corporations to profit from the climate crisis’. Appealing to the global ‘occupy movement’ FOE stated: ‘It is clear in whose interests this deal has been advanced, and it isn't the 99% of people around the world.  The noise of corporate polluters has drowned out the voices of ordinary people in the ears of our leaders’ (One World.Org, 12 December). The World Development Movement (WDM) went even further in their twitter, describing the UN climate talks in Durban as a “spectacular failure” ‘that will condemn the world’s poorest people to hunger, poverty and ultimately, death’ (Ibid).

### Lobbying for Green Capitalism

From Bali to Durban, consensus-building for a pro-development solution to global warming was pursued by free-trade lobbyists representing the timber and oil palm industry. Among the most outspoken was Australia’s Professor Alan Oxley. Alan Oxley is the managing director of international trade consultants ‘ITS Global’ (Rimbunan Hijau’s public relations consultant), and the chairman of the Australian APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) Study Centre at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, Australia, which is the coordinating, technical and advisory body that supports sustainable economic growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. He is also a former diplomat who held a position on Australia’s Foreign Affairs Council as Australia's envoy to GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), the predecessor to the World Trade Organization in the late 1980s.

# More recently, Oxley has become the founding chairman of ‘[World Growth](http://www.worldgrowth.org/)’, a free-market NGO based in Washington (D.C.), producing targeted research in areas with a direct bearing on international trade issues linked to the oil palm and timber industries. The annual COP meetings provided Oxley with international exposure during his press conferences; where he launched ‘World Growth’ pro-development reports challenging the dominant agenda of REDD to reduce deforestation and degradation. At the Copenhagen meeting Oxley released World Growth’s report ‘[C*onversion - The Immutable Link between Forestry and Development*](http://www.worldgrowth.org/assets/files/WG_Forestry_Conversion_Report.pdf)’ (2009) which argued that the cessation of conversion of land in tropical forest areas would retard development and harm the poor. The report labelled REDD as an ‘anti-development strategy’ which ignores the obligation of parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change not to hinder the development interests of developing countries (Word Growth Report, December 2009). In 2010, at the Cancun Climate Change Conference, World Growth released ‘*Palm Oil and Food Security: The impediment of Land Supply*’, which stated that proposals to reduce the amount of land converted for agriculture under schemes such as REDD will have a detrimental impact on global food prices and hunger levels (World Growth Report 2010). According to ITS Global, the carbon released when forest land is cleared is off-set by the carbon absorption properties of planting trees (ITS Global 2011:48).

# World’ Growth’s pro-development solutions to global warming reached international business audiences and government leaders via mainstream media outlets including *Bloomberg, CNN, CNBC, Wall Street Journal, International Herald Tribune, SBS World News Australia, Jakarta Post, and The New York Times,* as well as through leading national trade journals. The international media campaign attempted to undermine the fundamental principles of REDD as a conservation strategy and questioned the ethics and motives of some of the largest environmental lobby groups including Greenpeace International and the World Wildlife Fund. In 2010, a group of twelve scientists led by William Lawrence of James Cook University questioned Oxley’s integrity and criticised World Growth (WG) and ITS Global (ITS) for their support of Rimbunan Hijau:

Alan Oxley and ITS have often lobbied in favor of Rimbunan Hijau, one of the world’s largest industrial logging corporations. Rimbunan Hijau has been repeatedly criticized for its environmental and human-rights impacts in Papua New Guinea (Laurance et al 2010).

ITS Global retorted:

Laurence, et. al. throw a litany of accusations against PNG’s forest industry – specifically one company, Rimbunan Hijau — and align it with the country’s myriad social and environmental problems: corruption, violence, poor development indicators, deforestation and weak governance.

The implication is that without the forest industry in Papua New Guinea, the country would somehow magically be free of corruption, deforestation and other ills.  Anyone who has set foot in Papua New Guinea would be acutely aware of the absurdity of this (ITS Global, Forestry & Development Newsletter, 8 February 2011).

