Estimating Tree Cover Area and Change Using Sample-based Analysis

& DISCOVERY Global Land Analysis and Discovery Lab University of Maryland, College Park



Statistical Sampling

Democratic Republic of the Congo. FACET forest cover and change 2000-2010

Spatially exhaustive (wall-to-wall) mapping

Statistical sampling

PROBLEM

All maps produced using remotely sensed data have errors, which bring bias to the areas calculated from the map

SOLUTION

Reference sample data can be used to produce an unbiased estimate of area of map classes with known uncertainty (Olofsson et al. 2013, 2014)



Statistical Sampling

Wrong way



Global forest extent and change products provides spatially consistent, wall-to-wall data...

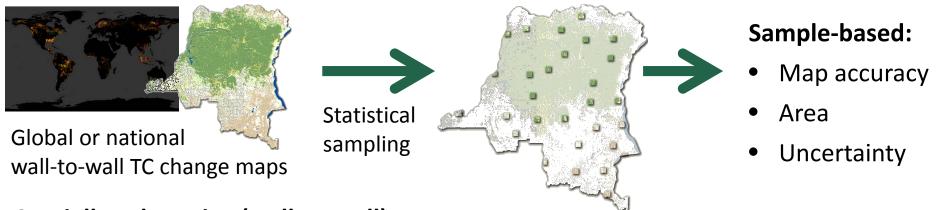
However:

- All maps derived from remotely sensed data contain errors due to data limitation, classification/change detection algorithm limitation, analyst errors and bias, etc.
- Errors on the global overview maps usually introduce bias in area estimations. Most of the overview maps provide "conservative" estimates of rare classes, i.e. they underestimate forest change.
- The global map errors may be spatially biased (e.g. due to different characterization model sensitivity within different environments).
- The uncertainty of classification may not be estimated from the map alone.



Statistical Sampling

Good practice



Spatially exhaustive (wall-to-wall) maps

- Provide information on spatial allocation of forest cover and change.
- Allow sampling design/area estimation with improved efficiently and precision.
- Global maps may have limitations and should be substituted with regional/national maps when possible.
- Sample-based assessment (reference sample data)
- Provides highest quality determination of the forest cover and change conditions per sample unit
 - Serves as reference data for map **accuracy assessment**.
 - Allows **unbiased area estimation** with known **uncertainty**.



Probability sampling allows to:

- Quantify map accuracy (Overall, User's, Producer's).
- Estimate "true" (unbiased) areas of mapped classes.
- Estimate uncertainty of the mapped classes area.
- Perform value-added thematic analysis based on visual sample interpretation (e.g. differentiate various types of forest or forest disturbance).



Primary stages of sampling assessment:

- **1. The sampling design**: how to select the reference sample.
- **2. The response design**: how to determine the "ground truth" for each observation in the reference sample.
- **3. The estimation and analysis protocol**: how to estimate area and uncertainty and quantify the accuracy of the map.

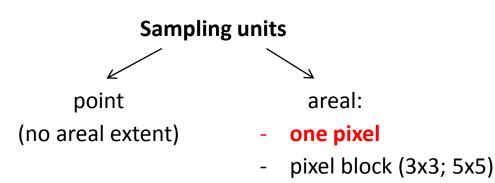


Basic principles of sampling design for TC/TCC assessment

- The entire area of analysis should be included into sampling frame.
- Samples should be allocated using **probability sampling** (e.g., randomly). Spatial autocorrelation does not usually affect sample-based estimates. Random allocation is preferred in most cases.
- Samples should **NEVER** be used as classification training.
- Samples should be **in sufficient number** (typically large) to reduce the uncertainty of accuracy metrics. For stratified sampling, at least 100 samples per strata is recommended.
- The number of samples is not correlated with the total population (number of pixels in the map). Only the total number of samples drives the precision, not the fraction of the area sampled.
- Each valid sample should have map data and reference data.



Sampling unit



- polygon (e.g. land cover unit, segment)
- fixed-area plot (rectangular, circular)

Considerations when choosing sampling unit:

- Cost/time of deriving reference value;
- Sensitivity to location error (boundary pixels and polygons);
- Ability to retain identity under map revisions (e.g. map polygons may change in case of a map reclassification).

Stehman and Czaplewski (1998): "No consensus exists on which sampling unit is best, and it is unlikely that any one sampling unit is optimal for all applications"



Sampling design – the protocol by which the reference sampling units are selected

Probability sampling: all sampling units have nonzero inclusion probability

statistically valid estimates can be computed

Examples of probability sampling designs:

- Simple random
- Systematic
- Stratified random
- Stratified systematic
- Cluster random
- Cluster systematic
- Stratified random cluster
- Stratified random systematic

Nonprobability sampling:

inclusion probabilities for the samples can not be defined

should not be used for the accuracy assessment or area estimation

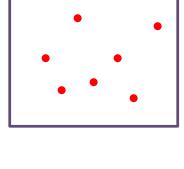
Examples of nonprobability sampling:

- Purposefully selecting training data for a supervised classification;
- Selecting reference samples from conveniently accessible sites;
- Using available aerial photography or high resolution imagery.

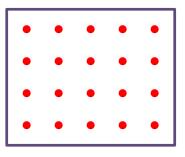


Common probability sampling designs

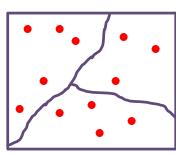
1. Simple random



2. Systematic

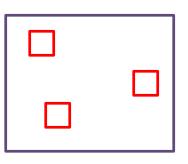


3. Stratified random

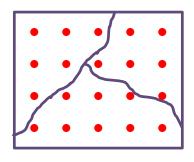


4. Cluster random one-stage

Reference data obtained for all pixels in the block (cluster)

