

Forest Management in the Brazilian Amazon: Risks and Opportunities

MA-04

Verfíssimo, A. (betoverissimo@uol.com.br)
Instituto do Homem e Meio Ambiente da Amazônia (Imazon)

ABSTRACT: The Brazilian Amazon contains nearly a third of the world's rain forest area. Timber industry is a major land-use activity in the region representing about 80% of the native wood used in Brazil. It generates a gross product of US\$2.5 billion per year. The industry harvested about 25 million cubic meters of timber in 2004. Most (90%) of this logging is done without management. However, managed timberland area rose from almost nothing in 1997 to more than 3.2 million hectares in 2004, with more than 1.3 million hectares certified by international Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The timber industry in the Amazon is going through a phase of change caused by three factors. First, there is great pressure from public opinion, tropical timber buyers, and environmental agencies for the adoption of forest management. Second, successful experiences with management in the region are increasing. Lastly, there are increasing green market opportunities for FSC-certified timber, especially in international markets. Although forest management is economically and technically viable, there are still serious obstacles to its adoption. One of the main obstacles is the land tenure issue. In fact, a great portion of the forest remaining is comprised of unsettled land and land that is either under dispute or litigation. Forest owners and loggers would prefer to operate within a stable system of defined rules and secure land tenure. Putting logging on a more sustainable footing is an integral part of any strategy to conserve widespread areas of Amazon forest. This strategy requires three broad approaches. First, expanding working public forest, whose purpose is to produce goods (timber and nontimber products) while maintaining environmental services. Second, increasing forest management under private forest. Third, improving monitoring of and enforcement against predatory logging. While Flonas and FSC may provide incentives for sound forest management by companies and communities, such management cannot compete if predatory logging is allowed to continue on a large scale. New remote sensing and communication technologies, in addition to an expanding role of NGOs in Brazilian civil society, provide a basis for increased transparency and, ultimately, regulation of the Brazilian Amazon forest sector.