**Rimbunan Hijau and ‘Climate Capitalism’**

In 2008, prior to the Copenhagen Accord, Ivan Lu, Executive Director of Rimbunan Hijau PNG announced the company’s commitment toward working with the PNG government on reforestation (land that did not contain forest on 31 December 1989) and sustainable forest management (SFM), stating that it must also address social and environmental issues, within a CDM framework:

For development to be sustainable in a long term, it must take place within a framework that does not focus solely on short term financial returns, but must also address wider economic, social and environmental issues. In PNG, it is vital that the forest industry work closely with the Government in meeting the objective of the recently signed Australia-PNG Forest Carbon Agreement and the Clean Development Mechanism. There are certain issues that are to be considered for reforestation projects to be qualified under the CDM:

* Re-establishment of the natural biodiversity where a range of indigenous trees and plants must be established and grown in such a way that it can provide natural habitat for the natural flora and fauna can be maintained.
* Provision of wood for fuel and building industry and furniture to meet the demand and need for the areas so as to reduce deforestation, timber collection and to contribute to meeting a country’s domestic and exports needs.
* The ongoing management and protection of the reforested area to prevent its subsequent destruction.
* Creation of local sustainable industry like eco-tourism and agriculture.
* Selection of area for reforestation in line with the country’s development and environment protection plan.

In 2010, Rimbunan Hijau proposed implementing a ‘no risk strategy’ to addressing global warming:

The economic consequences of global warming mitigation strategies currently proposed will probably be worse than the effects of global warming itself. Therefore, adaptation and resiliency strategies should be considered as a more cost-effective alternative. In addition, “no regrets” strategies that will provide benefits from greater economic growth whether global warming proves to be a problem or not, should be adopted at once (RH PNG Newsletter Issue 16, 2010: 1).

The ‘no-risk strategy’ evoked in Rimbunan Hijau’s discourse includes expanding into oil palm development to supply strong market demand for biofuels. This would enable the company to leverage on its experience and technological capabilities in Malaysia and New Zealand.

In its home-state of Sarawak in Malaysia, Rimbunan Hijau’s publicly listed conglomerate ‘Rimbunan Sawit Berhad’ has focused on expanding rapidly through oil palm plantations and tapping in on the green economy through ‘Kyoto Partnerships’. Much of the demand for palm oil is being generated by global priorities for alternative energy sources such as biofuels. Through the CDM mechanism, Rimbunan Sawit has secured Kyoto-approved funding to install a methane recovery unit in a wastewater treatment plant for its RH Plantation Palm Oil Mill in Sarawak (UNFCCC 5 June 2009). Reducing carbon emissions counts toward its environmental corporate accountability:

One of our commitments to nature is the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) project in RH Plantation Palm Oil Mill. The project will recover methane caused by the decay of biogenic matter in the effluent stream. Methane recovered will be used to generate electricity for the mill and vicinity plantations. The project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in an economically sustainable manner and is expected to reduce carbon dioxide equivalent by 20,002 tons per year. Zero burning during land development is practiced to ensure minimal carbon emission. Besides, biological control is practiced for pest management to reduce the dependency on pesticides. Empty fruit bunch is used as much in plantations in order to recycle the nutrients present. This helps to reduce the dependency on chemical fertilizers (Rimbunan Sawit Website).

Another of Rimbunan Hijau’s publicly listed groups in Malaysia, ‘Subur Tiasa Holdings Berhad’, claims to be championing Sustainable Forest Management practices in timber plantations. Its 3-step ‘**Wood Spa Treatment’ (reducing wood damage; reducing wood waste; and reforestation) is supposedly evidence of the company’s ‘love of forests’, which is far outweighed by its love of sustainable supply:**

#### ****We love forests. We love wood.****

Our heart for habitat compels us to commit not just to practice Sustainable Forest Management but to spearhead a comprehensive strategy that strives to ensure the sustainability of the environment.

Simply put, we plant trees. We plant significantly more trees than we log. Thirty times to be precise (as of 2010). It is unrealistic to ignore the continual demand for wood as a material for very practical needs. Extensive research is also being carried out to ensure proper conservation of our forests.

Selected indigenous species are being planted and rapid-growing exotic species are planted in areas designated for Industrial Tree Planting. Island Corridor Planting is also practised to reduce the burden bore by the environment and to preserve biodiversity which is at Subur Tiasa’s heart.

To accelerate and ensure our sustainable growth in today’s competitive business environment, we have partnered with our major shareholder, Rimbunan Hijau Group, to invest in our wood treatment strategy that is fronted by none other than our Managing Director, Dato’ Tiong Ing, a zealous lover of the habitat (Subur Tiasa Website).

