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Growing Our Future!
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Drivers of Forest Change in the Greater Mekong Subregion

Vietnam Country Report

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Vietnam

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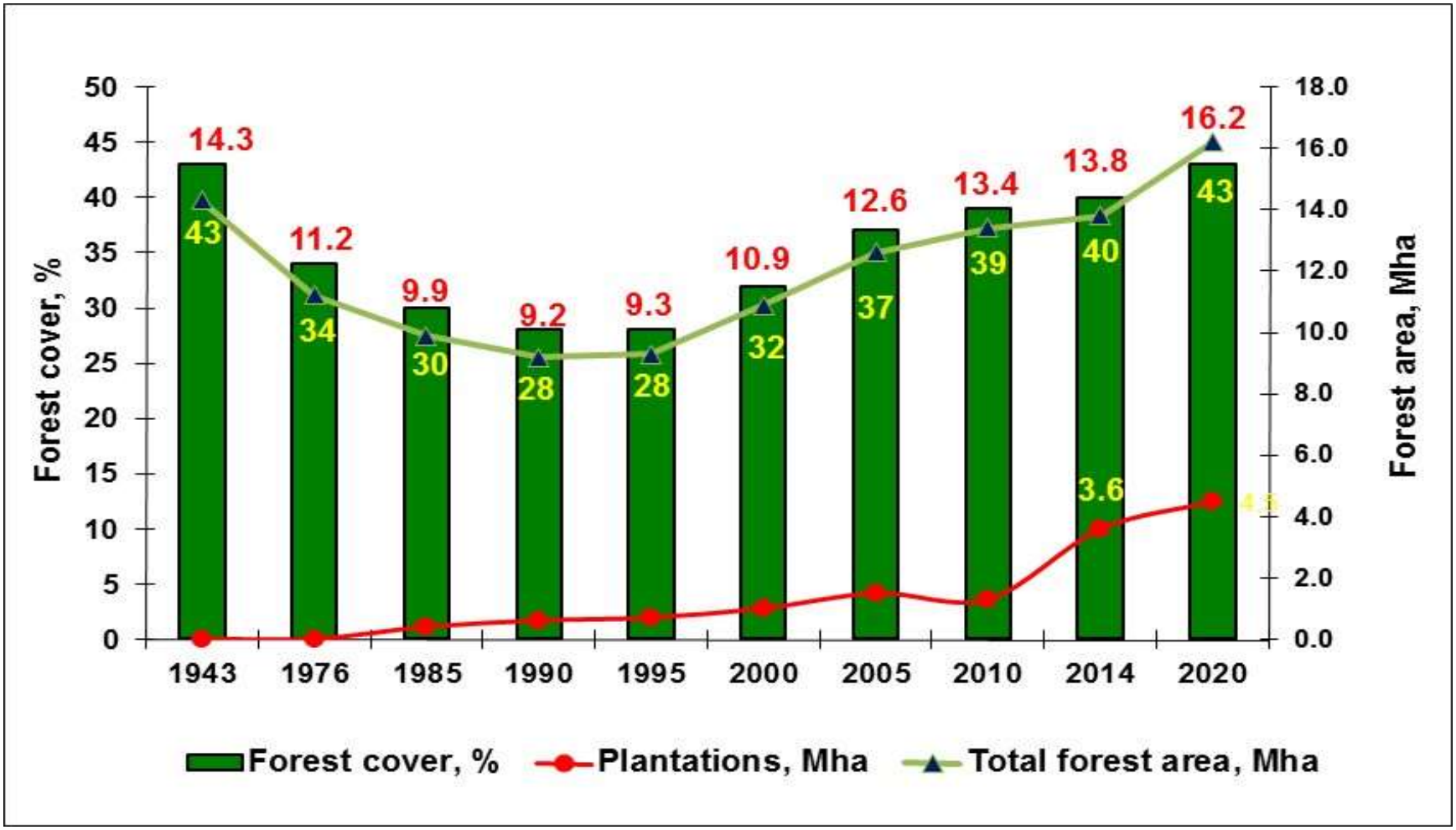
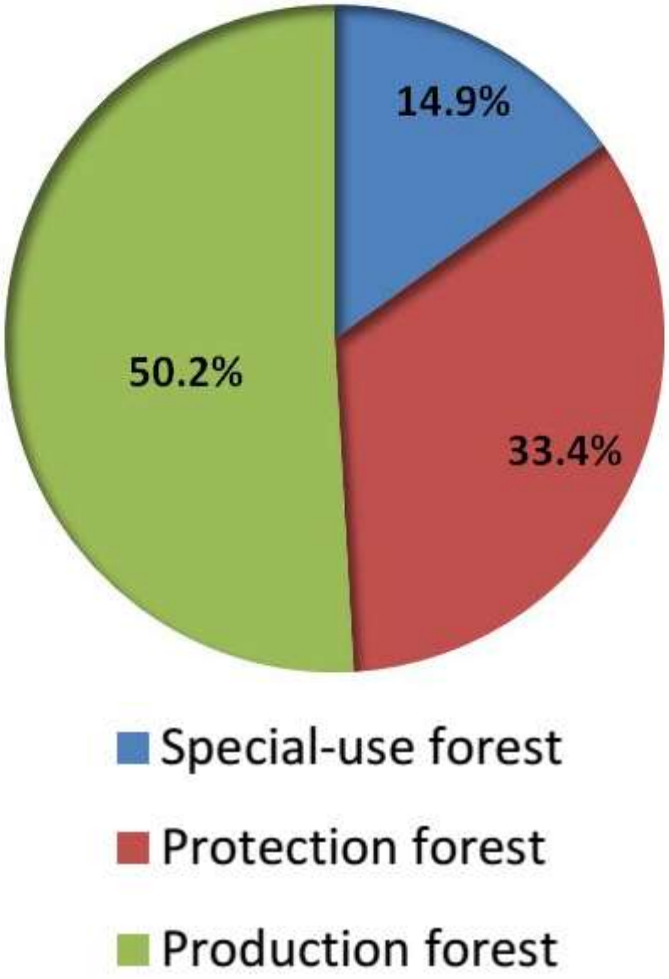
1. Overview of trends in forest and land use sector



