

## **Decline of forest area in Sabah, Malaysia : Relationship to state policies, land code and land capability**

### **Abstract**

Forest decline in Sabah has resulted from state policies operating within the federal context. Approximately two-thirds of Sabah's natural forest remains but estimates vary with the data source. Logging and shifting cultivation have degraded forest quality but commercial estate agriculture, especially oil palm, is now the major cause of forest loss, aided by Sabah's land tenure code and the ethnic equality and modernisation agendas of national and state agriculture policy. The pattern of forest decline is explained by partitioning of the land resource between gazetted Forest Reserves and land alienated to agriculture, guided by the 1976 land capability classification.