

Preventing primary habitat loss

Nearly a third of all carbon dioxide emissions are from the destruction of forests, equaling the total carbon output of the United States and the EU combined. How we manage the remaining forests could potentially make or break our efforts to tackle climate change.

Our standards already prohibit the clearing of primary habitat for organic production, but with this renewed urgency to protect forests around the world, we have been looking at how we can tighten up our existing standards to protect forests and other critically important habitats to ensure that land historically cleared of primary habitat is not then converted to organic production.

The proposal is that licensees must not use land cleared of primary habitat or an area of High Conservation Value after 1st January 2006 with an indefinite restriction on cleared land (see below for full proposal). The standards team would like your views on the approach we are proposing.

4.1.4

~~You must **not** clear primary ecosystems for organic production.~~

You must **not** use for organic production any land that was, until 1st January 2006, either primary habitat or identified as High Conservation Value (HCV).

4.1.5

For farmland that was primary habitat or identified as HCV at any time between 1st January 1994 and 1st January 2006, you must establish a conservation plan to compensate, in part, for the loss of biodiversity.

Note - There are six criteria for defining an HCV area. Only one of these criteria needs to be met for an area of land to have high conservation value. These are:

- areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity such as refugia, endemic or endangered species
- globally, regionally or nationally significant large landscape-level habitat where viable populations of most, if not all, naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance
- areas that contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems
- areas that provide basic ecosystem services in critical situations such as watershed protection or erosion control
- areas fundamental to meeting the basic needs of local communities as a source of food, water or income
- areas critical to local communities' traditional, cultural identity (this will be identified in cooperation with the local community).

An HCV area not only includes the characteristic of critical importance but also the surrounding area required to maintain or enhance these high conservation values. You can identify an HCV area by looking at local land use records, consulting with the appropriate authority, a regional or local conservation body and local communities.

4.1.6

If sufficient information is not available to identify primary habitat or an HCV area then you must adopt the precautionary principle and not farm the land organically.