1. Overview of trends in forest and land use sector

- national forest cover rose from 35.8% in 2002 to 41.0% in 2013
- about 10.4 million hectares were natural forests and 3.5 million hectares were forest plantations
- Approximately 75% of natural forests in Vietnam are classified as regenerated, degraded and poor natural forests

1. Overview of trends in forest and land use sector

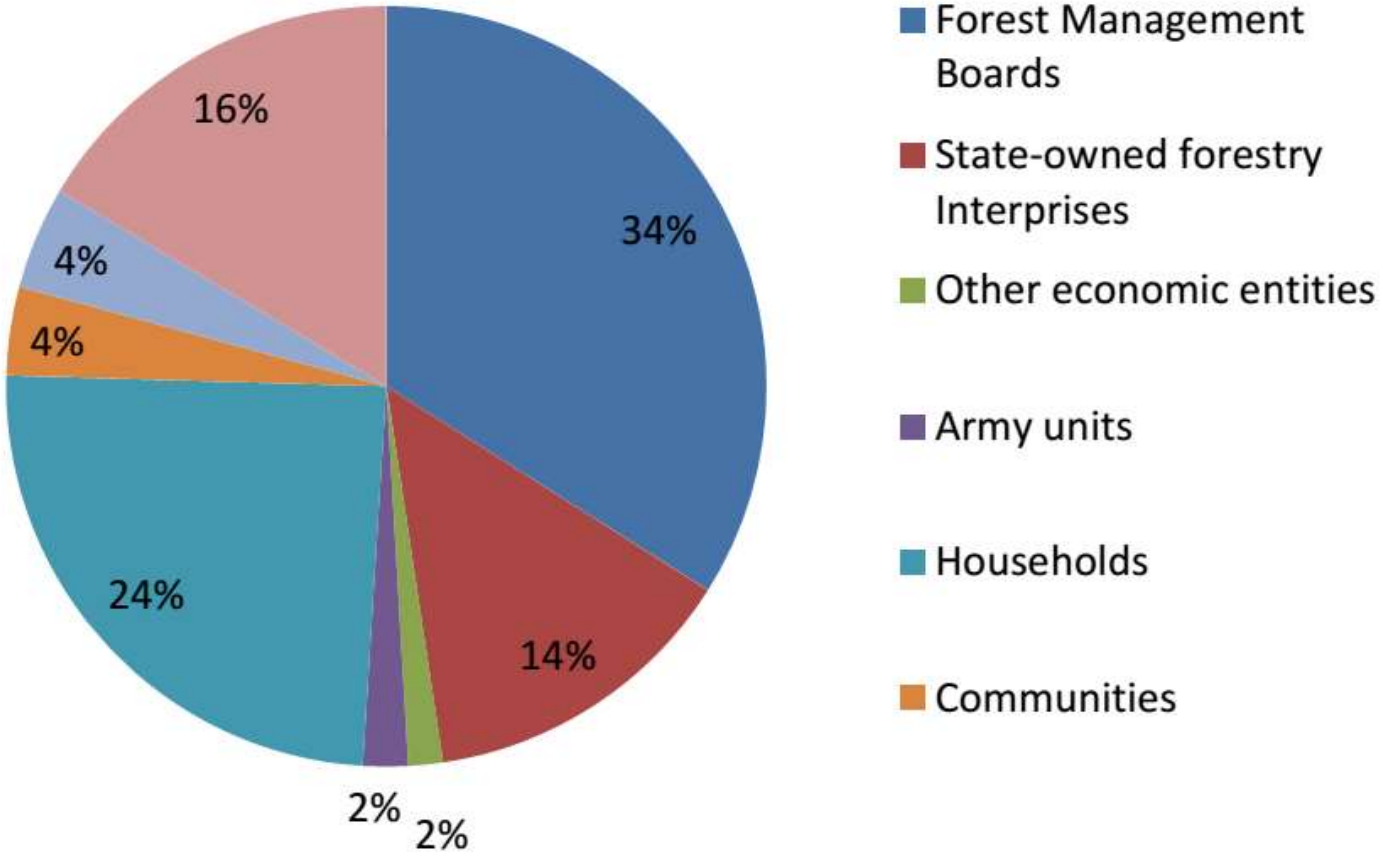


Forest area by functions

Forests in Vietnam are classified into three categories according to their designated use or purpose:

- Special-use forests (2,082 million ha or 15% of the total forests) are designated for the purpose of biodiversity conservation such as protected areas, natural parks and natural reserves;
- Protection forests (4.66 million ha or around 33%) are established for environmental protection purposes such as watershed and soil protection;
- Production forests (about 7 million ha, accounting for 50%) are used mainly for timber production