In New Zealand, Rimbunan Hijau’s ‘sister company’ ‘Ernslaw One’ (NZ fourth largest forestry plantation group) is also aligning to the green economy, branding its operations carbon-neutral:

Ernslaw One has over 25,000 ha of post-1989 Kyoto compliant forests, making it one of the largest owners of post-1989 forests in New Zealand…. The forests are spread throughout New Zealand, and comprise two species, Radiata pine and Douglas fir….Radiata pine is clear-felled anytime from age 25 onwards, whereas Douglas fir is from 45 years. This means that when Ernslaw One starts harvesting the Radiata pine in approx 2022, the Douglas fir will still be growing and will cover any carbon liability that may occur. Similarly, when the Douglas fir is being harvested, the Radiata pine will be growing. Ernslaw One can thus manage their forests for timber production, as well as ensuring that no liability arises for any carbon that is sold from the forest (Ernslaw One Webiste).

*Currently, Ernslaw One focuses on planting forest for the purposes of carbon credits, fibre and lumber, and plywood and pulp.  Yet, as of late, the company is also considering the possibility of extracting bio-oil from wood residues, and pursuing the possibilities of bio-energy crop. “You can plant trees for a number of streams, not just timber,” says Song. “If we enhance the value of our forests there is more potential. We are the first New Zealand forestry company, for instance, to export carbon to Europe. We have done four trades so far, two overseas totalling one million tonnes and two domestically totalling 200,000 tonnes. We see carbon management becoming a larger part of our business. Douglas fir is ideal for this as it can grow for over 100 years. It’s expensive to plant to begin with but is excellent for carbon management.”* [*http://www.manufacturingdigital.com/company-reports/future-thinking-forestry*](http://www.manufacturingdigital.com/company-reports/future-thinking-forestry) *(direct quotes)*

Drawing on its plantation experience in New Zealand and Malaysia, Rimbunan Hijau aims to invest in silvicul­ture and reforestation in Papua New Guinea. With plantation forestry high on its agenda, RH has been testing plantation species for suitability in Western Province (RH PNG Newsletter Issue 13, 2009). According to a report provided to the FIA PNG (Forest Industry Association) the design of Rimbunan Hijau’s plantations will incorporate the ‘Taungya system’ ofinter-planting food-crops between rows. Also included will be equal gender participation involving women’s work (tree planting and tending), and men’s works (thinning and pruning) (FIA PNG n.d). In order to comply with imperatives for Sustainable Forest management, Rimbunan Hijau’s Matrix of Benefits is strategically aligned to the three criteria for sustainable development (*social, ecological, and economic*).

***Table 1: RH Reforestation ‘Matrix of Benefits’*** *[[10]](#footnote-10)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Social*** | ***Ecological*** | ***Economic*** |
| Employment | Carbon sequestration | Timber Production |
| Recreation | Wildlife | Carbon trade |
| Taungya system | Aesthetic | Diversification of local economy |
| Fuelwood | Landscape & Biodiversity Restoration | Recreation, Tourism, Harvesting & Marketing of Minor Forest Products etc. |

(Source: FIA, n.d)

In terms of social contributions, Rimbunan Hijau has introduced a ‘Community Development Trust’ to facilitate community development goals and promote agricultural development and improved infrastructure in its PNG operations, it has funded more than K27 million on schools, churches aid posts and other social infrastructure (excluding roads) (RH PNG Newsletter; Issue 14, 2009), and donated K600,000 to the PNG Business Coalition against HIV and AIDS (BAHA) (RH PNG Newsletter Issue 16, 2010). These philanthropic gestures have so far failed to win the support of non-profit environment and civil society organizations, including PNGsEco Forestry Forum (EFF). In 2009, the EFF rejected Rimbunan Hijau’s offer to sponsor 500 mangrove trees for World Environment Day because of a court case brought about by EFF which (successfully) challenged the legal extension of Rimbunan Hijau’s logging concession ‘Kamula Doso’ in the Western Province. EFFs refusal to endorse its ‘green’ image drew a retort from RH’s public relations manager, who complained: ‘So much for battling the global climate change and environment sustainability war’ (RH Newsletter Issue 16, 2010: 3).