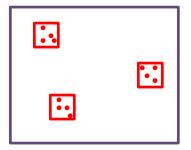


3. Stratified systematic



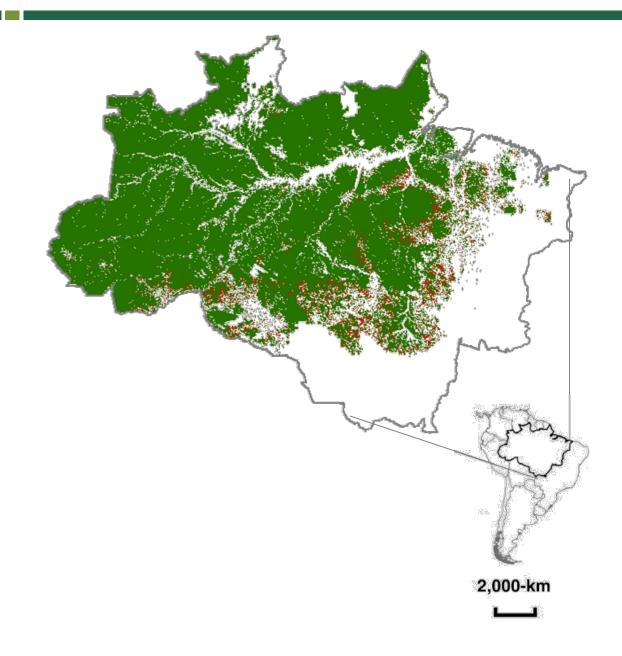
4. Cluster random two-stage

Reference data obtained for a sample of pixels in the block (cluster)





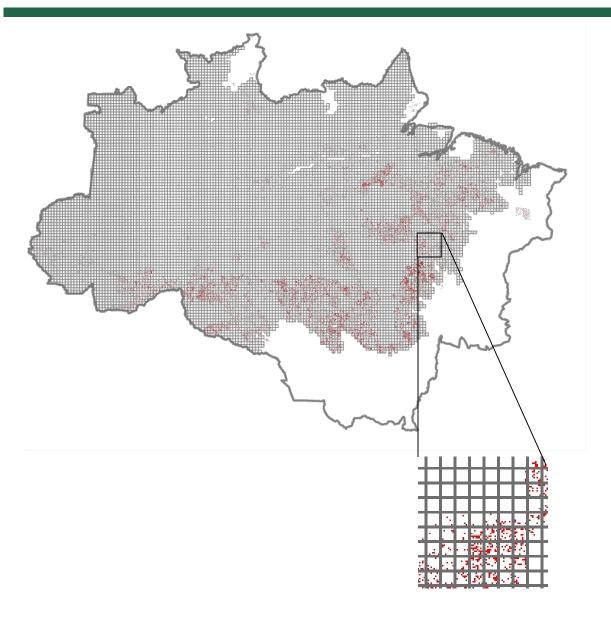
Test data: PRODES Landsat-mapped forest cover loss 2000-2005



