Carbon dioxide emissions from an Acacia plantation on peatland in Sumatra, Indonesia

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Abstract

Peat surface CO₂ emission, groundwater table depth and peat temperature were monitored for two years along transects in an Acacia plantation on thick tropical peat (>4 m) in Sumatra, Indonesia. A total of 2300 emission measurements were taken at 144 locations. The autotrophic root respiration component of the CO₂ emission was separated from heterotrophic emissions caused by peat oxidation in three ways: (i) by comparing CO₂ emissions within and beyond the tree rooting zone, (ii) by comparing CO₂ emissions with and without peat trenching (i.e. cutting any roots remaining in the peat beyond the tree rooting zone), and (iii) by comparing CO₂ emissions before and after Acacia tree harvesting. On average, the contribution of root respiration to daytime CO₂ emission is 21 % along transects in mature tree stands. At locations 0.5 m from trees this is up to 80 % of the total emissions, but it is negligible at locations more than 1.3 m away. This means that CO₂ emission measurements well away from trees are free of any root respiration contribution and thus represent only peat oxidation emission. We find daytime mean annual CO₂ emission from peat oxidation alone of 94 t ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ at a mean water table depth of 0.8 m, and a minimum emission value of 80 t ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ after correction for the effect of diurnal temperature fluctuations, which resulted in a 14.5 % reduction of the daytime emission. There is a positive correlation between mean long-term water table depths and peat oxidation CO₂ emission. However, no such relation is found for instantaneous emission/water table depth within transects and it is clear that factors other than water table depth also affect peat oxidation and total CO₂ emissions. The increase in the temperature of the surface peat due to plantation development may explain over 50 % of peat oxidation emissions.

1 Introduction

Lowland peatlands in Southeast Asia cover 24.8 million hectares (Mha), which is 56 % of the tropical and 6 % of the global peatland area (Page et al., 2011). Their high
carbon density gives rise to a large regional peat carbon store of 68.5 Gt, equivalent to 77 % of the tropical and 11–14 % of the global peat carbon store (Page et al., 2011). These peat deposits are formed and maintained by continuous organic matter inputs from tropical evergreen forests under waterlogged conditions. Since 1990, 5.1 Mha of the total 15.5 Mha of peatland in Peninsular Malaysia and the islands of Borneo and Sumatra have been deforested, drained and burned while most of the remainder has been logged intensively (Langner and Siegert, 2009; Miettinen and Liew, 2010). Over the same period, the area of unmanaged secondary peat swamp forest doubled to nearly a quarter of all peatlands, whilst industrial oil palm and pulpwood (Acacia) plantations expanded dramatically from 0.3 to 2.3 Mha, an increase from 2 to 15 % of the total peatland area. By 2008, only 10 % of the peatlands of Peninsular Malaysia, Borneo and Sumatra remained in an intact or slightly degraded condition (Miettinen and Liew, 2010). This high rate of land use change and associated increased rate of organic matter oxidation in disturbed and drainage impacted peat, has received increasing attention in recent years in both scientific and policy fora (e.g. Fargione et al., 2008; Rieley et al., 2008; Page et al., 2009; Couwenberg et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2010; Hooijer et al., 2010; Murdiyarso et al., 2010; Koh et al., 2011). Hence, there is a strong interest in quantifying accurately carbon losses and greenhouse gas emissions from drained tropical peatlands as part of the wider debate on the impacts of tropical land use change on climate change processes.

The carbon dynamics of tropical peatland involves plant photosynthetic CO₂ sequestration and respiration CO₂ emissions (autotrophic respiration), CO₂ emissions from microorganisms involved in aerobic peat decomposition (heterotrophic respiration), fluvial exports of dissolved and particulate organic carbon (DOC and POC), and methane (CH₄) emissions from microorganisms involved in anaerobic peat decomposition (e.g. Jauhiainen et al., 2005, 2008; Rieley et al., 2008; Moore et al., 2011). The quantities of CH₄ involved are small and their effect on atmospheric processes is much less than concurrent CO₂ emissions (Hadi et al., 2005; Jauhiainen et al., 2005, 2008, 2011). In peat swamp forest the difference between CO₂ sequestered and that lost through autotrophic and heterotrophic respiration is stored as structural carbon in tree biomass and accumulated as peat. Unfortunately, most data used to assess the scale of peat carbon losses from drainage-impacted tropical peatlands are confusing and contradictory and the literature on gaseous carbon emissions has been questioned for not quantifying separately autotrophic CO₂ emissions from tree roots and heterotrophic emissions from peat oxidation (cf. meta-analyses by Couwenberg et al., 2010; Hooijer et al., 2010). Two principal methods have been employed, namely closed chamber monitoring (real time) of gaseous CO₂ emissions from the peat surface, and measurement of the lowering of the peat surface as a result of subsidence over time combined with information on peat carbon concentration and bulk density (Couwenberg et al., 2010; Hooijer et al., 2011). Carbon loss estimates based on the latter approach have been hampered by small numbers of measurements, incomplete field information (inadequacy and inconsistency of monitoring) and a lack of reference data on peat characteristics that would enable accurate calculation of carbon loss rates before, during and after land use change. Consequently, most published estimates of carbon losses are derived from peat surface CO₂ emission measurements obtained using the closed-chamber method. Even for this method, however, there are fewer than ten peer-reviewed publications presenting CO₂ emissions data under monitored hydrological conditions (Inubushi et al., 2003; Furukawa et al., 2005; Hadi et al., 2005; Jauhiainen et al., 2005, 2008; Melling et al., 2005; Ali et al., 2006; Hirano et al., 2009), none of which has separated the contribution of CO₂ released in root respiration from total CO₂ emissions, making it impossible to determine CO₂ emissions arising solely from peat decomposition. Further complications are caused by poorly described methods, inconsistent data collection procedures and high variation between the size of data sets which prevents exact and meaningful comparison of results. There is, therefore, an urgent need for peat surface emissions data that quantify accurately and separately the main components of tropical peat CO₂ emissions and provide sufficient information on their temporal and spatial variation.
The focus of this paper is on the CO\textsubscript{2} emissions arising from peat decomposition following conversion of peat swamp forest to industrial plantation of Acacia pulp wood trees. Our aim is to quantify peat CO\textsubscript{2} emissions from peat decomposition across a range of conditions and obtain improved understanding of the drivers of peat oxidation. Based on daytime gas flux monitoring we assessed the effects on emissions of (i) land cover type and plantation tree growth stage and (ii) water table depth on both total (heterotrophic plus autotrophic) CO\textsubscript{2} emissions and emissions caused by peat oxidation alone (heterotrophic). We separated the relative contributions of autotrophic root respiration and peat oxidation to total emission. Based on our field data and values from the literature, we also investigated the effect of temperature on CO\textsubscript{2} emissions in tree stands at different stages of canopy closure.

