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Incentives urged to stop deforestation

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Environmentalists and foresters suggested on Thursday that more incentives be offered to countries that have vast areas of tropical forests, such as Indonesia, and to timber companies, which all play roles in preventing further deforestation.

Forests and livelihood program officer of the Bogor-based Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) Hari Priyadi said that the lack of incentives has made timber companies in Indonesia reluctant to implement "reduced impact logging (RIL)".

RIL is a collection of forest harvesting techniques which results in low levels of damage to the stock of residual trees, soil and water.

"The Ministry of Forestry

has issued a regulation in 2001 that all companies in Indonesia must implement RIL in their concession, but such a move isn't effective because the government doesn't offer any incentives to the firms," he told a workshop on Thursday at the Asia Europe Environment Forum in Jakarta.

The three-day forum, which began on Wednesday, features 12 workshops to discuss various environmental issues and is being attended by around 300 environmentalists from 38 countries in Asia and Europe.

Another CIFOR activist, Herry Purnomo, proposed that countries and companies, which have been carrying out sustainable tropical forest management should also be compensated under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

"Carbon trading should

provide attractive incentives to grow trees," he said.

CDM is one of the mechanisms regulated under the Kyoto Protocol to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. It requires developed countries to reduce their gas emissions by 5.2 percent from 2008 to 2012, and to finance projects in developing countries that can reduce gas emissions.

Under the scheme, the trade of per ton carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂) is worth between US\$3 and \$6 in the international market.

According to Indonesia's National Commission of CDM, the country has a potential to reduce up to 300 million tCO₂, which is equal to about \$1.65 billion.

A forester for the Austrian-based International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Florian T. Kraxner, said NGOs and environmentalists were

now lobbying for the inclusion of certified forest management as a verification tool for CDM projects.

"Such certification now merely functions as a market tool ... We are now lobbying that it will also be used as a verification system in the Kyoto Protocol for the 2008-2012 commitment period," he told *The Jakarta Post*.

Kraxner also said that market punishment was more effective to encourage timber firms to implement sustainable forest management.

"One possible incentive is to implement a procurement policy in big (wood products) buyer countries, such as the European Union countries and Japan. The policy, which is now being discussed in those countries, will require that the government or the public should only procure certified timber products," he said.