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International Tropical Peatlands Center

Why peatlands matter for food security



**Wednesday
3 June 2020**



03:30-05:00 pm – CET (Central European Time)

08:30-10:00 am – PET (Peru)

02:30-04:00 pm – WAT (Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo)

02:30-04:00 pm – WAT (Brazzaville, Republic of Congo)

08:30-10:00 pm – WIB (Jakarta, Indonesia)

Background

Peatlands play important roles in storing carbon and nature conservation. Healthy peatlands not only provide critical habitats for biodiversity, but they also provide vital ecosystem services, including cleaning and storing water, and climate regulation. In all countries, especially in the tropics, peatlands support food security and livelihoods for many communities.

The edges of peatlands, often along rivers, have a long history of human settlement. Peatlands are challenging places to live, but provide a range of products and income sources. For many people in the tropics, including in Indonesia, fishing in peatland catchments is the main source of income. Such groups traditionally catch fish and reptiles, and collect fuel wood, grass and non-timber forest products in peatlands.

Across the Cuvette Centrale peatlands in both the Republic of the Congo (RoC) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), people also rely on peat forest resources for their livelihoods, with a focus on fishing and small-scale farming of crops such as manioc (*Manihot esculenta*) and banana (*Musa spp.*), and limited livestock, including goats and chickens.

In Peru, most of the country's peatlands are located in the Amazon basin, but some are also present in the Andes. Lowland peatlands are mostly forested, hosting a high density of *Mauritia flexuosa* palms – known locally as *aguajes*. People consume the fruits

of the aguaje palm and a weevil – called *suri*– that develops inside dead palm trunks. These products are important sources of vitamins and proteins, especially for rural communities. Unfortunately, historically, the harvesting of these fruits has not been very sustainable. However, techniques are being introduced to harvest only what is needed from the palm.

Challenges

- In Indonesia, the use of peatlands is becoming more restricted due to increased awareness of their environmental significance. Therefore, it is necessary to develop alternate sources of livelihoods to allow peat-based communities to continue to pursue economic development.
- In Peru, 73 percent of the area of palm swamp forest on peatlands has been degraded. CIFOR research results suggest that degradation induces a shift in forest composition; the forest becomes dominated by woody trees instead of palms.
- Both in DRC and RoC, a large proportion of the residents of the Cuvette Centrale practice subsistence agriculture. Plots tend to be relatively small and located close to *tera ferma* villages. Local activity within the peatlands is limited to hunting and harvesting of forest products, such as palm fronds for roof construction. The current impact of local residents on the peatland ecosystems is likely to be minor and relatively sustainable in its current form.

Goal and Objectives

The 90-minute peatlands session at the GLF Digital Summit will provide a platform for exchanging knowledge and experience between participants and facilitators/resource persons in the following areas:

- Lessons from Indonesia and Peru showing peatlands are unsuitable for agriculture due to their acidic and nutrient-poor soils. In addition, many crops are unable to cope with the flooded conditions in peatlands.
- The key message from peatland research worldwide is that they should not be drained. There are other sustainable options for livelihoods in these ecosystems, and these need to be defined and developed in tandem with the communities living within them.
- DRC and RoC are committed to developing and promoting land use models that support sustainable peatland management and economic empowerment of local communities.

Expected outputs

- To share the importance of peatlands for food security
- To provide positive examples of transformations in livelihoods in peatland landscapes: how, why?
- To provide recommendations and actions so that peatland deforestation and degradation do not feature in future scenarios

Key messages



Farmers/smallholders

1. Understanding the necessity of conserving peatlands and demonstrating opportunities for peatland livelihoods, e.g. fisheries
2. Voices from the landscape – highlighting key challenges/messages for policy makers



Governments

1. How do you envision peatland ecosystem conservation relating to food security issues over the next 5-10 years?
2. What will leaders commit to?
3. What are the sticking points for governments?



Scientist

1. Demonstrate the role of peatland science in relation to food issues

Panelists

Moderator:

Jeremy van Loon

Team Leader Outreach and Engagement, CIFOR

Dr. Alue Dohong

Vice Minister, Ministry Environment and Forestry, Republic of Indonesia

Dr. Roch Germain Mpassi-Moumpassi

Director-General of Sustainable Development Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Republic of the Congo

Dr. Gabriel Quijandría Acosta

Deputy Minister of Strategic Development of Natural Resources, Ministry of Environment, Peru

Dr. Jean Jacques Bambuta

DRC National Coordinator and Focal Point of Peatlands, Democratic Republic of Congo

Prof. Susan Page

Professor of Physical Geography, University of Leicester, United Kingdom

Zulaili Isnaini Habib

Lecturer of Anthropology, University of Riau, Indonesia

Dompas Ghedang Cemerlang

Forest Farmer Group (Kelompok Tani Hutan/KTH), Riau, Indonesia

Georgine Lumba-Lobengo

Association des Femmes Pygmées de l'Équateur (l'AFPEQ)

Gerard Bondeko

Communities Coordinator, Wildlife Conservation Society's Lac Tele Community Reserve project, Republic of Congo




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Rundown

| Time | Activity | Format |
|---|---|---|
| 03:30 - 03:33 (3 min) | Moderator introduction – setting the scene and intro to Part #1 | Setting the scene (the what, why, how, where, and who of the topic) |
| Part #1 (Farmer Representatives) | | |
| 03:33 - 03:48 (15 min) | Voices from peatlands communities | Community voices a necessity for conserving peatlands for sustainable community food supply and nutrition for future generation |
| 03:48 - 03:58 (10 min) | Audience Q&A | 'Ask me anything' |
| Part #2 (Scientists) | | |
| 03:58 - 04:00 (2 min) | Host introduces Part #2 and panelists | |
| 04:00 - 04:10 (10 min) | Moderated panel discussion | The role of peatland science in food issues |
| 04:10 - 04:25 (15 min) | Audience Q&A | 'Ask me anything' |
| Part #3 (Governments) | | |
| 04:25 - 04:28 (3 min) | Host introduces Part #3 and panelists | |
| 04:28 - 04:43 (15 min) | Moderated policy round table | Government envision for the next 5-10 years peatlands ecosystem conservation related with food issues |
| 04:43 - 04:58 (15 min) | Audience Q&A | 'Ask me anything' |
| 04:58 - 05:00 (2 min) | Wrap up | Moderator |



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The International Tropical Peatlands Center is a multi-stakeholder cooperation and collaboration. All of its member countries will each provide input in contributing to its development.