2 Site characteristics and methods

2.1 Site location and sampling procedure

The study area is in an Acacia (pulp wood) plantation on peatland in the Kampar Peninsula, Riau Province, Sumatra, Indonesia (0°26′06.9″N, 101°53′01.4″E). This part of eastern Sumatra has an average annual rainfall of around 2500 mm and average daytime air temperature around 28°C. The Kampar Peninsula contains contiguous peat deposits of around 700 000 hectares. Prior to clearance of ~160 000 ha for plantation development from the year 2000 onwards, the area was peat swamp forest. The area was not affected by fire immediately prior to, during, or after land use change.

Data were collected over a 24-month period (April 2007 to April 2009) along 8 transects, A–H, located on one large peat dome on which peat thickness ranged from 4–9 m (average 6 m) (Table 1). The plantation area is drained by a rectangular system of canals at 800 m intervals (excluding field drains). The transects, 700 m long and up to 28 km apart, were located in different locations on the peat dome at low altitudes (below 11 m a.s.l.) and were positioned perpendicular to drainage canals (Fig. 1). Each transect consisted of either two (C, D, G, H) or four (A, B, E, F) sub-transects along which monitoring locations were situated. The sub-transects were located at 200 m intervals from each other, with the first being 100 m from the nearest canal. They were positioned between tree rows, which were ~3.5 m apart. The peat surface along all transects was almost flat, and microtopographic differences between emission monitoring locations (5 ± 11 to 9 ± 7 cm) were not significant; the maximum peat surface height difference was only 31 cm between measurement locations along all 8 transects.

2.2 Acacia tree stand characteristics along transects

Stands of plantation trees along transects consisted of both 1st and 2nd rotation cycles (Table 2); one rotation being ~5 yr from planting to harvest. Monitoring transects included recently harvested sites with bare peat through to closed canopy sites with mature trees. The usual plantation tree species was Acacia crassicarpa, with the exception of transect G where it was Melaleuca sp. Based on field observations, four plantation cycle stages were identified: (1) “unplanted” areas cleared of peat swamp forest trees and awaiting planting; (2) “open” canopy areas with 0–6 month old trees; (3) “immature” stands with a closing and closed canopy of 7–30 month old trees, and (4) “mature” closed canopy stands of 30 month to 5 yr old trees. Descriptions of tree stand characteristics during the 2 yr monitoring period are provided in Table 2. Transects D, E and F were located in “unplanted” and “immature” stands; transects G and H were in the younger end of the “immature” tree growth stage; transects A and B were in the older end of the “immature” and “mature” growth stage; and C was in the “mature” growth stage (Table 2, Fig. 2).
2.3 Measurement of peat characteristics

2.3.1 Groundwater table depth

The depth of the water table below the peat surface was monitored monthly or quarterly, at the same locations and times as CO$_2$ emissions, in perforated PVC tubes inserted in the peat surface along the sub-transects.

2.3.2 Bulk density and ash contents

Peat samples for determination of bulk density and ash content were collected following the method explained in Hooijer et al. (2011).

2.3.3 Peat temperature

Peat temperatures were measured, using a digital thermocouple (Eutech, EcoScan) equipped with a K-type probe, at the same times and positions as the CO$_2$ emissions and water table measurements. Daytime temperature was measured above the peat surface and at depths of 5, 10, 20 and 30 cm in the peat. Towards the end of the study, temperature was also determined at depths of 40, 50 and 60 cm. Temperatures were measured close to mid-day (average time 11:33) with 50% of the observations made between 10:28 and 13:14. In order to investigate diurnal fluctuations, temperatures in the peat profile were recorded using Thermochron® data loggers at 2-hourly intervals at five peat depths (between 5 and 60 cm) along transect B (closed canopy Acacia, 31–36 months old) and transect H (immature Acacia, 5–11 months old) during May–October 2008. The key temperature characteristics of the transects are shown in Table 3.

2.4 CO$_2$ emission monitoring

CO$_2$ emissions were measured along arrays of 7 regularly-spaced (∼0.5 m) gas flux monitoring locations between two adjacent living trees (Fig. 1), assuming that emissions furthest from the tree rooting zone would have a smaller autotrophic component in comparison to those nearest to trees.

