



The lucrative business of saving East African forests

Only 40 years ago, some 40% of Ethiopia was occupied by forests; today, less than 3% remains, much of it in the Kafa and Yaju Coffee Biosphere Reserves, designated in 2010. These forests contain 25 million tons of carbon in above-ground biomass. Some 600 000 tons of carbon could be removed from the atmosphere annually through natural forest growth, as long as the forest remains intact. The forests are endangered, however, by clear-cutting for smallholder agriculture and industrial coffee and tea plantations. Harvesting wild coffee, on the other hand, does not harm the forest.

A 3 million euro project funded by the German Ministry for the Environment as part of its International Climate Initiative is being implemented from 2009 until 2013 by NABU, a local NGO. The project's main goal is to increase carbon sequestration in the Kafa Biosphere Reserve through reforestation and rehabilitation of fragmented forests and degraded areas.

At the same time, community plantations with fast-growing tree species for use as fuelwood are being introduced, as well as 10 000 efficient wood-burning stoves. Tourism opportunities and jobs are also being created via the construction of a model lodge and a microcredit system, among other initiatives.

From 1 to 20 April this year, a training course in assessing carbon storage was organized in Yaju Coffee Forest Biosphere

Reserve. The course was run by the Environment and Coffee Forest Forum, in collaboration with UNESCO's Nairobi office and the Nature Conservation Research Center for West Africa in Ghana, which provided the training via theoretical lectures and field assessments. Applying their newfound knowledge of how to collect forest carbon data, the 17 trainees from Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda estimated the amount of carbon stored in their countries' forests. This information was required, for instance, to complete the feasibility study of the Yaju Coffee Forest REDD+ project. The trainees were able to complete the feasibility study and, together with the trainers, also drafted a carbon assessment manual for practitioners. The course wound up with a half-day seminar at Jimma University on climate change and REDD+ carbon as a potential source of conservation finance.

The ultimate goal of the course was to enable these four forested countries to take advantage of the opportunities offered by REDD+ for generating sustainable funding for conservation and poverty alleviation. The global carbon market trades emissions via cap-and-trade schemes and credits that offset reductions in carbon emissions. Countries that can prove they store carbon, such as via their forests, can sell these credits on the market to businesses that have exceeded the agreed cap on their own allowable carbon emissions.

Source: on Kafa Biosphere Reserve: German National Commission for UNESCO (2011) For Life, for the Future: Biosphere Reserves and Climate Change (see page 24); on the training course: n.raondry-rakotoarisoa@unesco.org



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Roasting coffee beans in Kafa Biosphere Reserve (Ethiopia)