**A Climate of Discontent**

# Rimbunan Hijau’s strategy of capitalising on climate change through the enhancement of carbon stocks (reforestation) and biofuel production under the CDM is yet to be implemented in Papua New Guinea. To do this Rimbunan Hijau requires long term tenure arrangements in agroforestry projects on degraded land

# Insert Pulie-Anu in WNB and maybe WP (logged over land) as the case study here(as Pomio involves FCA).

# The granting of SABLs enables customary land (including primary forests) to be legally converted into agricultural development on land which is leased from landowners for ninety-nine years. For this reason they have been described as a mechanism for the appropriation of timber stocks. Former Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan described SABLs as a “conspiracy” between the national Department of Lands and international corporations to grab land from unsuspecting landowners from the rural areas (*Post Courier* *Editorial*; 10 November, 2011). The extent of the current ‘land-grab’ is staggering, involving almost 5 million hectares of customary land (11 per cent of PNG’s total land area) (Filer 2011:2).

In 2010, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) raised concerns that SABLS were purely a means of accessing saleable timber resources in the guise of agricultural (oil palm) development and stated that ‘[t]here is little evidence that these proposals will lead to viable palm oil production’ (Nelson et al 2010:11). In his detailed account of existing SABLS, Colin Filer (2011) pointed out:

It is a moot point whether the companies interested in the acquisition of such land in PNG have any genuine interest in its agricultural potential, or whether they are simply looking for new ways to log PNG's native forests (Filer 2011:2)

After much international outcry, SABLS became the subject of a Commission of Enquiry (COE) in August 2011. According to ITS Global, the ‘Statement of Case’ published by the GOPNG on August 4 to justify the inquiry indicates a high level of influence from environmental campaigners (ITS Global; August, 30, 2011). The Statement also links the Commission’s findings to PNG securing funding for REDD. The UN-approved National Plan for REDD in Papua New Guinea will release USD6.4 million for UN-backed projects in the country. Withdrawing around 80 per cent forest clearances issued with SABLs will be the most straightforward means of achieving emissions reductions, which was the basis of the Plan, according to ITS Global (Ibid). During the Commission of Enquiry into the Pomio SABL, the Commissioner was told that incorrect signatories were registered on the lease-lease back agreement (Post Courier; 10 November, 2011). Pepi Kimas, Secretary of PNG’s Lands Department earlier indicated that there are problems arising from within the Incorporated Land Groups (ITS Global, May 31 2011).

**A Regional Policy Framework for REDD[[11]](#footnote-11)**

In 2012, a Pacific Islands Regional Policy Framework for REDD+ was endorsed by the Pacific Ministers for Agriculture and Forestry at the Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry meeting held on 28 September 2012 in Nadi, Fiji. The framework identified the major drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in the Pacific Islands as “planned and unplanned timber harvesting and agricultural expansion”. Demand for economic development both locally and nationally, demand for logs and timber outside the region, and demand for land for food security and agricultural development were identified as the drivers of deforestation and degredation.

The report stated:

REDD+ activities provide an opportunity to create and sell (export) carbon assets instead of, or along side, timber assets. Accordingly, REDD+ activities in the larger Melanesian countries encompass an opportunity to access a significant source of foreign exchange earnings.

Section 4.1.2

Performance-based payments for REDD+ activities require defining activities in terms of the difference between a baseline/reference scenario and the implementation scenario.

Baseline/reference scenarios can include:

a. Deforestation is occurring or is likely to occur in the future.

b. Forest degradation is occurring or is likely to occur in the future.

c. A forest is already degraded and remaining degraded.

d. There is potential for a forest land use to replace a non-forest land use.

Implementation scenarios can involve:

1. Avoidance of current or future deforestation by protecting a forest.

2. Avoidance of current or future deforestation by implementing sustainable forest management.

3. Avoidance of current or future degradation by implementing sustainable forest management

***4. Conversion of a low carbon (degraded) forest to a high carbon forest.***

***5.* Conversion of non-forest land to forest land (including re-establishment of indigenous forest, plantation establishment, and agroforestry).**

Section 4.1.3

The greatest per hectare financial returns from REDD+ activities are where the carbon stock difference between the “without-payment” and the “with-payment” scenario is largest. The positive difference between the “without-payment” and “with-payment” carbon stock can be understood as ‘carbon benefits’.

*4.1.3a In order to prioritise which activity types to pursue, Pacific Island countries should estimate the approximate per hectare carbon benefits associated with different activity types.* ***Non-carbon co-benefits and alignment with existing national priorities should also be considered****.*

4.2.1. REDD+ will suit different countries at different scales. The scale of approach will also depend on what financing instruments are available.