Surface peat CO$_2$ emissions were measured by using a portable infrared gas analyzer EGM-4 connected to an SRC-1 respiration chamber unit (PP Systems, Hitchin, United Kingdom). In order to increase the measurement area, the standard 10 cm cover of the SRC-1 unit chamber was replaced by a 30 cm diameter one. During measurements, the chamber was placed securely over the peat surface and CO$_2$ concentrations were recorded automatically at 5-s intervals for a total incubation period of 81 s to ensure that readings were consistent and that the chambers were stable and did not leak. The CO$_2$ emission rates were calculated from the linear change of gas concentration inside the closed chamber as a function of measurement time. Readings were rejected if nonlinear concentration changes were obtained during incubation, owing to leakage or peat disturbance. Readings taken near to damaged trees (wind thrown) were not included in the data set. Measurements were made 2-weekly to monthly unless there were problems of gaining access to the transects. In total, more than 2300 CO$_2$ emission measurements were obtained at 144 individual locations forming the sub-transects and transects (Table 4, Fig. 1). For the timing of measurements during the day see Sect. 2.3.3.

2.5 Treatments to minimize root CO$_2$ emissions

Several measures were taken to remove or quantify autotrophic root respiration from CO$_2$ emission resulting from peat oxidation (decomposition). First, it was determined through pit observations that the bulk of the Acacia root system, even near “mature” trees, was restricted to within less than a metre from the tree although, in some instances, a few roots close to the peat surface extended over a longer distance in mature
Acacia tree stands. Very few roots were found at monitoring locations in the middle of sub-transsects, and it could therefore be assumed that at such locations (i.e. ≥1.3 m from trees on average) respiration from tree roots was negligible (see Fig. 1). Secondly, monitoring locations were kept free from any herbaceous vegetation; however it should be noted that such vegetation was scarce or absent in most locations. Thirdly, during the last 6 months of monitoring the contribution of root respiration to total CO₂ emission was tested experimentally along transects B, D, G and H by regular trenching (sawing) of the peat surface down to a depth of 0.5 m around the three central monitoring locations on each sub-transect (at least ~1.3 m from trees, Fig. 1), which was the depth within which most lateral tree root growth occurred according to our pit observations. Finally, trees were felled along several transects, before (transects E, G, H) or during (transects D, F) the monitoring period, which allowed measurements under conditions where live tree roots were guaranteed to be excluded or roots would not reach far from recently planted trees (see minimum tree age in Table 2).

Mean daytime root respiration was calculated by subtracting the mean of the CO₂ emission measured at “furthest from trees” locations from that of the “nearest to trees” locations, i.e. oxidation CO₂ emissions were subtracted from the total peat emission for mature Acacia growth stages (data is based on Table 4).

2.6 Statistical analyses

The SPSS™ statistical package was used for descriptive and comparative statistical analyses of the data. The main statistical test was univariate analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA), run at the 95 % confidence level.

3 Results
3.1 Peat characteristics

3.1.1 Bulk density and ash content

Characteristics of the upper peat layer are similar along most transects, with ranges of 0.06–0.12 g cm⁻³ (average 0.09 g cm⁻³) and 0.08–2.20 % (average 0.71 %), for bulk density and ash content, respectively (Table 1). This confirms the observation that surface peat at all locations is fibric to hemic, with a very low mineral content, indicating the ombrotrophic nature of the peat.

3.1.2 Groundwater table depth

The average water table depth along all transects is about 0.8 m but there are considerable variations in time and space during the two-year monitoring period (Table 2). On average, the lowest water table during CO₂ flux monitoring was at C transect (mean 1.06 m, and 75 % quartile upper limit at 1.04 m). For transects A and H the water table depth mean was about 0.9 m; along the F, D, B and E transects there were shallower drainage conditions with mean water table depths of between 0.84 and 0.70 m. Transects G and H were located in a hydrology test site where water tables were maintained at distinctly different depths, i.e. the mean water table was 0.43 m at transect G and 0.92 m at transect H.

CO₂ emissions and water table depths measured at “nearest to trees” and “furthest from trees” locations differ significantly only along transects B and D (Table 4). The potential role of water table depth difference on CO₂ emission was tested by applying water table depth as a covariate in the analysis for these transects, but the impact of water table depth difference on the emissions is found to be low (Table 4).
3.1.3 Peat temperature

The average daytime air temperature close to the peat surface is 33.6 °C along transects in the open and young immature Acacia stages (transects D, E, F, G, H) and 30.0 °C in closed canopy Acacia (transects A, B, C), (Table 3). At a depth of 5 cm below the peat surface, mean daytime temperatures are between 29.3 °C and 33.0 °C (mean 31.5 °C) in the open and young immature tree stands (transects D, E, F, G, H) and between 28.2 °C and 29.2 °C (mean 28.7 °C) in closed canopy tree stands (transects A, B, C). Diurnal mean (24 h) and mean daytime (11:00 to 13:00) peat temperatures at a depth of 5 cm differ by 1.3 °C to 1.6 °C along the closed canopy transect B and the open canopy transect H, respectively. The difference between daytime and diurnal peat temperature averages rapidly diminish with peat depth, to 0.3 °C at 10 cm depth. Data from both manual measurements and automated temperature loggers indicate comparable temperature differences.

3.2 CO₂ emissions

Daytime CO₂ emissions data are summarised in Table 4, separated into those “nearest to trees” and those “furthest from trees”, with the latter assumed to approach peat oxidation emission alone, and the former including the combined total of root and oxidation emissions. No significant differences (p > 0.05) in CO₂ emission were identified before and after trenching, at the “furthest from trees” measurement locations along the B, D, G and H transects that varied from “mature” to “open” during trenching operations. This confirms that the tree roots are relatively localised around the bases of the trees. Since the data from emissions monitoring at both trenched and untreated locations did not differ, all data from the “furthest from trees” monitoring locations were combined for subsequent analyses.