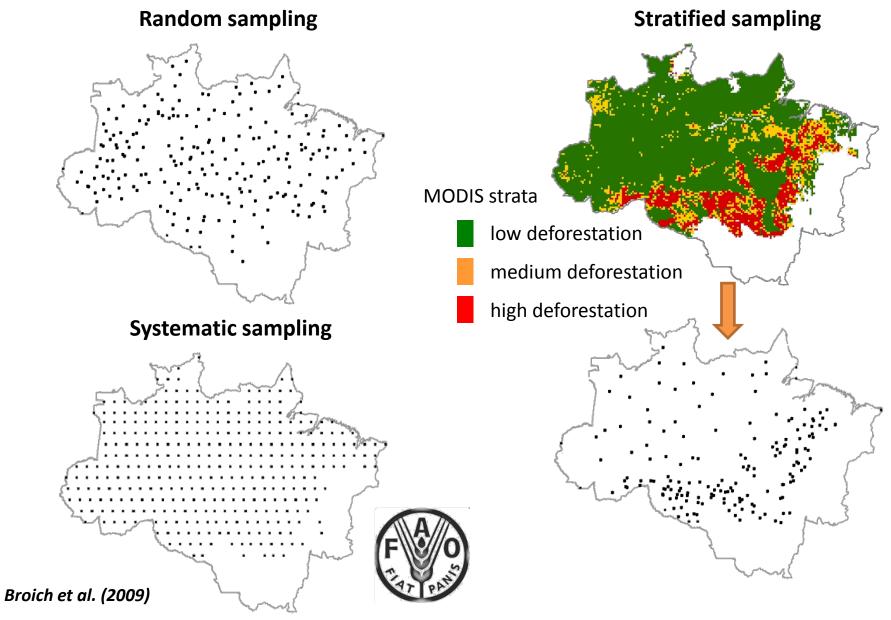


Test data: PRODES Landsat-mapped forest cover loss 2000-2005

Sampling frame: 18.5x18.5km sample blocks

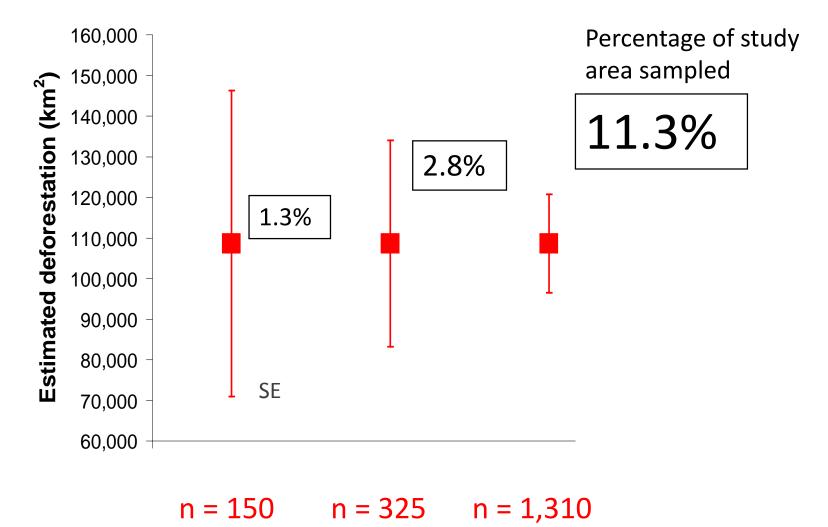




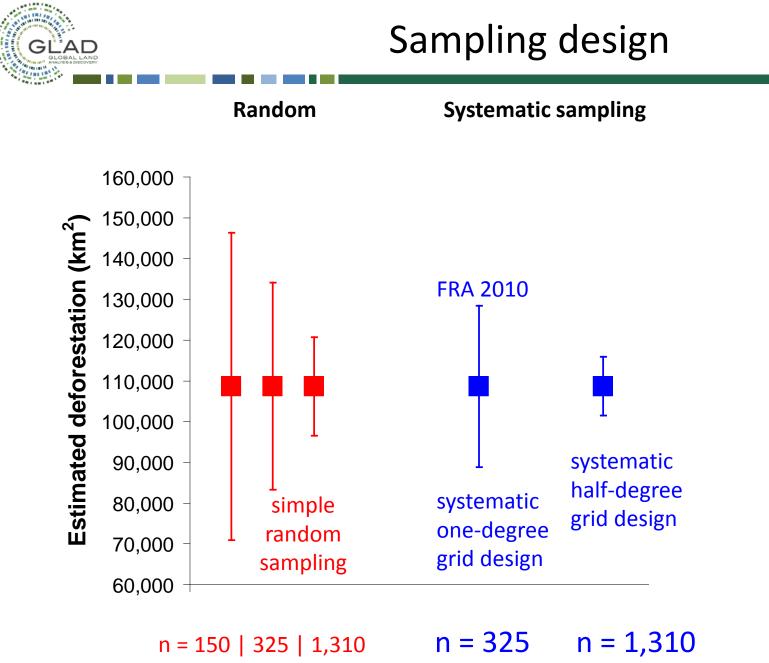




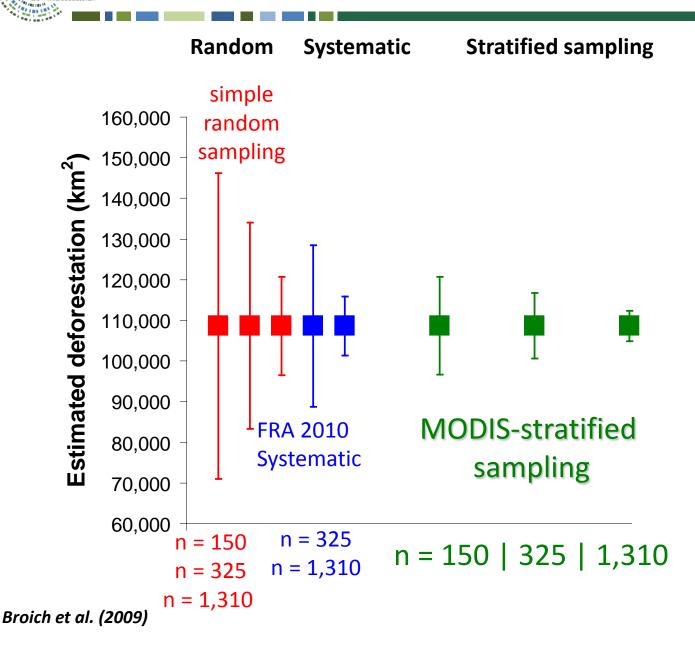
Random sampling



Broich et al. (2009)



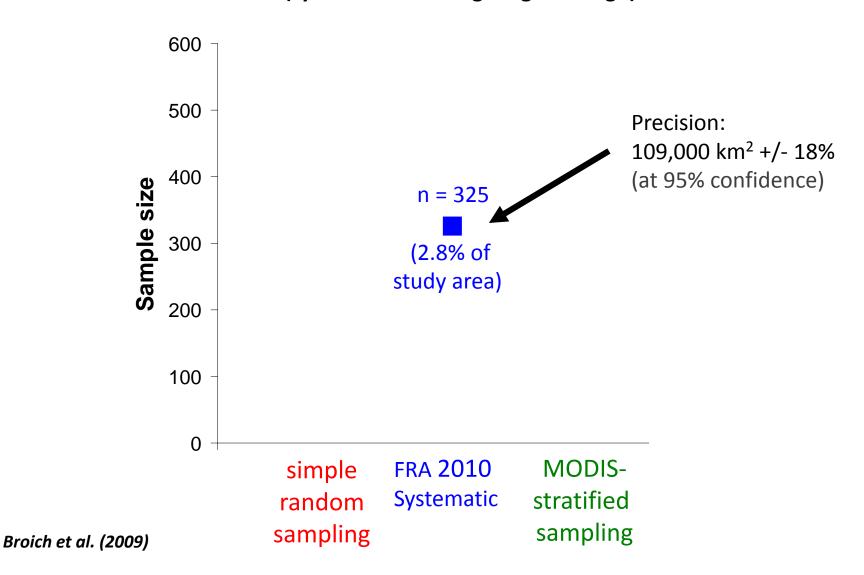
Broich et al. (2009)



GĽAD



Sample size needed to achieve precision of FRA 2010 (systematic one-degree grid design)





Common probability sampling designs

From Stehman (2009):

Table 4. Relative strengths and weaknesses of basic sampling designs according to desirable design criteria. The criteria are: *C1*) probability sample, *C2*) practical, *C3*) cost, *C4*) spatial balance, *C5*) precise estimates of class-specific accuracy, *C6*) ability to estimate standard errors, and *C7*) flexible to change in sample size. The rating symbols are \bullet =strength and \circ =weakness; absence of a symbol indicates the design is 'neutral' with regard to that criterion. See also section 5.4 in text.

Design	<i>C1</i>	<i>C2</i>	<i>C3</i>	<i>C4</i>	<i>C5</i>	<i>C6</i>	<i>C</i> 7
<i>D1</i> : Simple random	•	•	0	0	0	•	•
D2: Systematic	•	•	0	•	0	0	0
D3: Stratified (land cover) random	•	٠	0	0	•	٠	٠
D4: Stratified (land cover) systematic	٠		0		٠	0	0
<i>D5a</i> : Stratified (spatial) random $(n_h=1)$	•	•	0	•	0	0	
<i>D5b</i> : Stratified (spatial) random $(n_h > 1)$	•	•	0		0	•	•
D6: Stratified (spatial) systematic	•	•	0	•	0	0	0
D7: Cluster random	•		•	0	0	•	
D8: Cluster systematic	•		•		0	0	0
D9: Stratified random cluster	•		•	0			
D10: Stratified systematic cluster	•		٠			0	

Olofsson et al. (2014):

