

Associate professor lecture
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Forest and People – the policy and economics of ecosystem services

Abstract

Most societies are transforming toward bio-based society systems, and the forest has a key-role in developing bioeconomy and contributing to the Sustainability Development Goals (SDG). The forest is facing a multitude of challenges as increasing and competing demands for land, wood, energy, climate mitigation, ecosystem services, as well as social demands such as recreation and aesthetic values are requiring goods and services from the forest. The transformation toward a bio-based society further increases the demand on forests as a major contributor to bio-based materials and goods. Simultaneously, the world's forests face common challenges of degradation, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. Furthermore, connected to urbanization, population growth, and dietary transformation leads to increasing demand for nutritious food and access to fuel wood, hence the demand for agricultural land may increase, most likely on the expense of forests, possibly leading to further deforestation.

Following the SDGs 17 goals and the economic, social and environmental values of the forest, increasing demands on forests and forest land is creating new challenges but also opportunities of forest land use management. The challenges for all sectors, and for the forest sector in particular, is to meet the challenges of competing with traditional fossil-based products, as the forest sectors is particularly targeted as one of the corner stones in the circular bioeconomy. Challenges for the emergence of bioeconomy are governance regimes and economic structures toward understanding the trade-offs and synergies among the three pillars of forest management: ecology, economy and social values. Policy is challenged by integrating different interests, increasing demand on the forest, and its ecosystems, e.g., demand for bio-based products, demand for supporting and regulating ecosystem services, and at the same time manage the demand for forests to support human health, regardless if it is for food, fire wood, or for mental health purposes.