The highest values for total emissions from “nearest to trees” locations were obtained along transects A, B, C, F and H, three of which (except F and H) are “mature” plantations with average tree stand ages over 31 months. The lowest total emissions were obtained along the recently replanted and open transects D, E and G, with average tree stand ages below 13 months.

In two of the three mature tree stands (transects A and B), mean emissions are significantly higher at the “nearest to trees” rather than the “furthest from trees” locations, at 56 % and 21 %, respectively (Table 4). In the mature tree stands (A, B and C) the emission difference is even higher (80 %, 44 % and 14 %, respectively) between individual monitoring locations at ~50 cm distance from trees (location 3 in Fig. 1) in comparison to the “furthest from trees” locations, however, it is only 28 %, 4 % and 1 % respectively at a distance of ~90 cm from trees (location 2 in Fig. 1). Along the other transects in the open and immature tree stands, the differences are in general smaller and either of the emission monitoring locations (“nearest to trees” or “furthest from trees”) could result in the higher emission (Table 4). Mean daytime root respiration, calculated as the emission difference between locations “nearest to trees” and “furthest from trees” for the 1st rotation cycle closed canopy Acacia transects (A, B and C) varies between 115 and 630 mg CO₂ m⁻² h⁻¹ (data from Table 4). The highest average daytime root respiration at transect A is 36 % of the total emission from at monitoring locations “nearest to trees”. For transects B and C, the average root respiration emissions are about 17 % and 9 % of the emissions at locations “nearest to trees”. The overall mean root respiration for these transects is 320 mg CO₂ m⁻² h⁻¹, which is 21 % of the total emission at “nearest to trees” locations.

3.3 Relation between CO₂ emissions, groundwater table depth and tree growth stage

Analysis of datasets of instantaneous daytime CO₂ emissions (both for “nearest to trees” and “furthest from trees” locations) and water table depth along individual transects yields significant relations only for transects B, C, F, G and H. However these relations are very different, and for the other transects no relation is evident at all (Fig. 2).
3.4 Relation between CO₂ emission and long-term average groundwater table depth

In order to determine a possible effect of average long-term hydrological conditions on CO₂ emissions, mean daytime emission rates over the two year monitoring period were tested against mean water table depths for each transect (Fig. 3, based on Table 4). Monitoring transects were also separated into two categories, i.e. ≤ 16 months and ≥ 24 months old tree growth stages in order to determine if CO₂ emissions differed following recent disturbance (harvesting) compared to the more stable conditions in maturing tree stands.

There is a trend of reducing CO₂ emission when the water table is closer to the peat surface (Fig. 3). Correlation between mean peat oxidation emission and mean water table depth, measured at locations “furthest from trees” in the ≥ 24 months old tree growth stages, is very high \( R^2 = 0.99 \). It is somewhat lower \( R^2 = 0.53 \) for combined open and ≤ 16 month old tree growth stages. The total CO₂ emission and mean water table depth relationship is unclear, however, in locations “nearest to trees” for which \( R^2 \) values below 0.22 were obtained for the two growth stages used in the analysis (Fig. 3).

The relation between water table depth (in m) and daytime CO₂ emission (in mg m⁻² h⁻¹) for all transects is described by the following linear regressions (95 % confidence limits):

For daytime oxidation emission at “furthest from trees” locations:

\[
\text{emission} = 953.35 \cdot \text{WTD} + 309.07 \quad (R^2 = 0.47, \text{SE} = 197)
\]

For daytime total emission at “nearest to trees” locations:

\[
\text{emission} = 989.46 \cdot \text{WTD} + 391.79 \quad (R^2 = 0.34, \text{SE} = 317)
\]

Several studies suggest temperature differences in peat impact on organic matter oxidation rates by ratio \( Q_{10} = 2 \) (see Sects. 4.4 and 4.6 for details). An average difference between daytime and diurnal peat temperature at 5 cm depth of 1.45 °C is found across the Acacia plantation. By applying temperature correction, based on diurnal surface peat temperature fluctuation and a \( Q_{10} \) value of 2, daytime CO₂ emissions are subject to 14.5 % reduction. Presenting these temperature corrected emission values as scaled-up unit (t ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹), the regressions for all transects are:

For temperature corrected oxidation emission at “furthest from trees” locations:

\[
\text{emission} = 71.40 \cdot \text{WTD} + 23.15 \quad (R^2 = 0.47, \text{SE} = 197)
\]

For temperature corrected total emission at “nearest to trees” locations:

\[
\text{emission} = 74.11 \cdot \text{WTD} + 29.34 \quad (R^2 = 0.34, \text{SE} = 317)
\]

4 Discussion

4.1 Separation of peat surface CO₂ emission sources

Several measures taken in this study have allowed us to separate CO₂ emissions caused by peat oxidation from those due to root respiration. The absence of tree roots and therefore of root respiration at locations “furthest from trees” was confirmed by (i) an observed lack of tree roots in control pits, (ii) the lack of effect of the “trenching” treatment on emissions, and (iii) the absence of a systematic reduction in emissions at locations where trees were harvested during the measurement period. Moreover, the finding that mean daytime total emission values for the most mature tree stands (transects A, B and C) were indeed considerably higher (by up to 80 %, 44 % and 14 %, respectively) at “nearest to trees” rather than at “furthest from trees” locations, demonstrates that the emission measurement method does measure root respiration where it occurs, which further validates the method. We therefore conclude that it is indeed possible to measure emission that is largely or completely “root respiration free” in drained peatlands, by focusing on measurements well away from trees.
4.2 The contribution of root respiration to the total CO$_2$ emission

