

Paris 2015 and Peatlands – Vision and Reality

Bernd Hofer - Summary

The outcome of the Paris Declaration requires that there is a reduction of GHG-emissions resulting from drained peatlands of approximately 70% by 2030, with the remaining 30% achieved by 2050. This presentation analyses the different sources of GHG emissions from peatlands according to region and land use, and describes the efforts needed to stop them.

GHG emissions from peatlands – different sources

The Global Peatland CO₂ Picture (H. Joosten and Wetlands International 2008) gives a clear impression of the different sources of GHG-emissions from drained peatlands. Though definitions and methodologies used may vary between regions, this work clearly illustrates the differing emissions resulting from drained peatlands across regions and peatland uses, and outlines appropriate actions. This data should not be used to point a finger at any particular nation - *everyone* is required to make efforts to reduce these emissions as soon as possible.

The challenge – stopping emissions from agriculture on peatlands

Through illustrative examples the presentation analyses the magnitude of this challenge. Special attention is given to current developments and projects in Indonesia and Central Europe. But subsidy policies of the EU in the agricultural sector and energy policy are drivers too.

Technical aspects such as GHG emission performance of rewetted peatlands are an important component of a forecast of future peat-related emissions. First results of the current research project “Optimoor” will be presented. This project investigates different technical approaches to rewetting peatlands used for agriculture, considering aspects of climate protection and nature conservation.

Stopping emissions from peat extraction

There is positive news emerging regarding the reduced use of peat and correlated reduction in peat-derived emissions. The percentage of available alternative and renewable raw materials is increasing, especially for growing media for the hobby market. Furthermore, co-combustion of wood and peat or replacement of peat by regenerative fuel is taking place more and more. The peat industry is not far away from fulfilling its emissions reduction target of 30% in 2020, and a reduction of even 50% or more (compared to 1990) is imaginable in the coming decades.

On the other hand, there is an increasing global demand for growing media, and thus for more raw materials. To meet this demand, and where peat cannot be replaced by alternative renewable raw materials, it should be supplied from already degraded peatlands. In regions where these do not exist, such as in Canada, responsible extraction techniques, combined with successful restoration, should be the standard practice. This strategic approach is in line with the IPS’s “Wise use of Peatlands” and “Strategy for Responsible Peatland Management”, and with existing certification systems like “Veriflora” or “RPP”.

Conclusion

Given the scale of the task of stopping GHG emissions from peatlands during the next one or two decades, we should take notice of all positive developments and make the general public and government aware of them. All actors must also think about options to cooperate. A common dialogue and conciliatory moves are indispensable in this campaign for the more responsible management of peatlands.