

8 September 2010, Press release

Making Indonesia's palm oil production sustainable

SFIAR Award for 2010 won by ETH researcher Lian Pin Koh

This year's research award from the Swiss Forum for International Agricultural Research (SFIAR) goes to a project entitled "A spatially-explicit scenario analysis for reconciling agricultural expansion, forest protection, and carbon conservation in Indonesia". Based on a model, project leader Lian Pin Koh analysed potential scenarios for rapidly expanding palm oil production in Indonesia. As a result, he found a way to reconcile forest protection, agricultural food supply, and the economic benefits of palm oil production. The award ceremony will be held on 15 September 2010 as part of a large international conference at the ETH in Zurich.

The context

In many parts of the world hunger and poverty are still a sad reality. The majority of the world's poor people live in rural areas, where they try to make a living from agriculture. One of the major challenges today is to improve their agricultural production while at the same time reducing pressure on natural resources. Together with farmers, scientists and development organisations are working on many fronts towards promising solutions. Switzerland is very active in this regard. Numerous Swiss institutions are involved in, or concerned with, agricultural research for development. In order to pay tribute to Swiss researchers' valuable contribution to international development efforts, the Swiss Forum for International Agricultural Research (SFIAR) launched an annual award in 2008.

The 2010 SFIAR Award

With the aim of supporting agricultural research for development, the SFIAR honours an innovative Swiss project with an award each year. Many interesting proposals were submitted this year. The SFIAR has decided to confer the 2010 SFIAR Award (CHF 5,000.–) on Dr. Lian Pin Koh of ETH Zurich, for his project of "A spatially-explicit scenario analysis for reconciling agricultural expansion, forest protection, and carbon conservation in Indonesia".

The winning project

Palm oil is the most important vegetable oil worldwide in terms of quantity. Indonesia is the greatest palm oil producer and is planning to yet double its production by 2020. This expansion is competing with other interests: cultivation of food crops, protection of the forests and their biological diversity, and carbon sequestration in biomass are threatened by haphazard palm oil production.

Lian Pin Koh, researcher at the ETH, developed a model to simulate various scenarios of palm oil expansion. Each scenario gives priority to different interests. The simulations showed that the best solution lies in a middle course: The various interests can be balanced fairly well if the

expansion of palm oil production is concentrated on degraded areas as well as on land unsuitable for producing food crops and poor in stored carbon. Moreover, such a middle course will enjoy the greatest political and social acceptance. Through his research, Koh demonstrates that careful spatial planning can help to make development more sustainable.

Award ceremony

The formal presentation of the SFIAR Award will take place on 15 September 2010, at the Conference on Tropical and Subtropical Agricultural and Natural Resource Management (Tropentag) 2010. This large-scale international conference to be held on 14–16 September 2010 at ETH Zurich is jointly organised by various German and Swiss research institutions. The award ceremony will be moderated by SFIAR President Padruot Fried, and Lian Pin Koh will present the winning project.

Further information:

Swiss Forum for International Agricultural Research (SFIAR): www.sfiar.ch

SFIAR Award: www.sfiar.ch/award.htm (with press photos for download)

Tropentag 2010: www.tropentag.de

Contact:

SFIAR Secretariat

Felix Hintermann

Tel. +41 (0)31 910 21 91

E-mail: felix.hintermann@bfh.ch

C/o Swiss College of Agriculture, Länggasse 85, 3052 Zollikofen

or

Dr. Lian Pin Koh

Tel. +41 (0)44 632 68 36

E-Mail: lian.koh@env.ethz.ch

ETH Zurich, Department of Environmental Sciences, CHN G 73.1, Universitätstrasse 22, 8092 Zurich