Root respiration contributes 35–45% to the total peat CO$_2$ flux in boreal peatlands (Nykänen et al., 1995; Silvola et al., 1996), and in non-tropical natural forest sites the contribution can be between 10% and 90%, depending on vegetation type and season (Hanson et al., 2000). Somewhat similar percentages are found near trees in mature tree stands in our study (transsects A, B and C), where we found that root respiration accounts for an average of 21% (36%, 17% and 9%, respectively) of total emissions at “nearest to trees” locations, as compared with the oxidation emissions measured at greater distance from trees. In immature tree stands of 7–16 months age (transsects E, F, G and H), however, the contribution of root respiration to total emission could not be calculated due to very different emissions from the two monitoring locations (Table 4, Fig. 2), which is probably explained by the limited extent over which roots have extended over the short time since planting. Even in relatively mature tree stands, roots were observed to hardly go beyond 1 m from trees, which may be explained by the fact that these trees were still less than 4 yr old. Their root systems, therefore, cannot be compared to those occurring in natural forest, where roots are known to extend for many metres from mature trees.

The root respiration contribution of 21% to the total respiration emission is much lower than the previous values suggested for oil palm plantations on peatland, which range from 46% (Melling et al., 2007), to 36% (Murdiyarso et al., 2010) and 29% (Hergoualc'h and Verchot, 2011). This difference may be caused by the fact that these earlier studies and reviews were based on very small numbers of measurements (at only one location in the case of Murdiyarso et al., 2010 referring to work by Melling et al., 2005), that were not specifically set up to separate root respiration from oxidation emission, i.e., these percentages proposed earlier are rough estimates of root respiration contribution rather than actual measurements.

Emission numbers from studies where the distance of the measurement location(s) from the nearest trees is unknown (e.g. Melling et al., 2005), may tentatively be interpreted to represent 21% root respiration and 79% oxidation emission: the same percentages that we find in relatively mature Acacia plantation. There appears to be no reason to assume that the percentage of root respiration occurring in Acacia plantations would differ very much from the percentage of root respiration expected in other types of plantation agriculture on peatland. In fact the extent of the bulk of the root system around mature oil palms has been observed to be less than 1 m in plantations on deep peat in Jambi, Sumatra (A. Hooijer, unpublished data), as is the case in Acacia plantations.

Considering that oil palms are generally planted further apart than Acacia trees (4–6 m compared to 3.5 m between tree rows), there will be relatively more land surface where root respiration is negligible. Moreover, mature oil palm stands have oxidation emissions that are as high or higher than those from mature Acacia tree stands, because of similar water table depth and limited canopy cover (compared to natural conditions) combined with much higher fertilization rates (Hooijer et al., 2011). We therefore propose that the root respiration contribution estimates for Acacia plantations are also applicable to other peatlands that have been drained and converted to plantation agriculture.

4.3 Relation between CO$_2$ emission and groundwater table depth

When quantifying relations between CO$_2$ emission and groundwater table depth, it must be considered that water table depth is not in itself a control on peat oxidation. It is, however, a proxy for the soil moisture content above the water table, which is an important control on oxidation, by influencing oxygen availability in the soil pore space (Liyama and Osawa, 2010), since air-filled pore space is the inverse of moisture content. Furthermore, peat moisture content also affects the availability of water to microorganisms involved in oxidation in the peat profile.

In peatlands with high groundwater tables and no controlled drainage, the relation between water table depth and soil moisture content is strong: both go up when it rains and go down in dry periods. Jauhiainen et al. (2005, 2008) found that total CO$_2$ emissions from undrained and unregulated, drained sites on tropical peatland were...
4.4 The role of soil temperature in peat oxidation and CO₂ emissions

The rate of decomposition of organic matter on peatlands correlates positively with increase in temperature (Lafleur et al., 2003; Minkkinnen et al., 2007; Mäkiranta et al., 2009). In the tropics, diurnal and annual temperature fluctuations are relatively modest in comparison to northern peatlands. However, there is both a general temperature increase after deforestation and also an increase in diurnal temperature fluctuation in the surface peat and hence a likely increase in the rate of peat decomposition. In this study, no significant relationship was found between mean daytime CO₂ emission and mean daytime peat temperature for all transects ($R^2$-values from 0 to 0.02), probably owing to the limited variation in daytime peat temperature along each transect (Table 3). In a previous study, however, a clear CO₂ emission/temperature relationship for tropical peat was found through 4 yr of automated hourly monitoring of both variables in peat swamp forest (Hirano et al., 2009); this relation suggests a doubling of instantaneous in-situ peat CO₂ emission rates (including those from root respiration) over a temperature range of 5 °C (from 24 to 29 °C). Moreover, long-term combined field

and laboratory studies in the subtropical peatlands of the Everglades (Florida) showed that peat oxidation expressed as peat surface subsidence doubled with a 10 °C increase in temperature (Stephens and Stewart, 1977). Similarly, CO₂ emission rates from incubated surface samples of tropical peat from Sumatra were also found to double between 25 and 35 °C (Brady, 1997). Both Brady (1997) and Hirano et al. (2009) found that the increase in temperature had a greater effect on CO₂ emission rate than soil moisture or water table depth. In our study, we use this relation between temperature and CO₂ emission to adjust CO₂ measurements, which apply to higher daytime temperatures, to correspond to diurnal average temperature conditions.