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| --- | --- |
| *4.2.1a The larger Pacific Island countries may want to consider the following options:* National approach | Involves national carbon accounting and the distribution of financial benefits to nations from the financing instrument. Nations then need to develop sub-national financial benefits distribution systems. May be required under the UNFCCC; currently an option outside UNFCCC. |
| Jurisdictional and nested approach | A jurisdiction is either a national or sub-national entity. This approach involves jurisdiction-scale carbon accounting in combination with jurisdictional-scale and/or project-scale activities. Currently an option outside the UNFCCC; may be an option under the UNFCCC. |
| **Project scale approach** | **Involves project-scale carbon accounting and the distribution of financial benefits from financing instruments directly to forest-owning communities. A potentially valuable approach:**  **− for early action prior to the availability of a UNFCCC mechanism;**  **− if the UNFCCC does not produce a financing instrument;**  **− if a country elects to not undertake the UNFCCC approach.**  **Individual projects can operate over areas between tens of hectares to tens of thousands of hectares depending on the financing instrument.** |
| **Grouped project approach** | Enables the bundling and replication of projects in a ‘programme of activities’. This approach can be used to:  a. **Generate economies of scale for several small project sites**  b. **Operate national crediting schemes without the need for national scale REDD+ engagement,**  **c. Bundle projects from different islands within a country and/or between countries** |

*4.6.2a Pacific Island countries should strengthen their REDD+ programmes by integrating REDD+ with other forest governance and integrity programmes such as:*

• *Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) voluntary partnership agreements*

• *Forest Governance Integrity in Asia Pacific*

• *Transparency International*

• *Forest certification*

4.6.3 REDD+ implementation can take place on government-owned land, freehold land, and/or customary land. Performance-based payments for REDD+ will be dependent upon clear delineation of land tenure, carbon tenure arrangements, as well as effective, equitable, and transparent benefit sharing arrangements for REDD+ implementation activities.

*4.6.3a Pacific Island countries and/or REDD+ project proponents will need to clarify land and forest carbon tenure arrangements as a key condition of REDD+ implementation.*

*4.6.3b Pacific Island countries already possess laws and regulations guiding the production, distribution and sale of commodities (e.g. timber, minerals) derived from natural resources. These laws and regulations can be used as a starting point for the development of laws and regulations (including taxation) guiding the production, distribution and sale of carbon assets.*

*4.6.3c Pacific Island countries should ensure effective, equitable and transparent distribution of benefits arising from REDD+ implementation. Benefit distribution and benefit sharing systems should address gender equality.*

*4.6.3d Pacific Island countries should share experiences on involving resource owners, defining forest* carbon rights and REDD+ financial benefit distribution.

REDD+ implementation activities must be in line with international instruments to protect the rights of indigenous people. These instruments include the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and United Nations Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNCSICH). Almost 90% of land in the Pacific Islands is under customary ownership making the indigenous people of the Pacific major resource owners.

*4.6.4a Pacific Island countries should ensure that the knowledge and rights of indigenous people are respected and protected and constitutional rights of customary landowners are not violated by REDD+ activities.*

*4.6.4b Pacific Island countries should recognise that the integrity and durability of REDD+ implementation will depend upon definition and adherence to the principle of free, prior, informed consent (FPIC) of resource owners*

4.6.8 Leakage (the displacement of emissions) occurs when REDD+ activities cause a reduction of emissions at one location, and an increase of emissions in another (i.e. no net benefit to the atmosphere). Local leakage can be reduced by addressing local drivers, and is usually a requirement of project-scale financing instruments. Leakage within one country is eliminated if a national-scale approach to REDD+ is used.

*4.6.8a Pacific Island countries will need to address leakage as an integral component of REDD+ implementation.*

4.*6.8b Controlling leakage across the Pacific Island region will require regional cooperation.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Glossary** Afforestation | The direct human-induced conversion of land that has not been **forested for a period of at least 50 years** to forested land through planting, seeding and/or the human-induced promotion of natural seed sources. (UNFCCC) |
| Agroforestry | A collective name for land use systems and practices in which woody perennials are deliberately integrated with crops and/or animals on the same land management unit. The integration can be either in a spatial mixture or in a temporal sequence. There are normally both ecological and economic interactions between woody and non-woody components in agroforestry” |

**ITS Global’s Response to Regional Framework (Forestry & Development Newsletter)**

November 7th, 2012

The framework will “retard not advance economic development in the Pacific Islands” .

