



Tropentag, September 10-12, 2025, hybrid conference

“Reconcile land system changes
with planetary health”

Shifting ground: understanding policy change and stability in indonesia’s forest governance in responding to climate change

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Abstract

Indonesia’s forest policy has undergone notable shifts in recent years. Early policies primarily focused on economic development through timber extraction. In contrast, recent policies have addressed multiple challenges, including alignment with global climate commitments. For example, Indonesia has ratified climate change mechanisms such as REDD+ and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. However, national interests in economic development continue to influence forest policy, often conflicting with climate goals. Frame analysis is a relevant approach to understanding how policy change and stagnation occur, by revealing how actors construct narratives involving perceived problems and solutions. This research aims to better understand recent policy changes in Indonesia’s forest governance in response to climate change and investigate how different actors contribute to and frame these changes. The study combines document analysis of forest and land use-related policies—from legal texts and strategic plans to programme documents—with purposive, semi-structured interviews of key actors to identify dominant policy themes and actor perspectives. Preliminary findings indicate that there has been policy change in response to climate change, such as the introduction of carbon value policies and the FOLU Net Sink Strategy. However, policy stagnation persists, as the focus remains on economic development goals and the introduction of new policy instruments such as Multi-Business Forestry, which also involves carbon projects that align with these objectives. The government remains the central actor in shaping forest policy, which corresponds with international climate commitments. However, the private sector has also become increasingly involved, particularly in carbon-related initiatives. For example, the introduction of carbon value policies and the growing number of private sector-led carbon projects are shaping the forest governance landscape. Overall, forest policy change and stagnation in Indonesia are often framed as opportunities for economic development, allowing for both continuity and innovation in forest governance. Understanding how various actors influence and frame forest policy in this context is critical for assessing the effectiveness of Indonesia’s climate-related forest policies.

Keywords: Climate Change, Forest governance, forest Policy, Frame Analysis, Indonesia, Policy Change