At a landscape-scale, the surface peat temperature in an intact peat swamp forest is lower and more constant than in deforested and developed tropical peatland (Jaya, 2007), not only because the forest floor is sheltered from direct sunlight but also because it is cooled by evaporation from the peat surface, which usually has a high water content. This cooling effect makes surface forest peat cooler than the air above it, even during the daytime. Average daytime peat temperature at a depth of 5 cm in peat swamp forest (26.5 °C) in Central Kalimantan is 2.9 °C below the average air (29.4 °C) temperature inside the forest (Jauhiainen et al., 2008). After deforestation the amount of solar radiation reaching the peat surface increases and so does the temperature of the peat surface. In Central Kalimantan, the average daytime peat temperature at 5 cm depth is 4.4 °C higher (at 29.9 °C) in open degraded peatland than in nearby non-drained forest (25.5 °C), while the air temperatures just above these peat surfaces are 32.4 and 26.4 °C respectively, a difference of 6 °C (Jauhiainen et al., 2005, 2008). Jaya (2007) reports an even greater difference in another part of Central Kalimantan, of 7.3 °C between average diurnal surface peat temperature in an agricultural area (30.2 °C) and in nearby relatively intact forest (22.9 °C), while average daytime air temperatures are 28.8 and 33.4 °C, respectively. In nearby heavily degraded forest, the average diurnal peat surface temperature and daytime air temperature are 26.7 and 30.4 °C, suggesting that even partially removing the canopy cover has a profound effect on peat and air temperature. From the above, we conclude that the average
temperature of surface peat under intact tropical forest cover is around 25 °C at most, a value that we use in further calculations.

In this study, average daytime temperatures of peat and air in the Acacia plantation are comparable to those in degraded peatland in Kalimantan. Average peak temperature at 5 cm depth is between 29.3 and 33.3 °C (mean 31.5 °C) in open areas and from 28.2 to 29.2 °C (mean 30 °C) in closed canopy Acacia tree stands, and respective mean air temperatures are 33.6 and 30 °C. It must be assumed that these temperatures have increased considerably since deforestation and drainage. If we assume the same original surface peat temperature of 25 °C that was reported for Kalimantan (Jaya, 2007), in natural forest, then the temperature of the surface peat would have increased by 5.6 °C.

4.5 CO₂ emission rates and long-term, average groundwater table

The means of the water table depths along each transect throughout the entire study period (i.e. long-term water table depth) show a strong relationship with long-term mean root respiration free CO₂ emissions (Fig. 3). CO₂ emission rates along the transects are lower at higher water table depths (i.e. when the water table is nearer to the surface). A similar CO₂ emission/water table depth relationship is found for the unplanted and recently planted (≤16 month old) transects and for those with older (>24 month old) trees. The highest regression R²-value (0.99) is for the mature tree growth stage, which represents comparatively constant environmental conditions after several years have lapsed following harvesting and re-planting operations, and where the closed canopy provides relatively stable microclimatic conditions at the peat surface.

As the CO₂ emission means are based on 2 yr of data collected intensively from a relatively large area (Table 4), these values can be used to quantify annual emissions for the entire plantation. The overall daytime mean (±SE) peat oxidation CO₂ emission derived by regression (Fig. 3) is 93.9 ± 17.2 t CO₂ ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ (1072 ± 197 mg m⁻² h⁻¹) at 0.8 m water table depth. Other studies on permanently drained peat, albeit with relatively few measurements over shorter periods and without measures to quantify the contribution of root respiration, provide emissions of 201 mg m⁻² h⁻¹ (water table depth 0.07 m) on a taro field (Chimner and Ewel, 2004), 733 mg m⁻² h⁻¹ (water table depth 0.24 m) on a cassava field (Furukawa et al., 2005), 504 mg m⁻² h⁻¹ (water table depth 0.27 m) under sago and 693 mg m⁻² h⁻¹ (water table depth 0.60 m) under oil palm (Melling et al., 2005). Although most of these mean CO₂ emissions (Chimner and Ewel, 2004; Furukawa et al., 2005; Melling et al., 2005) are outside the water table depth range in this study, an extended regression line to water table depths of 0.2 and 0.3 m (Fig. 3) would result in a comparable CO₂ emission range from 502 to 597 mg CO₂ m⁻² h⁻¹.

The mean daytime peat oxidation CO₂ emission from this study of ~94 t CO₂ ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ at 0.8 m drainage depth (Fig. 3), is higher than reported in most other studies that have used subsidence measurements, as presented in recent meta-analyses (Couwenberg et al., 2010; Hooijer et al., 2010). One explanation for this may be that this value is based on daytime CO₂ flux measurements, which may result in an overestimate if peat temperatures vary diurnally. This emission value may therefore be considered a maximum, which should be corrected for daytime temperature and emission both being above average.

4.6 Correcting CO₂ emissions for temperature effect

In this study, we calculated the potential impact of diurnal peat temperature differences on peat decomposition rates on the basis of Q₁₀-values provided from the literature for comparable environmental conditions (see Sect. 4.4). The average daytime peat decomposition CO₂ emission of 94 t ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹, which covers both open and closed canopy conditions, was used as a reference. The diurnal mean temperatures of the surface peat were found to be lower in comparison to the daytime temperatures measured during gas flux monitoring. The average difference between daytime and diurnal temperatures is 1.45 °C across both open and closed canopy conditions inside Acacia plantations. Assuming that a difference in peat temperature of 1 °C will result in a
10% difference in CO₂ emission (Brady, 1997; Stephens and Stewart, 1977; Hirano et al., 2009), the daytime CO₂ emission value may therefore be reduced by up to 14.5% to account for diurnal temperature fluctuation in peat. Applying this correction to the mean daytime CO₂ emission value of 94 t ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ we find an average emission value of 80 t ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ (Fig. 3).

