

FOR PEAT'S SAKE: THE FACTS

WHAT IS PEAT?

Peat is **made up of partly decomposed vegetation** and is **formed over centuries** in **anaerobic, waterlogged conditions**.



PEAT HAS BEEN ON OUR **PLANET** FOR AROUND **360 MILLION YEARS**.



WHERE IS IT FOUND?

Peat exists in a variety of climates around the world.



from **tropical rainforests**;



to **coastal areas**;



to **high altitudes**;



to **permafrost regions** towards the poles, where soil has been frozen year-round for at least two years.

68%

of **tropical peatlands** are found in **Southeast Asia**.

Countries with large stores of peat include...



Indonesia



Peru



Democratic Republic of the Congo

WHY ARE PEATLANDS IMPORTANT?

Peatlands are disproportionately important to the world's climate. They cover around **3-5%** of the earth's surface, but are home to more than **30%** of carbon stored in soil worldwide.



People around the world also **depend on peatlands** for their livelihoods and they are important sources of food, water, and biodiversity,



Estimates suggest peatlands contain **twice as much carbon** as is found in **all the world's forests**...



including hosting endangered species like orangutans and the Sumatran tiger. Healthy peatlands can help prevent droughts, floods and intrusion of salt water into agricultural areas.



FUN FACT

Peat is used to dry malt barley for whiskey distilling. It gives whiskey its distinct smoky flavor.



FUN FACT

The **'Tollund Man'**, a mummified corpse from the 4th century BC, was discovered buried in a peat bog in Denmark. His remains were so well-preserved that he was mistaken for a recent murder victim.



WHY ARE PEATLANDS UNDER THREAT?

In the northern hemisphere, permafrost is thawing and causing peat to dry out. In tropical areas, peatlands are being drained, cleared and set alight to make way for agricultural plantations that produce palm oil and wood pulp.

In the peatlands of Malaysia, Sumatra and Borneo alone, forest cover fell by more than half between **1990** and **2010**: from **77%** to **36%**.



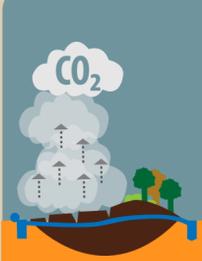
PEAT FIRES: MAKING WAY FOR AGRICULTURE

When peat is set alight, enormous levels of carbon dioxide toxic compound and fine particulate matters are emitted into the atmosphere. This contributes to **climate change** and raises serious **public health concerns**.



ESSENTIAL FACT

As peatlands are such incredible carbon stocks, they pose a great risk for contributing to climate change: the **15%** of peatlands that have been drained contributed **5%** of total anthropogenic CO₂ emissions.



WHAT IS BEING DONE TO TURN THIS AROUND?

Cutting carbon emissions from peatlands is an essential part of meeting vital environmental targets like the **Sustainable Development Goals** and the **Paris Agreement**. Several international, regional and country-level efforts are underway to protect and restore peatlands, including:

- ▶ The **Global Peatlands Initiative** is led by top experts and institutions to save peatlands and to prevent carbon from being emitted into the atmosphere.
- ▶ At the **COP21** talks in Paris, a map of global peatlands hotspots was launched, showing where the most urgent action is needed to reduce emissions.

- ▶ In Indonesia, the Government has set up the **Peatlands Restoration Agency** and has pledged to restore two million hectares of peatlands by 2020.

- ▶ Analysis of different ways to stop fires and deforestation in the first place, as studies have shown that restoration efforts can never fully regain lost carbon.



References and further reading

For further information, please contact Herry Purnomo at h.purnomo@cgiar.org

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Bogged down by peat? Find out all you need to know with our new fact sheet: Did you know peatlands have x4 carbon as the atmosphere? Find out more facts here: Peat cheat sheet: Everything you ever need to know from @GlobalLF:



Check out our new peat fact sheet: International experts are meeting in Jakarta to discuss why Peatlands Matter. Have a look at our peat cheat sheet to get up to speed.



Leading international experts are gathering in Jakarta for the Global Landscapes Forum: Peatlands Matter thematic event. But for those who may not know their peat from their wheat, we have prepared a short fact sheet that gives you the complete lowdown.



The Global Landscapes Forum is a multi-stakeholder forum for multi-directional dialogues that keeps science at the core, but cuts across sectors in order to negotiate complex solutions for more beautiful, sustainable and prosperous landscapes.

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