The drafting of the regional framework was supported by the “Climate Protection through Forest Conservation in Pacific Island Countries” project and funded by the German government’sInternational Climate Initiative. It argues the major drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in the Pacific Islands are planned and unplanned timber harvesting and agricultural expansion. It reflects the position of Western aid donors that “REDD+” promotes low carbon economies through the development and sale of carbon credits from forest instead of, or alongside, timber products.

REDD+ has never been officially endorsed as a program of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.  It has been pushed by donors and the World Bank. REDD strategies are based on UN assessments which are now [shown](http://forestryanddevelopment.com/site/2012/07/02/winrock-data-global-deforestation-emissions-halved-again/) to have overstated global greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation by least 50 percent.  The annual 2011 FAO survey of the “[State of the World’s Forests](http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2000e/i2000e.pdf)” finds PNG’s deforestation rates are small. Nevertheless, aid donors are now pressing developing countries to adopt “low carbon” strategies to reduce emissions.  The contention is that countries like PNG can replace existing activities, like forestry, with programs to create carbon credits from forest strands and sell them.  The PNG Forest Industry Association has [shown](http://forestryanddevelopment.com/site/2009/11/12/pngfia-releases-study-on-economic-importance-of-land-use-in-png/) this is impracticable.  “Carbon farming” would be much less productive than most other commercial uses.

**Concluding Remarks**

Despite implementing ‘green’ technologies in its home-state operations, Rimbunan Hijau’s international reputation continues to be defined by the perspective that it is widely engaging in unethical commodity production. As corporations such as Rimbunan Hijau compete for market-share in the newly emerging international climate regime for forests, evidence of voluntary compliance with socially and environmentally sustainable development, as well as the existence of collaborative partnerships and inclusive dialogues is increasingly necessary to demonstrate increasing standards of corporate accountability, which requires business activities to be compatible with robust social, environmental and ecological safeguards. In the long term, pressures to conform to global voluntary initiatives such as the ‘Sustainable Commodity Initiative’ (International Institute for Sustainable Development), which places a greater focus on consumer end of supply chains, may gradually move Rimbunan Hijau’s commitment from the instrumental politics of resource acquisition to genuine reform towards value-creation, which could generate increased socio-economic benefits in rural economies.

The prevalence of active forms of participatory politics as exemplified by international critique, social, environmental watchdogs, and landowner resistance groups, indicates that the long-term presence of Rimbunan Hijau in the forests of Oceania may be contingent not only upon its capacity to introduce green technologies, but upon its ability to deliver collaborative outcomes defined by local perspectives and desires, as well as national and global objectives. In the meantime, the widening gulf between the corporation, landowners, and NGOs suggest that the expanding frontiers of climate capitalism in Oceania will continue to be defined by the politics of ‘friction’ (Tsing 2005).

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1. As of 2010, there were 197 active JI projects (UNFCCC 2010) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Project 2510in Bolivia [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Coalition for Rainforest Nations includes Bangladesh, Belize, Bolivia, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Congo, Colombia, Costa Rica, DR Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, El Salvador, Fiji, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Thailand, Uruguay, Uganda, Vanuatu and Vietnam (FERN Briefing Note 02; Nov. 8, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. International Tropical Timber Organization [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Global deforestation has decreased from an estimated 16 million hectares per year in the 1990s to around 13 million hectares per year in the last decade’ (FAO 2011:3). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This was primarily due to large scale afforestation efforts in China, where the forest area increased by 2 million hectares per year in the 1990s and by an average of 3 million hectares per year since 2000. Bhutan, India, the Philippines and Viet Nam also registered forest area increases in the last decade’ (FAO 2011:9). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Conservation areas in the Asia-Pacific increased by 1.8% from 2000-2010 (FAO 2011:9). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. PNG was one of 50 ‘pilot countries’ selected for the REDD-plus interim partnership to formalize areas of agreement on REDD-plus. The REDD-plus interim partnership focuses on “fast track” financing of REDD-plus action to supplement the UNFCCC negotiation track (UNEP 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <http://unfccc.int/files/press/press_releases_advisories/application/pdf/pr20110812_offsetting.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *FIAPNG* *Report by Rimbunan Hijau on Reforestation*, n.d:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. REGIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR REDD+ (Paper endorsed by The3rd Regional Conference of Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry (MOAFS) on 28 September 2012 in Nadi, Fiji) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)