This temperature corrected emission value of ~80 CO₂ ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹, at an average water depth of 0.8 m, is close to the value of 76 t CO₂ ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ resulting from subsidence and bulk density measurements conducted partly in the same landscape at the same water table depth (Hooijer et al., this issue). It is also close to the values of 72 to 72.8 t CO₂ ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ suggested by Hooijer et al. (2010) and Couwenberg et al. (2010) in their meta-analyses, for a plantation water depth of 0.8 m. In two other studies, Murdiyarso et al. (2010) and Koh et al. (2011) apply a much lower CO₂ emission estimate (34.1 t ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ at 0.5 m water table depth) for peat oxidation under plantation conditions. This estimate, however, is based on only two case studies (Murayama and Bakar, 1996; Melling et al., 2005) that present very limited datasets at only one or a few locations, and a poor description of measurement method and field conditions.

The above correction applies a diurnal temperature difference measured near the peat surface, at 5 cm depth, whereas we find that temperature fluctuation diminishes rapidly with depth. Our approach therefore implicitly assumes that most peat oxidation, and therefore most production of CO₂ gas, takes place in the upper 10 cm of the peat profile. We may assume that oxygen availability is highest at such limited depth, and it appears likely that the near-surface layer contains a relatively large amount of the most labile peat carbon compounds, so it does seem probable that the highest oxidation rate is indeed found near the peat surface. While we have no information on the distribution of CO₂ gas production in the peat profile, it is likely that part of it is generated at greater depth and, therefore, the temperature corrected emission value of 80 t ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ may be seen as a minimum estimate. Support for the correction value applied, however, is provided by other studies.

In drained forest in Kalimantan, the average of long-term diurnal CO₂ emission is 18% below emissions measured at 12:00 (Hirano et al., 2009). A single 24-h CO₂ emission monitoring by Ali et al. (2006) in Jambi also yielded a comparable diurnal emission difference of 18% in selectively logged and drained peatland, and a 13% difference in an oil palm plot on peat. These three values, with a narrow range of 13% to 18% in very different land uses in different parts of Indonesia, are close to the 14.5% reduction applied in the current study for daytime emission measurements in Acacia plantations.

The high sensitivity of CO₂ emissions to peat temperature, and the resulting relative insensitivity to water table depth, implies that bringing up water tables in plantations will not reduce carbon losses by as much as would be expected on the basis of peat surface emissions in forest systems (e.g. Jauhiainen et al., 2005, 2008) or earlier relations between water table depth and CO₂ emission (e.g. Couwenberg et al., 2010; Hooijer et al., 2010). The implication of this is that high CO₂ emission from any peatland that is converted to agriculture, whatever its water and land management, may have to be regarded as inevitable.

4.7 Comparing temperature and water table depth as likely main drivers of oxidation emission in tropical peatland plantations

The effect of temperature on average CO₂ emission from the Acacia plantations can be estimated by applying the same correction factor as used above, of a 1°C temperature difference yielding a 10% difference in CO₂ emission, to the average increase of 5°C after deforestation and drainage that follows from the above analysis of data from Central Kalimantan. This would indicate that up to 56% of the CO₂ emission in Acacia plantations may be caused by the change in peat temperature after plantation development alone, which would make it the most important single control. The remaining 44% of emission would then be caused by soil moisture (with water table depth as a proxy), but also by soil disturbance and fertilization. This likely dominance of temperature as a cause of oxidation in tropical peatland plantations has not been given much attention in
5 Conclusions

This study is the largest and most detailed investigation of CO$_2$ emissions undertaken in an industrial plantation on tropical peat. It is also the first study to separate "root respiration" and "peat oxidation" CO$_2$ emissions. We conclude that this scale of study, and a consistent approach to separating emission contributions, is necessary in order to quantify "net" CO$_2$ emissions from drained peatland. We provide descriptions of a monitoring set-up that can yield such results, and that deviates significantly from set-ups applied in earlier studies.

The contribution of root respiration to CO$_2$ emission is found to be 21% on average along transects in mature tree stands. Significant root respiration occurs very close to trees, but it is negligible at locations more than 1.3 m away from trees. This means that emission measurements well away from trees are free of root respiration and represent only oxidation emission.

We found an average minimum temperature corrected oxidation CO$_2$ emission of 80 t ha$^{-1}$ yr$^{-1}$ for the Acacia plantation, after reducing an average value of 94 t ha$^{-1}$ yr$^{-1}$, as measured during the daytime, by 14.5% to account for the lower peat temperatures that occur by night. Such a correction has not been applied before, but we think it is necessary to be able to compare the results of different emission studies. The resulting value applies at an average water table depth of 0.8 m, in peatland with a thickness greater than 4 metres, for a peat surface covered by vegetation and with limited fertilizer application only in the first year after planting.

Mean long-term water table depth along transects correlates quite well with average oxidation CO$_2$ emissions, although the results of our study indicate that temperature differences may be the most important control on peat oxidation and may in fact explain over 50% of emissions from drained peatlands when compared to forested, pre-clearance conditions. Even if the water table were at the surface, which is impossible in plantations, the relation found would predict that CO$_2$ emissions from peat oxidation are still 231 t ha$^{-1}$ yr$^{-1}$ or more. It is therefore evident that high CO$_2$ emissions are inevitable in any type of agriculture on tropical peatland.

There is no reason to assume these conclusions apply only to Acacia plantations. All agriculture on peat requires removal of forest cover and lowering of the water table, similar to the study sites. Growing non-permanent crops (like vegetables, rice) on peat results in less ground cover and higher temperatures than in Acacia or oil palm plantations. Most crops, including oil palm, also require much higher fertilizer inputs than Acacia, which will further enhance peat oxidation. Thus emissions from other types of agriculture on peat are likely to be as high or higher than those from Acacia plantations, at similar water depths and on similar peat types.

