

Editorial

Ethical and professional standards in environment management

Until 100 years ago, people in the tropics would clear forests and grow crops, and when they moved on, nature would reclaim the land, heal the scars and regenerate the forests. Then Governments began to exercise power to allocate, sell or lease out land. As a consequence, land was no longer available for nature to reclaim. In 100 years, forests in many tropical countries have become so diminished and fragmented that they cannot heal themselves back to their original condition even if allowed to do so.

Our world has also been fragmented into separate conceptual, professional and vocational fields, backed by separate Ministries, separate university departments, separate scientific journals and separate thinking boxes. This has allowed the separated parts to be treated as unrelated profit or cost centres, to be promoted or neglected accordingly. Hence agriculture has been subsidised while forestry has been neglected. Within forestry, logging gets priority while reforestation is underfunded. Within agriculture, oil palm profits support oil palm R&D and very little goes to support agricultural diversification. It is like we are in a cruise ship in which the restaurants earn the most money and get the most attention while safety features are neglected because they make no profit. In our cruise ship (or space ship) Earth, wildlife, biodiversity and environment have been most seriously neglected.

New ethical and professional standards are needed to sustain agriculture and the global environment. Ordinary land owners could do a lot by allowing part of their crop to be used by wildlife. Patches of wilderness could be made available along stream-sides and boundaries so that small animals may continue to live their lives. An enlightened land-owning public could do this of its own accord.

The fate of big animals like the *seladang* and big trees like the *tualang* must depend largely on the Civil Service Departments doing the right things, e.g. the highway authorities could construct elevated stretches of roads to provide safe crossing places for animals, the forest departments could put more energy into replanting and into conservation of seed sources, the water authorities could impose higher standards for protection of water catchments and riverbanks. The sewage departments could do more to prevent disposal of garbage into rivers. The Civil Service is a lot more permanent and professional than Ministers in government and could do a lot more without waiting for political directives.

Scientific journals should be in the forefront in promoting sound scientific ideas and practices. UASJ approaches agriculture as a holistic enterprise in which readers are exposed to all areas of plant, animal and food production within the context of sustainable management of land, water and environment. We treat our readers as participants in shaping agriculture and the world. Readers can support us by registering as subscribers for free, and by spreading the word. We also need sponsors to support future issues.

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