

Aynur Mammadova		
Affiliation	TESAF Department, University of Padova	
Session Chair		
Presentations	Session 4.1	<i>The politics of forest governance: understanding power and global complexity.</i>

Abstract Session 4.1 – Conceptualizing and tracing deforestation risk in commodities. The case of bovine leather.

The production and trade of certain commodities have devastating impacts on tropical forests. Complex trade systems and global supply chains make full traceability a challenge complicating the link between places of commodity consumption and deforestation. These uncertainties are expressed with the term deforestation risk. In this regard, alternating terms such as commodity-driven deforestation, forest-risk commodity, and embedded deforestation are used. The exposure to embedded deforestation risk can happen through different channels. One identified channel of deforestation risk is through the supply chains of so called “by-products”, i.e. bovine leather as a by-product of beef. In this article, we explore and systematize the conceptualization of deforestation risk and use the case of Brazilian leather production to illustrate its implications. The research employs primary and secondary data. Primary data is mostly qualitative, in the form of face-to-face interviews and observation notes, collected by the first author during extended field research in Brazil in May-August 2018. Secondary data consists of extensive literature review, statistical data on annual slaughter, bovine hide/leather registry and annual deforestation, as well as geospatial data on deforestation, slaughterhouse and tannery locations. The research shows us that the concept of deforestation risk is loosely defined, yet highly relevant for current debates about policy and trade, and likely to be increasingly so in the future. Our case of Brazilian leather illustrates how the diverse emphasis in each of these conceptualizations also requires different types of methodology of assessment and measurement. Better conceptualization of deforestation risk as well as methods to assess and map it are therefore needed to inform policy and trade decisions. We argue that the choice of concepts when discussing the deforestation risk impacts how responsibility and accountability is constructed both through legal actions and voluntary sustainability standards by a sector itself.

Co-authors: Caroline Sartorato Silva França, Jelle Behagel, Mauro Masiero, Davide M. Pettenella