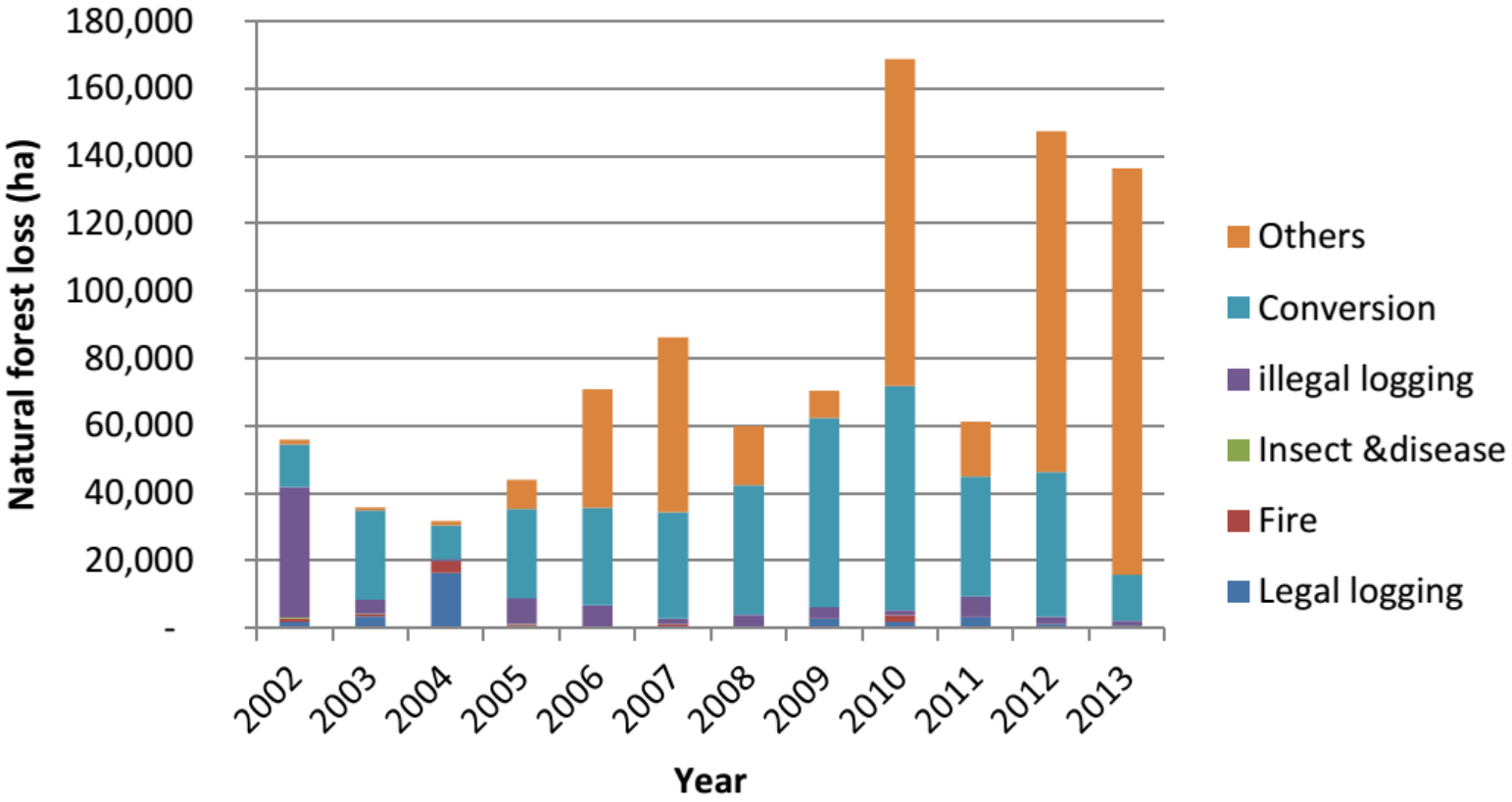
Forestland classification by management systems in Vietnam



