

## Has Indonesia world's second largest reserves of natural forest?

BBC

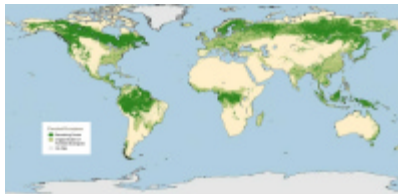
Attn: Manuela Saragosa

### Re: Indonesian paper firms fight boycott. Sumatra has two of the world's largest pulp and paper producers, BBC, September 10, 2002

Manuela Saragosa informs, "Indonesia has the world's second largest reserves of natural forest but the World Bank has warned it could all disappear within the next decade. Critics say the country's forests have been exploited with little regard for their sustainability as a valuable resource. Industries which depend on the forests have been singled out for blame, and pulp and paper companies in particular have come under heavy criticism."

Indonesia doesn't have the world's second largest reserves of natural forest and it doesn't have the second largest reserves of tropical forest, either. This can be easily verified from maps.

The WWF map "Remaining forests of the world" clearly shows the extent of Indonesian forests compared to the world's forests ([www.panda.org/resources/programmes/global2000/pages/mapdownload](http://www.panda.org/resources/programmes/global2000/pages/mapdownload)). Half of the world's forest areas have already been lost, while much of what remains has been fragmented or degraded.



The UNEP "Atlas of the rain forest" maps the remaining rain forests and shows what proportion is in Indonesia ([www.unep.org/](http://www.unep.org/)). Only three large expanses of lowland forest remain in these regions: Amazonian, the Congo Basin, and New Guinea, and only half of New Guinea is in Indonesia or presently Papua.



The FAO data and maps of Indonesia show forest left in the country ([www.fao.org/fo/country](http://www.fao.org/fo/country)). Most of the closed forest area has been lost and open/fragmented forest areas are converted to agricultural land and plantations.



The loss of tropical forests is particularly acute in the lowland forests of Asia and much of Africa and Latin America. In Indonesia the forest loss rate is some 2.2 million hectares annually, including loss of rain forest. Seven out of ten logs are illicit.

Rain forest area is less than half of the tropical forest area of the world. The majority is dry land and deciduous forest, in which problems are more pronounced than in the rain forest as they typically have more suitable climates and soils for agriculture, livestock ranching, and human settlements, than do rainforest areas.

The proportion of rain forest resources is overemphasized in respect to the world's forest resources. The vision

that all the tropical forest is rain forest and that Indonesian tropical forest was in reality the world's lungs are examples how strong imagination is attached to rain forest. Does the imagination have justification in the real terms? If all the rain forests disappeared, oxygen does not because there are the other forests, the seas and oceans.

The government of Indonesia needs to be under heavy criticism allowing forest logging, which exceeded 2-3 times the planned annual sustainable targets for Repelita VI 1994/95-1998/99. The pulp and paper, and plywood companies shall be under heavy criticism for the gross negligence of the obligation to establish forest plantations as the primary sources of wood supply and for unsustainable exploitation of natural forests, which is the major cause of loss of forest cover.

The installed pulp mill capacity exceeds 6-7 times the sustainable timber supply in Riau in Sumatra, where the two of the world's largest pulp and paper producers are located. The government has, among others, committed to the Consultative Group of Indonesia to restructure and reduce the capacity of the forest-based industries. However, there are plans to increase it. This has nothing to do with definitions and gaining credibility now by auditing wood purchase practices. Credibility has been lost by previous actions.

The pulp, paper and plywood companies cannot deny the non-existence of the long overdue self-supporting forest plantations and mismanagement in timber supply. It would take more than eight years for the existing companies to be totally independent in wood supply from the planted forests. For the planned companies this will take 30 years, although some of them are considered to start operations within a few years. If the companies cannot have self-supporting plantations, alternatives for raw material are natural forests, but logging in natural forests is temporarily banned, or import.

BBC and Manuela Saragosa saying that Indonesia has the world's second largest reserves of natural forest give inaccurate information, which may be considered correct around the world. The fact is that the statement is incorrect.

Best regards,  
Pasi Lehmusluoto (Email: [pasi.lehmusluoto@kolumbus.fi](mailto:pasi.lehmusluoto@kolumbus.fi))  
Ph.D.  
Jakarta/Helsinki