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Justification of the list of insignificant emissions sources and carbon pools in the REDD Methodological Module "Determining the significance of emissions sources and changes in carbon pools in REDD project activities"

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I. APPROACH

The VCS-approved tool "Determining the significance of emissions sources and changes in carbon pools in REDD project activities" facilitates the determination of which GHG emissions and changes in carbon pools are insignificant for VCS-REDD project activities. A number of emission sources are deemed insignificant and, hence, can be neglected in VCS-REDD baseline and monitoring methodologies. Normally, the project shall account for any significant increase in emissions and reduction in carbon pools that is reasonably attributable to the project activity — the sum of decreases or increases in carbon pools and in emissions that may be neglected shall be less than 5% of total project GHG benefits.

Justification for deeming certain emissions sources and carbon pools insignificant is generally based on expert judgement and taking into account likely situations in which REDD project activities are implemented. If preliminary assessments, based on IPCC default values and some variation around those values, suggest that emissions sources or carbon pools are (individually) well below the 5% mark, an additional effort is taken to identify situations that would falsify the assumption that the increase in emissions sources or reduction of carbon pools is not significant.

II. JUSTIFICATIONS

Fertiliser application, Removal of herbaceous vegetation, Transportation, Fossil fuel combustion, Collection of wood from non-renewable sources to be used for fencing of the project area

Various A/R CDM and ARR project cases have indicated that these emissions sources are negligible compared to total project GHG benefits. Therefore, they are deemed insignificant for A/R CDM project activities by the CDM Executive Board.

For example, assuming that typically thick posts are placed 10 m apart with 3 thinner posts in between, the carbon stored in those posts will be minimal in comparison with project carbon sequestration (if an AR component forms part of the REDD project activity) or with carbon stock lost due to deforestation or forest degradation. Only in case of exceptional geometries such as plots of a few meters wide and kilometres long there may be a significant amount of carbon stored in the posts.

If not significant for A/R CDM (or ARR) project activities, these emissions sources will be even less significant for REDD project activities, because carbon stock changes in A/R or ARR activities are generally smaller than carbon stock changes in deforestation or forest degradation.

Nitrous oxide (N_2O) emissions from decomposition of litter and fine roots from N-fixing trees

This emissions source is relevant for REDD project activities if an A/R CDM or ARR scheme is part of the activity, e.g. as a way to provide alternative income from timber production (project case), or if deforestation is combined with the planting of N-fixing tree species or crops (baseline case).

Based on various literature sources it is concluded that only in the case of high precipitation levels and poorly drained soils a significant emission of N_2O may be detectable if N-fixing trees are dominant. In particular in N-limited degraded lands emissions will be negligible. Using IPCC default values for N-fixing crops and assuming that all tree crown biomass will be shed each year and that this biomass possesses the properties of N-fixing crops, thus assuming a worst case for trees, only a >75% share of N-fixing trees may result in significant N_2O emissions. In the case of A/R CDM this is deemed to be an insignificant emissions source. If such is the case, this emissions source will be even less significant for REDD project activities.

Litter and dead-wood

Removing trees generally leads to a reduction in dead organic matter. Therefore, not accounting for litter and dead-wood (and soil organic carbon) in REDD project activities will be conservative. Project proponents may choose to account for the loss of litter and dead-wood in the baseline, but normally these carbon pools will be insignificant compared to carbon stock losses in biomass following deforestation or forest degradation.