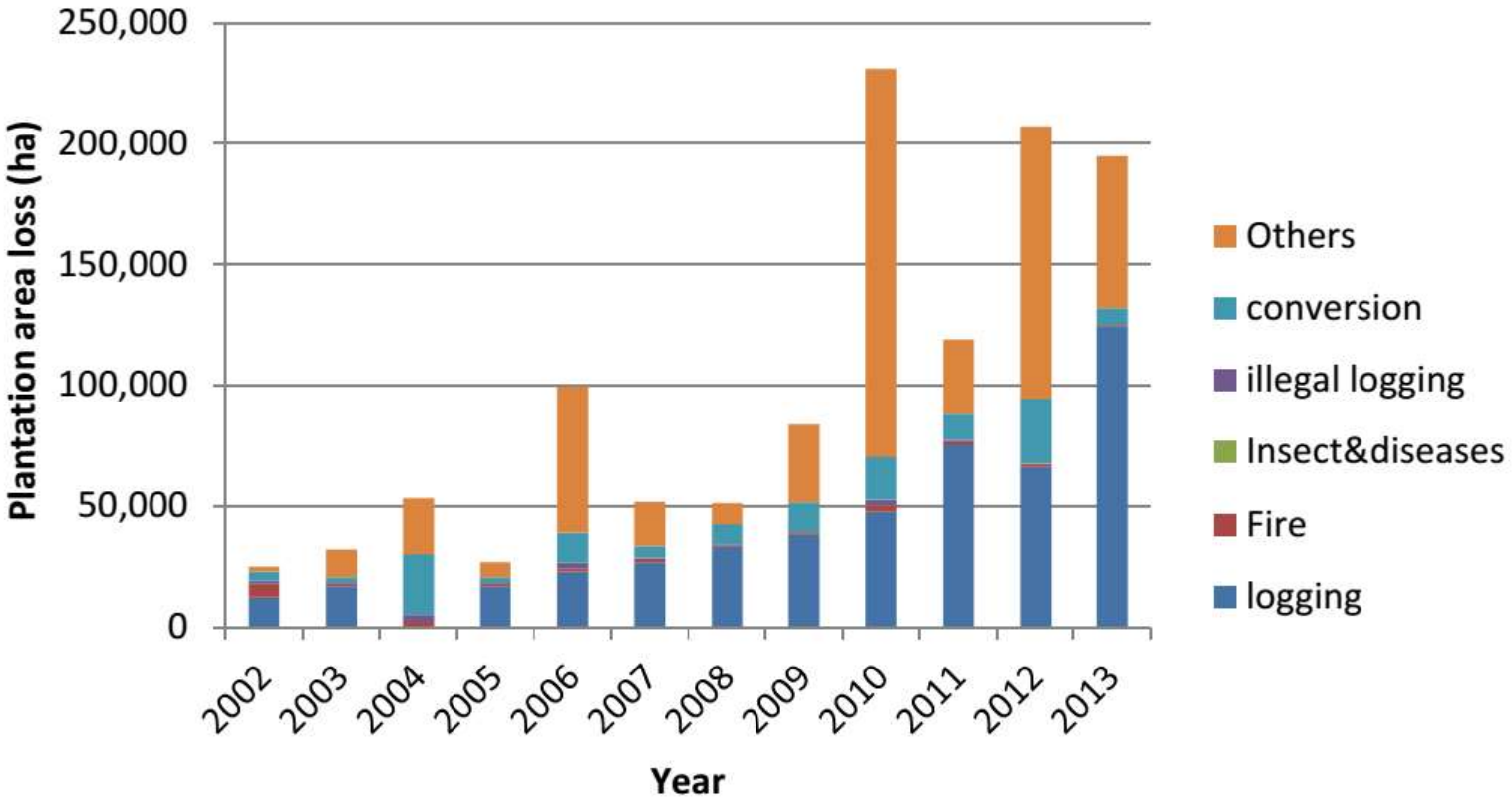
2. Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation

2.1. Direct drivers

- logging (both legal and illegal);
- forestland conversion to infrastructure and high commercial perennial plantations;
- forest fire;
- insects and diseases; and
- other causes, mainly land conversion into annual crops by local people



Natural forest loss in Vietnam by causes



Plantation forest loss in Vietnam by causes

2. Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation

Drivers of natural forest loss

- Forestland conversion
- Official forest conversion to infrastructure and commercial perennial plantations by companies
- Logging (both illegal and legal)
- *Forest fire, insects and diseases*

2. Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation

Drivers of plantation loss

- Timber plantations have been converted to other commercial plantations and cash crops (e.g., rubber, coffee, cassava).
- Other important causes include official land conversion to infrastructure projects by both state-owned companies and private companies (mainly hydropower dams and roads) and fires

2. Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation

2.2. Underlying drivers

- demand for agricultural crops and high value plantations,
- insufficient recognition of communities' rights to land and forests, and
- ineffective forest governance

The first cause is a market-driven force while the second and third causes are factors exacerbating existing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation

3. Drivers of SFM, forest conservation, afforestation and reforestation

Level	Drivers	Sources
Global	i) *Key international agreements on environmental protection to which Vietnam is a party*: - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), signed 1992 - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), signed 1994 - Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, signed 1998	Thuy *et al.*, 2012 UNFCCC, 2012
	ii) *Key international agreements/institutions on market integration to which Vietnam is a party/member:* - Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), signed 2010 - WTO, signed 2007	Thuy *et al.*, 2012 WTO official website
	iii) *International standards on sustainable forest management (e.g., Forest Stewardship Council or FSC)*	Thorsten & Tuan, 2013
	iv) *Potential markets for forest ecosystem services (e.g., carbon credits in REDD+)*	MARD, 2013
	v) *International movements in forestry management introduced by NGOs in Vietnam* (e.g., community-based forest management, co-management and participation, decentralization, SFM)	Tuan, 2011