Stratified random sampling is a recommended "good practice" sampling design

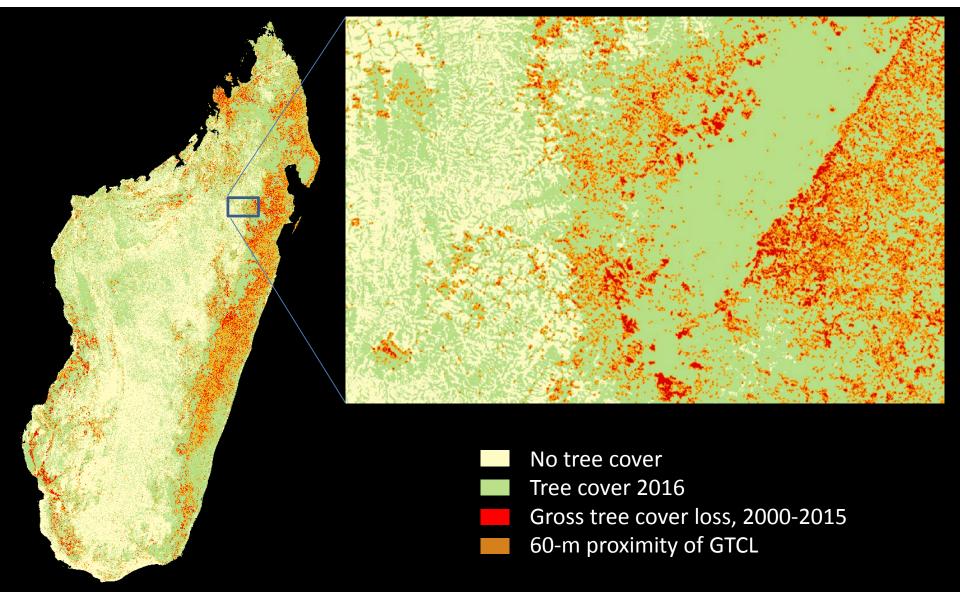


Principles of stratified random sampling design

- Assign all pixels to groups (strata). Strata should represent areas with low variability of the measured quantity (e.g. forest change). Alternatively, "natural" strata may be used (e.g. land-cover classes). In this case, however, stratification may not have effect on the uncertainty of the estimate.
- The large number of strata will require large number of samples and will complicate accuracy and area estimation. If required, post-strata may be added later to characterize specific regions or land cover types.
- Specify sample size for each stratum. Equal, proportional, or other allocations may be used. Ensure that rare classes (strata) appear in the sample. Sample may be added later to strata which contribute most to the overall uncertainty.

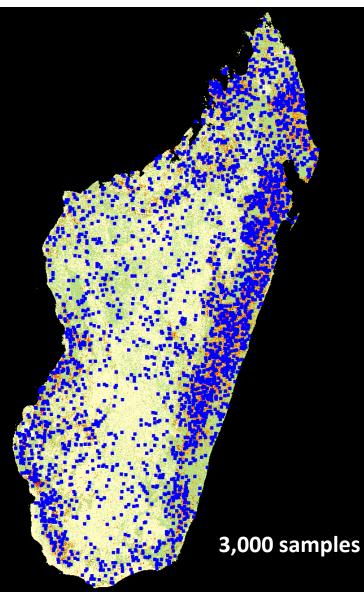


Sampling design to quantify tree cover change in Madagascar, 2000-2015





Sampling design to quantify tree cover change in Madagascar, 2000-2015

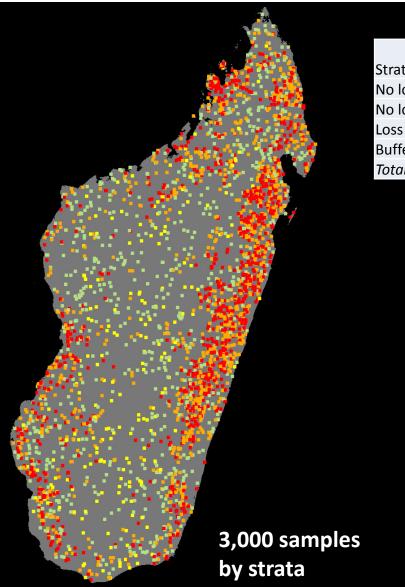




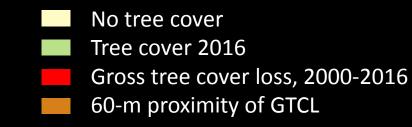




Sampling design to quantify tree cover change in Madagascar, 2000-2015



				— · · ·	
	area,	count,		Total	Training
Stratum	ha	30x30m pixels	% total	samples	goal
No loss / no trees	25,141,547	348008206	43	200	50
No loss / tree cover	23,815,964	327272139	40	800	150
Loss 2001-2015	2,658,505	36480651	4	1000	150
Buffer around loss	7,528,648	103251036	13	1000	150
Total	59,144,663	815012032		3000	500





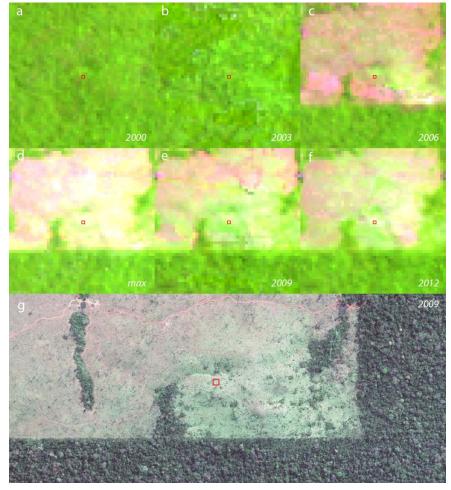
Reference classification should be:

- Of higher quality than what was used to create the map (e.g. high resolution imagery to validate Landsat-based map);

OR

- Created in a more accurate way, if the same data were used for both the map and reference classifications (e.g. visual interpretation of Landsat time-series to validate Landsat-based map derived using supervised classification).