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References


Murdiyarso, D., Hergoualc’h, K., and Verchot, L. V.: Opportunities for reducing greenhouse gas...

Table 1. Main characteristics of the peat at the CO2 monitoring transects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transect</th>
<th>Depth (m)</th>
<th>BD × (g cm−3)</th>
<th>Ash content (% of dw)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.1–4.7</td>
<td>0.11 ± 0.01</td>
<td>0.29 ± 0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>7.8–9.0</td>
<td>0.12 ± 0.02</td>
<td>2.61 ± 1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C, D</td>
<td>4.6–5.1</td>
<td>0.08 ± 0.03</td>
<td>0.15 ± 0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>5.1–5.5</td>
<td>0.07 ± 0.01</td>
<td>0.08 ± 0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>7.9–9.5</td>
<td>0.06 ± 0.01</td>
<td>0.51 ± 0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G, H</td>
<td>5.0–6.2</td>
<td>0.06 ± 0.01</td>
<td>0.19 ± 0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Mean ± SD at 30–50 cm horizon from the peat surface (n = 3–9).
Table 2. Tree stand age characteristics (months) and average water table characteristics (m from the peat surface) at the CO$_2$ monitoring transects over the two year monitoring period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree stand age (months)</th>
<th>Water table depth (m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min.</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%ile 25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%ile 50</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%ile 75</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 1st</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 2nd</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* At G transect water table was maintained closer to surface than is normal in the plantation area.

Table 3. Temperatures (mean ± SD) of air close to the peat surface, and at depths of 5, 10, and 60 cm into the peat based on manual measurements at daytime during CO$_2$ flux monitoring and diurnally collected logger data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temperature (°C) at transects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manual measurement*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daytime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air</td>
<td>30.9 ± 2.7</td>
<td>28.9 ± 2.1</td>
<td>30.2 ± 1.7</td>
<td>33.0 ± 3.2</td>
<td>29.7 ± 2.9</td>
<td>26.7 ± 2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 cm</td>
<td>29.2 ± 2.3</td>
<td>28.2 ± 2.0</td>
<td>28.6 ± 1.4</td>
<td>30.5 ± 2.5</td>
<td>27.8 ± 1.6</td>
<td>26.5 ± 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 cm</td>
<td>28.9 ± 2.2</td>
<td>28.2 ± 1.9</td>
<td>28.5 ± 1.6</td>
<td>29.4 ± 2.1</td>
<td>27.1 ± 1.1</td>
<td>27.0 ± 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 cm</td>
<td>31.3 ± 2.6</td>
<td>29.7 ± 1.3</td>
<td>30.9 ± 0.9</td>
<td>30.6 ± 1.4</td>
<td>28.5 ± 0.6</td>
<td>28.5 ± 0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air</td>
<td>36.9 ± 2.3</td>
<td>31.0 ± 3.2</td>
<td>34.1 ± 3.8</td>
<td>33.2 ± 2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 cm</td>
<td>31.9 ± 1.5</td>
<td>29.3 ± 2.2</td>
<td>33.3 ± 3.6</td>
<td>32.6 ± 2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 cm</td>
<td>30.3 ± 1.6</td>
<td>28.9 ± 1.7</td>
<td>33.1 ± 3.5</td>
<td>32.3 ± 2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 cm</td>
<td>31.9 ± 1.4</td>
<td>30.7 ± 1.1</td>
<td>33.5 ± 3.1</td>
<td>33.4 ± 2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Daytime mean peat temperature at 5 cm depth is 30.5°C for all transects (A–H), 28.7°C for transects A–C, and 31.5°C for transects D–H.
Table 4. Mean daytime measured CO$_2$ flux in “furthest from trees” and “nearest to trees” locations and the related mean water table depths at the monitoring transects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transect Location relative N</th>
<th>CO$_2$ (mg m$^{-2}$ h$^{-1}$)</th>
<th>Water table depth (m)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Furthest</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1128</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nearest</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>1758</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B'</td>
<td>Furthest</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>1028</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nearest</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1242</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Furthest</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>1185</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nearest</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D'</td>
<td>Furthest</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nearest</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Furthest</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nearest</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Furthest</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1103</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nearest</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>1366</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Furthest</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nearest</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Furthest</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>1584</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nearest</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* By accounting water table depth as covariate at B and D transects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transect Location relative N</th>
<th>CO$_2$ (mg m$^{-2}$ h$^{-1}$)</th>
<th>Water table depth (m)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Furthest</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>1019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nearest</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Furthest</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nearest</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>702</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1. Outline of CO$_2$ emission monitoring location arrangement at sub-transect, and an outline of a transect in a tree growing unit.
Fig. 2. Instantaneous daytime CO$_2$ fluxes (mean ± SE) at transects representing various tree growth stages using 10 cm wide water table depth classes. Mean CO$_2$ emissions at “furthest from trees” locations (•) and “nearest to trees” locations (◦) are shown separately for each transect.

Fig. 3. Regression on mean peat surface "oxidation" (upper graph) and "total" (lower graph) emissions at mean water table depths at the monitoring transects. Emission values provided in multiple units; daytime emission values (mg m$^{-2}$ h$^{-1}$, t ha$^{-1}$ yr$^{-1}$) on the left axis, and temperature corrected emissions (tha$^{-1}$ yr$^{-1}$) on the right axis. Linear regression lines for ≤16 months old trees (−symbol, dotted line), ≥24 months old acacia (+symbol, dashed line), average (solid line), and 95% confidence limits (solid curves) for the combined data of 8 transects are provided. Arrows indicate regression mean emissions and water table depths.