3. Drivers of SFM, forest conservation, afforestation and reforestation

National/sectoral	vi) *National economic reform from state management to market driven* vii) *High risk of environmental problems*: climate change (e.g., sea level rise), flooding, soil erosion & desertification, high rate of biodiversity loss viii) *Government demand for poverty elimation and rural development*, of which forestry protection and development is one component	MARD, 2007
	ix) *Demand for improved effectiveness and efficiency of forestry operations* (e.g., timber production and wood processing)	MARD, 2013 Tuan, 2014
Local	x) *Needs to solve environmental issues that negatively impact local livelihoods* (e.g., soil loss and degradation, landslide, flooding) xi) *Needs of SFM at landscape level to ensure sustainable livelihoods in mountainous regions*: forests supporting other income generations (e.g., sloping cultivation) xii) *Needs to improve net income per unit of forestland*, thereby significantly contributing to household income xiii) *Increased public awareness*	Cuong, 2012 MARD, 2014

3. Drivers of SFM, forest conservation, afforestation and reforestation

At the national and local levels, the main direct drivers for promoting SFM, biodiversity conservation, and afforestation and reforestation in Vietnam can be identified as the following:

- Response to increasing environmental risks and hazards.
- Decentralization movements and increasing public awareness
- *Inefficient system of state-owned forest enterprises* underscores the need for restructuring SFEs to improve the efficiency of state forest management.

4. Policies and Measures (PAMs) addressing deforestation and promoting sustainable forest management, forest conservation, afforestation and reforestation

4.1. PAMs addressing deforestation and forest degradation

- the Law on Forest Protection and Development (1992, 2004);
- the Land Law (1993, 2003, 2013),
- Decree 02 (1994), Decree 01 (1995), Decree 163 (1999).

4. Policies and Measures (PAMs) addressing deforestation and promoting sustainable forest management, forest conservation, afforestation and reforestation

4.2. PAMs promoting sustainable forest management, forest conservation, afforestation and reforestation

- social forestry programme,
- Five Million Hectares Reforestation Program/Program 661
- SFM programs funded by GIZ,
- forest certification,
- payment for forest environment service (PFES),
- REDD+,
- restructuring of state- owned forestry enterprises.
- …

4. Policies and Measures (PAMs) addressing deforestation and promoting sustainable forest management, forest conservation, afforestation and reforestation

4.3. Major gaps of Vietnam PAMs addressing deforestation and forest degradation

a. Policies on forestland allocation and contracting

- Remaining large forest areas with high risk of unsecured land use rights
- Inequity in forestland allocation
- Unclear boundaries and overlapping property rights

4. Policies and Measures (PAMs) addressing deforestation and promoting sustainable forest management, forest conservation, afforestation and reforestation

4.3. Major gaps of Vietnam PAMs addressing deforestation and forest degradation

b. Policies on SFM and afforestation & reforestation

- Unclear property rights and inequity in forestland allocation create conflicts and difficulties for local people's investment in forest development and protection
- The government fund for forestry is rather limited
- The prospect for forestry investment differs between regions
- Establishment of commercial industrial plantations (mainly rubber, coffee, and pepper) with the advantages of high demand and annual harvesting often yield significantly higher economic returns than afforestation and natural forest management
- Low profit from timber plantation per unit area is common in Vietnam

5. Proposed action plan

To more effectively tackle deforestation and forest degradation, Vietnam forestry policy should aim towards two key objectives:

- sustainable management of the remaining high conservation value natural forests for biodiversity conservation and long term provision of forest products and environmental services, and
- improving incomes and livelihoods of forestland owner

5. Proposed action plan

A number of key recommendations to combat deforestation and forest degradation for the period 2015 to 2020 are as follows:

- Establish a permanent national forest estate as soon as possible to protect the entirety of remaining important forest ecosystems as an essential strategy to respond to continuing loss of natural forests;
- Improve existing forest policies;
- Set up new forest policy instruments ;
- Develop a national program on high value timber plantation.

Thank you!

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