

CLARA

Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance

CLARA statement at COP 25: Climate action in land, forests + other ecosystems

We face two global and interlinked emergencies - climate and biodiversity. Neither can be solved in isolation. Nor can they be solved unless the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities are respected and development pathways promoted that benefit nature and people.

Business as usual in any sector must be re-assessed. Nowhere more so than in land and forests where past UNFCCC approaches have led to perverse outcomes and fostered low mitigation/high risk outcomes.

Transformational change cannot be achieved unless the UNFCCC is prepared to embrace the holistic approaches intended and foreshadowed, in the Paris Agreement.

Actions that nourish communities and the biodiversity and ecosystems that support them must be prioritized over large-scale agri-business and industrial scale extraction. Neither is viable in a rapidly changing world. We can no longer afford to trade off biodiversity, ecosystem integrity, the rights and interests of IPLCs and climate resilience for short-term economic gain.

The scale of biodiversity loss and resulting loss of ecosystem integrity combined with 1.1 degrees of warming is resulting in profound changes affecting agricultural and natural systems. Imagine what 2 degrees will mean for food production and other ecosystem services on which we all depend.

The rapid changes we are experiencing means it is fundamentally important to protect and restore ecosystem integrity as the condition of ecosystems affects their vulnerability to climate change, the likelihood of premature release of carbon to the atmosphere and their adaptive capacity.

Improving the protection of carbon dense primary ecosystems, ecological restoration, agroecological farming systems, and community conservation provide robust, long term, and relatively stable climate mitigation and adaptation outcomes.

Activities that endanger livelihoods, harm ecosystems, and fail to advance true mitigation ambition must be avoided.

Land and Forest Climate Actions Supported by Clara

In its 2018 report [‘Missing Pathways to 1.5°C: the role of the land sector in ambitious climate action](#), CLARA identified appropriate sequestration, avoided-emission, and adaptation solutions that improve the outlook for biodiversity and ecosystem integrity while safeguarding food security and rights. ‘Missing Pathways’ provides a roadmap for land-sector solutions that contribute to <2°C warming scenarios – without offsetting, and without BECCS or other geoengineering solutions.

Protecting primary forests through supporting the rights and livelihoods of indigenous peoples; encouraging regeneration of 25% of natural wood production forests to their biological potential -- ‘proforestation’ – and implementing agroecological practices are key mitigation actions identified by CLARA to limit

warming to 1.5 degrees and to help solve the biodiversity crisis. Rigorous indicators for protecting and restoring ecosystem condition, rather than just increased forest cover, must be the critical parameter for evaluating reforestation actions.

CLARA is strongly supportive of the land-sector ambition if it is underpinned with a respect for land and human rights and planetary boundaries.

Rights *must* be at the core of climate ambition: 1) *procedural rights* for communities (e.g., access to information, consultation, free prior and informed consent); 2) *rights pertaining to food security and sovereignty* emphasizing vulnerable groups; and 3) *customary rights and legal recognition of resource tenure*, emphasizing indigenous rights including FPIC. Due consideration must be given to the fact that half of the world's land is under customary claims or management.

Climate action in land must be developed in consultation with local and indigenous communities and build on their traditional knowledge. Investment in community resource rights is often the *most* critical factor in securing resilience and robust mitigation outcomes.

We also note the critical importance of biodiversity within agro ecological systems. Improving biodiversity in soil improves productivity while enhancing moisture retention and carbon storage. Biodiversity is the most important indicator of agricultural soil health. Agroecological solutions improve farmer livelihoods and increase resilience of these working lands.

CLARA does not support:

Land based action that provides [fossil fuel companies](#) with sources of cheap offset credits. We are witnessing the dangerous expansion of this thinking into a critical global sector for climate mitigation – aviation – that is exploring the use of REDD+ credits to allow for continuous expansion of air travel.

Proposals to increase forest cover based on the expansion of monoculture plantations, while at the same time continuing to convert or degrade primary and other natural forests, even though primary carbon dense ecosystems are irreplaceable for their climate and biodiversity value.

‘Climate smart agriculture’ which promotes intensive agricultural practices at the expense of improving the ecological health of soils and social justice.

Utilizing climate action in land and forests to offset industrial emissions at a time when there is simply no longer any room in carbon budgets for any form of offsetting and when the risks of carbon release to the atmosphere differ significantly between ecosystem carbon stocks and geological stocks – particularly high risk/ low integrity monoculture plantations.

Actions that create or increase risks to environmental defenders, pushing back on forest-sector corruption, and targeting companies that have failed to make or meet anti-deforestation commitments.