

# Developing nations help tropical forests

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A rainforest biologist from the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama says developing nations may help stop tropical forest destruction.

William Laurance, who is also president of the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation, says an initiative by developing nations involves selling or renting rainforests to help protect the billions of tons of carbon they store, thereby slowing the rapid buildup of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The International Panel on Climate Change says the destruction of tropical forests -- currently at a rate of 50 football fields a minute -- accounts for up to a quarter of all human greenhouse-gas emissions.

The initiative -- sponsored by an alliance of developing countries led by Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica -- would allow industrial nations to pay developing countries to slow deforestation. Industrial nations would earn "carbon credits" that would count toward their agreed emissions target under the Kyoto Protocol or other international agreements.

"It's potentially a win-win situation for everybody involved," said Laurance. "The forests win, the atmosphere wins, the international community wins and developing nations struggling to overcome poverty win."

The study is to appear Friday in New Scientist magazine.

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