

The stability of tropical rainforest margins, linking ecological, economic and social constraints of land use and conservation — an introduction

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Abstract

Tropical rainforests disappear at an alarming rate causing unprecedented losses in biodiversity and ecosystem services (*Hughes et al. 1997, Noble & Dirzo 1997, Tilman et al. 2001, Achard et al. 2002*) with Southeast Asia showing the highest rates of deforestation of any major tropical region (*Sodhi et al. 2004*). Despite an increased recognition of the value of these goods at national and international levels, rainforests continue to be seriously threatened by various forms of encroachments such as low-intensity harvesting of non-timber forest products by the rural poor, large-scale plantation forestry by the state or private actors, and the conversion of forested land by smallholder farmers. Transformation of ecosystems and changes in land use affect important ecosystem services and ultimately human well-being (*Robertson & Swinton 2005*).