

► Project *brief*

Thünen Institute of International Forestry and Forest Economics

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Improved governance helps reducing tropical deforestation

 Richard Fischer¹ · Lukas Giessen² · Sven Günter¹

- A scientific literature review identifies components of governance, which have a positive impact on tropical deforestation
- It provides a differentiated picture of governance effects
- From a multitude of possible governance components only a few are applied in practice, mostly showing positive effects and interrelations
- Governance effects strongly depend on the context of deforestation drivers, such as illegal logging or population growth

Background and aims

Today, all major forest policies aiming to reduce deforestation emphasize the importance of improved governance. Forest governance considers all rules, structures, actors and practices related to forests. To get indications on whether there is a general relation between governance and reduced deforestation, we selected the 32 most frequently cited studies from over 800 publications on deforestation. We used systematic content analysis and multiple regression analysis in reviewing these literatures.

Selected discussion points

Among a number of governance components (Figure 1), **clear tenure and ownership** was strongly associated with decreasing deforestation. However, in some cases forests become overexploited as soon as ownership is clarified. Therefore, a combination with structural governance components like laws, enforcement and institutions is needed as well.

Executive state forest agencies are observed having a positive effect and have a complex role to play: on the one hand, they are seen as advocates and moderators of local interests, but are responsible for enforcing laws and rules on the other.

Deforestation drivers such as illegal logging and population growth influence governance effects. Hence, governance effects on deforestation are context specific.

Conclusions

Improving governance in tropical countries appears as a promising approach to reduce tropical deforestation and needs to be taken into account in development cooperation. This holds true for classical core components depicted in Figure 1. Established governance frameworks, however, include a much broader range of components, which are rarely studied. The specific context of deforestation drivers needs to be analyzed and considered, before governance measures are taken. Such governance measures should strengthen existing structures, rules and institutional frames, as well as support own initiatives and private motivation.

Results

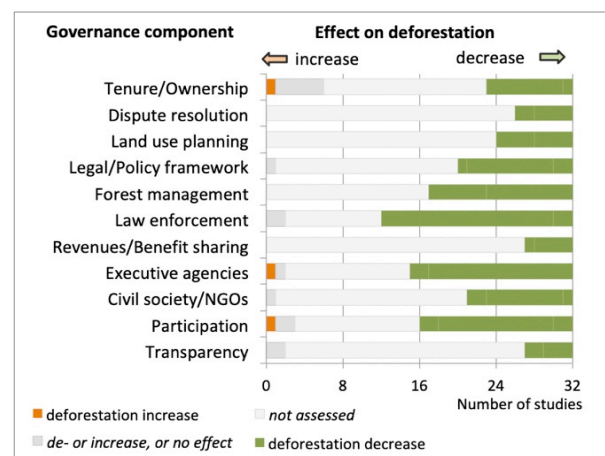


Figure 1): Number of studies that mentioned effects of specific governance components. All governance components have the potential to reduce deforestation but are studied with differing frequencies.

Further Information

Contact

¹ Thünen Institute of International Forestry and Forest Economics
richard.fischer@thuenen.de

² EFI European Forest Institute

www.thuenen.de/en/wf

Publication

Fischer, R., Giessen, L., Günter, S:
Governance effects on deforestation in the tropics: A review of the evidence (in peer review).