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Mangroves to receive huge boost from new carbon credit rules

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A new method for calculating the role that mangrove restoration plays in slowing climate change, by capturing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, has been adopted.

The methodology is adopted under the UN climate change convention's Kyoto Protocol, as part of the Clean Development Mechanism that supports emission reduction projects in developing countries. .

This will provide a significant boost to restoration efforts for mangrove forests, which grow in tropical and sub-tropical coastal regions and provide a wide range of biological services such as nurseries for juvenile fish and a source of timber for local populations.

"The fact that this new methodology is now part of the Clean Development Mechanism should allow us to achieve similar results for other types of coastal and marine ecosystems," says **Carl Gustaf Lundin, Director of the IUCN Global Marine and Polar Programme**. "Adopting new policies and financing mechanisms for protection and management of our oceans should be at the heart of nature-based solutions to climate change."

Only recently has the important role of mangroves in trapping carbon from the atmosphere and locking it into sediments begun to be recognised. Many scientists believe that mangroves are far more efficient at trapping carbon than tropical and temperate forests, whose role as climate regulators has been recognised and established longer.

The methodology was developed by IUCN, Ramsar and Sylvestrum for the Clean Development Mechanism and was based on field experiences from a 3-year partnership with Danone. The project was initiated by food and water company Danone and its brand Evian in partnership with IUCN and Ramsar, which implemented large mangrove restoration initiatives together with local communities in Africa and Asia..

"The new methodology will open up opportunities for mangrove restoration on a far greater scale," enthuses Bernard Giraud, Danone Vice President of Sustainability. "It will have a very significant impact on local communities and will stimulate companies to make corporate-level investment and grasp new carbon offsetting opportunities in coastal regions."

Mangrove forests are just one of several coastal ecosystems that play an important role in regulating climate and are commonly referred to as "blue carbon" solutions. Others include salt marshes, seagrasses, kelp forests and wetlands.

Many mangroves become degraded through the upstream building of dams, roads and irrigation channels. The methodology also recognises the importance of automatic regeneration of mangroves, which can be achieved through changes to the upstream hydrology or "re-wetting."

"Destruction of coastal habitats releases huge amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and destroys livelihoods," says **Prof Nicholas Davidson, Deputy Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**. "Well-planned and implemented restoration and protection of these ecosystems delivers very tangible benefits to local populations in tropical countries, and increases the ecosystems' capacity to store carbon."

For more information please contact:

James Oliver, Global Marine and Polar Programme, e
james.oliver@iucn.org

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Mangroves in Can Gio Biosphere Reserve
Photo: IUCN Vietnam