Reference labeling protocol and rules for defining agreement between reference and map should be established prior to validation



Possible sources of error in reference classification:

Mato Grosso, Brazil

- Geolocation errors (spatial mismatch between reference data and map)
- Interpretation uncertainty (interpreter error in the assignment of reference class and difference between interpreters)
 from Olofsson et al., 2014



Collecting sample (reference) data

Field data collection steps

- 1. Define sample locations (i.e. allocate samples randomly within the entire area, or within accessible area).
- 2. Develop efficient plan for visiting sites and contingencies for unreachable sites.
- 3. Use GPS (satellite images, on-line and off-line maps) to find pre-determined reference sites.
- 4. Use explicit definitions of the classes to insure that reference data are consistent



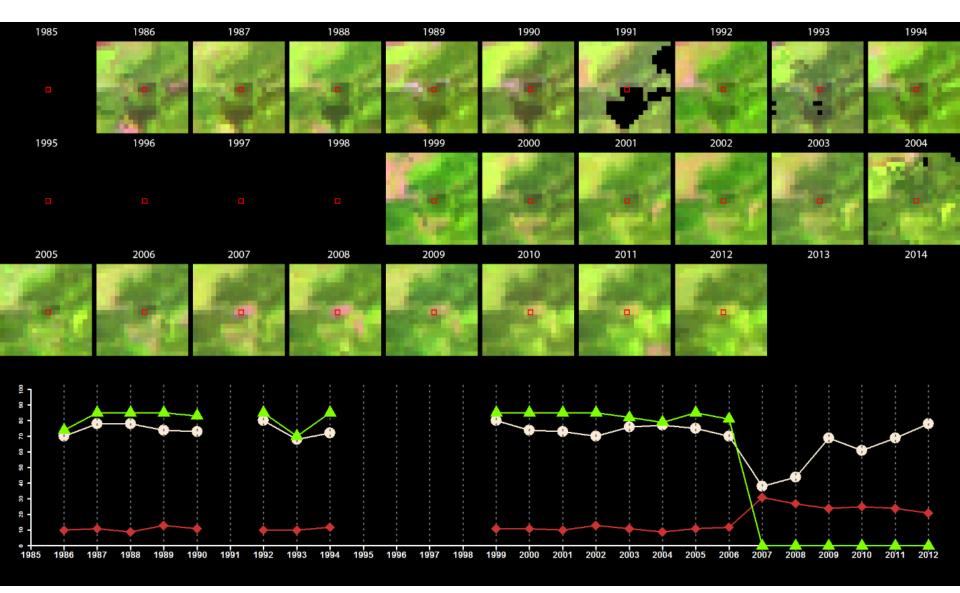


Collecting sample (reference) data

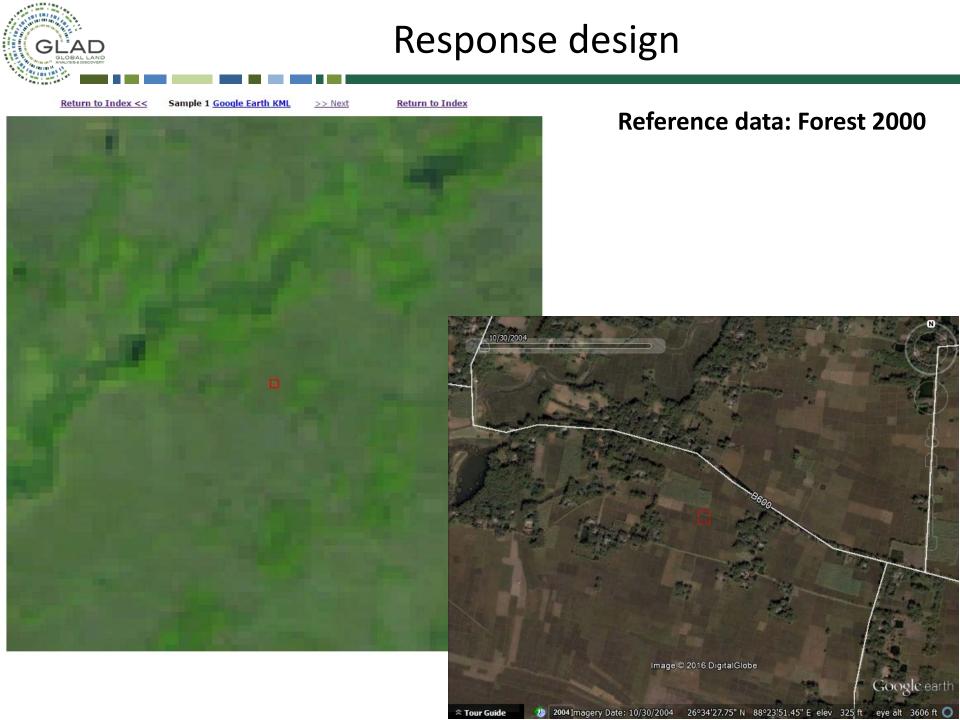


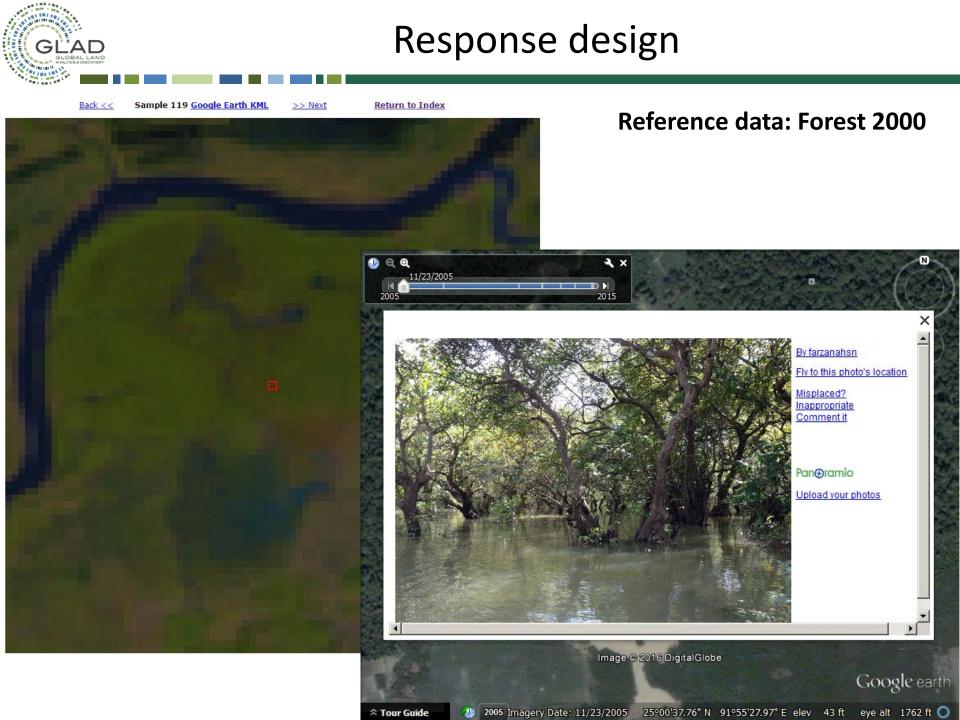
Using high-resolution images

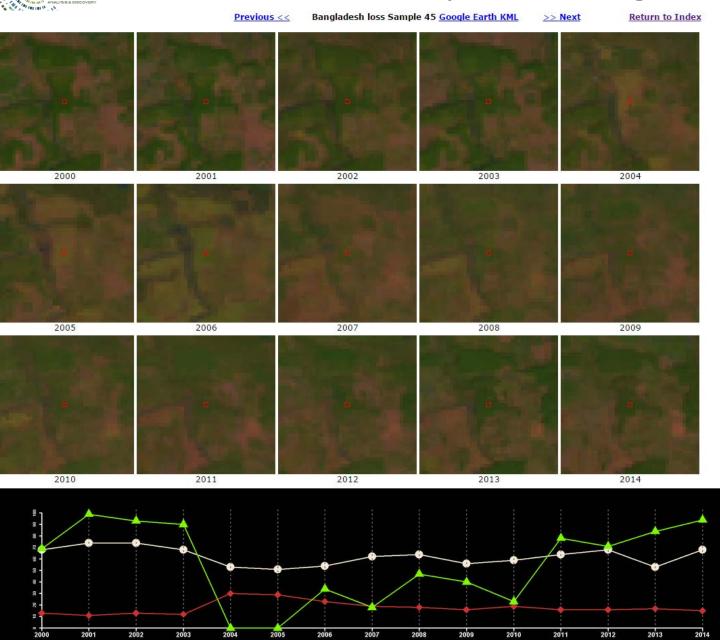




Landsat annual time-series as reference data



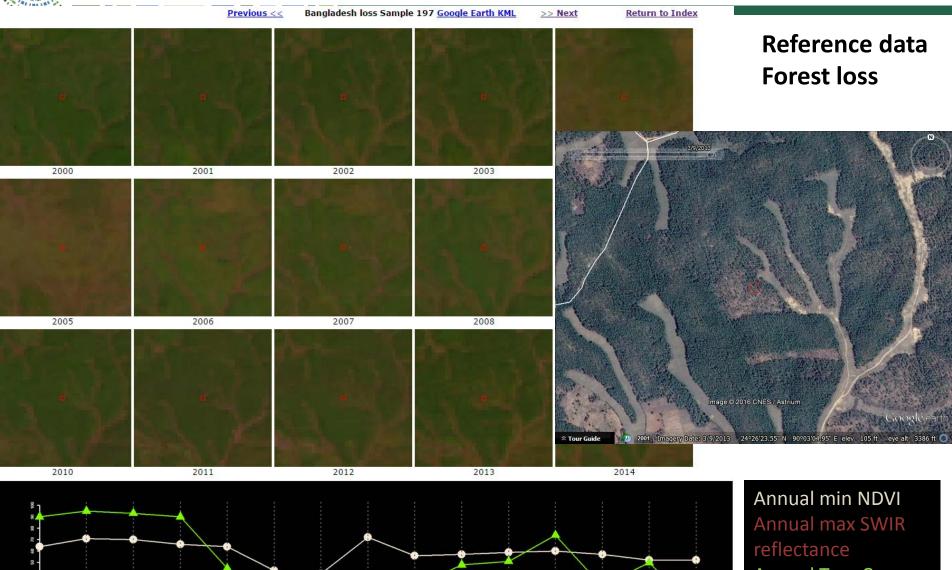




Reference data Forest loss

Annual min NDVI Annual max SWIR reflectance Annual Tree Canopy Cover

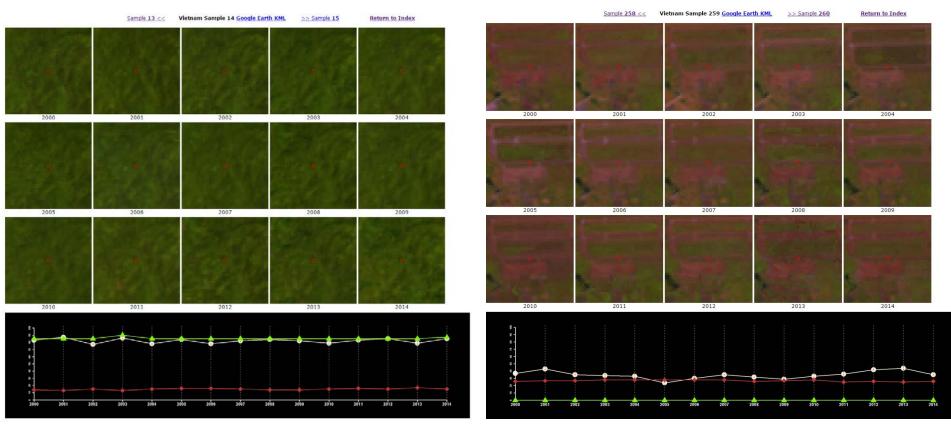




Annual Tree Canopy Cover



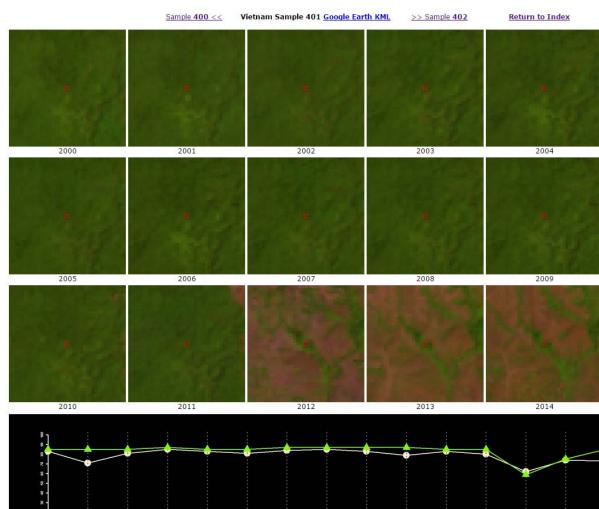
Reference data



Annual min NDVI Annual max SWIR reflectance Annual Tree Canopy Cover



Reference data



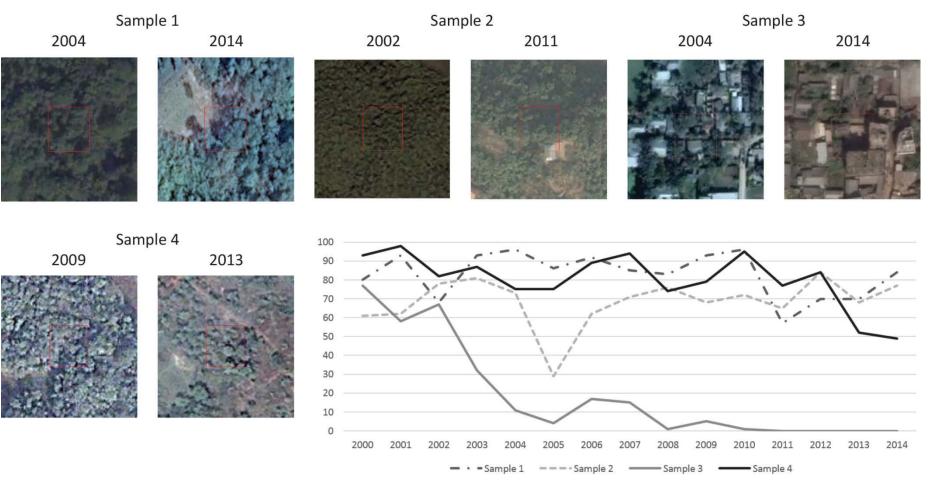
Google Earth (TM) Data





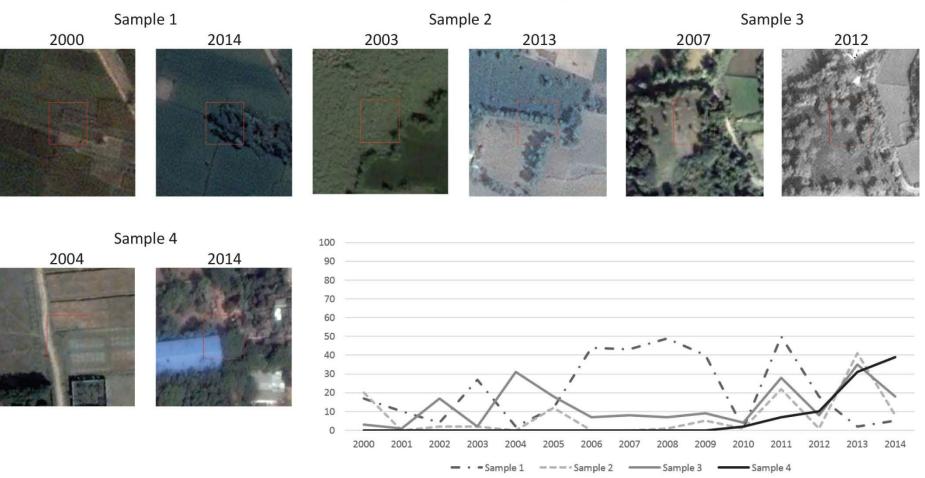


Tree canopy cover loss samples





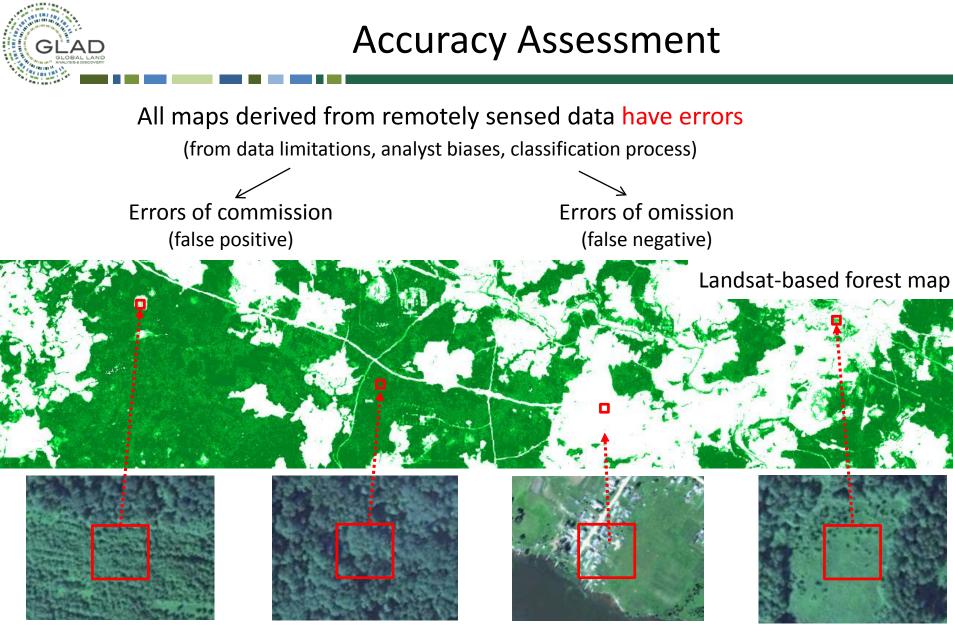
Tree canopy cover gain samples





Probability sampling allows to:

- Quantify map accuracy (Overall, User's, Producer's).
- Estimate "true" (unbiased) areas of mapped classes.
- Estimate uncertainty of the mapped classes area.
- Perform value-added thematic analysis based on visual sample interpretation (e.g. differentiate various types of forest or forest disturbance).



Map: non-forest Reference: forest

Map: forest Reference: forest

Map: non-forest Reference: non-forest

Map: forest Reference: non-forest



Confusion matrix (or error matrix) summarizes the relationship between the two sources of information (e.g. map and reference sample point data).

	Reference				
Мар	Forest	Non-forest			
Forest	True positive	False positive (error of commission)			
Non-forest	False negative (error of omission)	True negative			

→ Full population (wall-to-wall) reference data are usually absent, so a <u>reference sample</u> has to be used instead

Confusion matrix outputs:

- Quantification of map uncertainty:
 - Overall accuracy
 - User's accuracy (represent commission error)
 - Producer's accuracy (represent omission error)

- Estimation of the "true" area of mapped classes.



Accuracy measures

Overall accuracy represent the percent of correctly mapped sample points of total number of sample points.

OA = Number of correct plots total number of plots

User's accuracy is a measure of the commission error. This statistic indicates the probability of how well the classified sample represents what is found on the ground.

UA = Number correctly identified as a given map class Number claimed to be in that map class

Producer's accuracy is a statistic that specifies the probability of a ground reference data being correctly classified and it is a measure of the **omission error**. This statistic is calculated because the producer may want to know how well an area can be classified.

Number correctly identified test sites

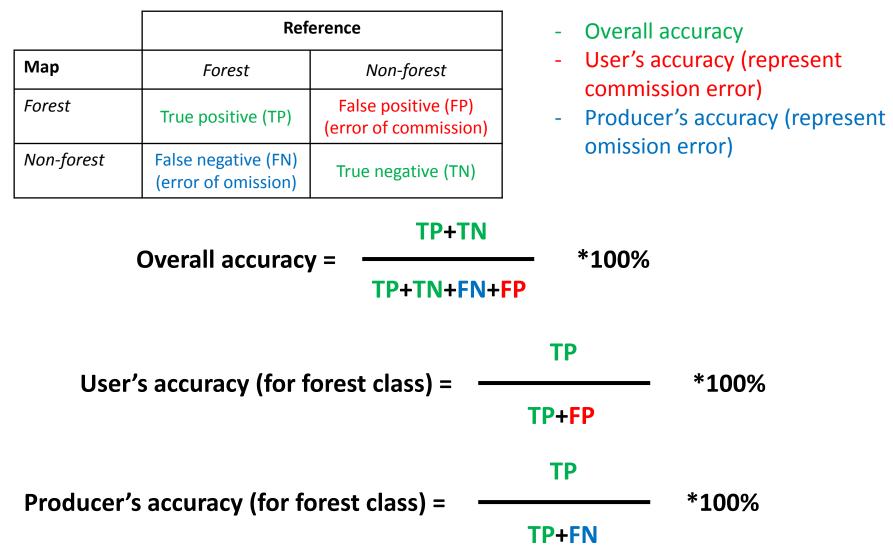
PA =

Number actually in that class



Accuracy Assessment

Accuracy measures





Accuracy Assessment

Some causes of poor accuracy

Classification limitation

- Insufficient classification training
- Classes not separable (with chosen algorithm/parameters)

Data limitation

- Spatial scale of remote sensing instrument does not match classification scheme
- Classes are not separable using the spectral data used
- Insufficient data correction (e.g. atmospheric effects)
- Data pre-processing and correction introduce artifacts precluding correct classification (overcorrection)

Incorrect reference data

- Positional error
- Field identification error
- Mixed pixel
- Confused land cover with land use



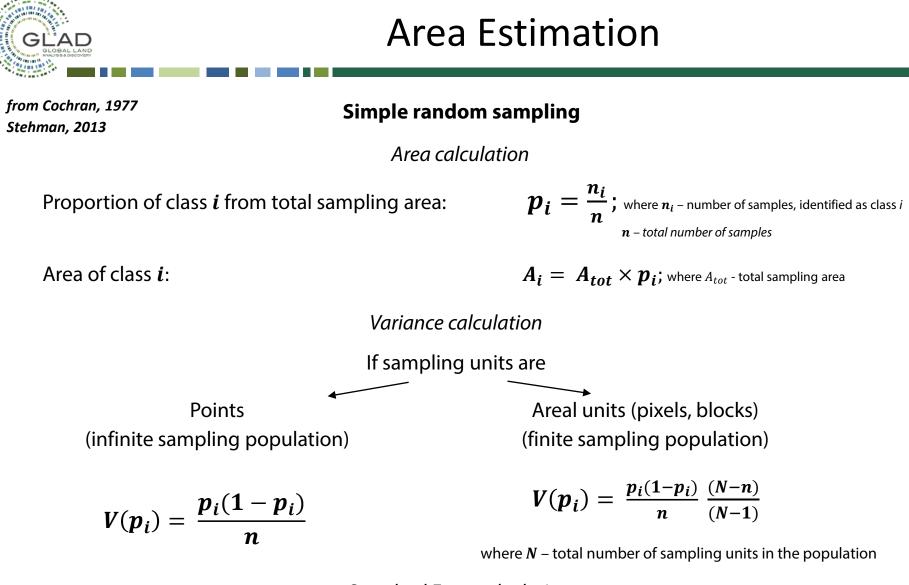
Probability sampling allows to:

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Area Estimation

- Sample-based analysis provides the best available reference data. Samplebased data is most suitable for national-scale area estimation for LC/LU and change classes.
- Unlike map, sample data provides unbiased estimation of class areas with known uncertainty (precision).
- The same approach used for accuracy analysis (confusion matrix) is suitable for class proportion estimation.
- Availability of the complete map may be beneficial to sample-base analysis:
 - It may be used for stratification to increase sampling efficiency and estimate precision
 - It may be used in the form of regression estimator to increase area estimation precision



Standard Error calculation

As a proportion from total area:

In units of area:

 $\begin{aligned} SE(p_i) &= \sqrt{V(p_i)} \\ SE(A_i) &= A_{tot} \times \sqrt{V(p_i)} \end{aligned}$



Area Estimation

from Cochran, 1977 Olofsson, 2013 Stehman, 2013

Mean proportion of class *i* in stratum *h*:

Proportion of class *i* from total area:

Area of class *i*:

Stratified random sampling

Area calculation

$$\overline{p}_{ih} = rac{\sum_{u \in h} p_u}{n_h}$$

$$p_i = \sum_{h=1}^{H} \frac{N_h}{N} \overline{p}_{ih}$$

$$A_i = A_{tot} * p_i$$

Variance calculation

$$V(p_i) = \sqrt{\sum_{h=1}^{H} \left(\frac{N_h}{N}\right)^2 \frac{\overline{p}_{ih} \left(1 - \overline{p}_{ih}\right)}{n_h - 1}}$$

Standard Error calculation

As a proportion from total area:

In units of area:

$$SE(p_i) = \sqrt{V(p_i)}$$
$$SE(A_i) = A_{tot} \times \sqrt{V(p_i)}$$

Sampling units – pixels

 $p_u = 1$ if a pixel is identified as class *i*, and $p_u = 0$ otherwise n_h – number of samples in stratum *h*

 N_h – total number of pixels in stratum hH – number of sampling strata N – total number of pixels in the sampling region

Atot - total sampling area



Probability sampling allows to:

- Quantify map accuracy (Overall, User's, Producer's).
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Pre-disturbance forest type

Pre-disturbance vegetation type		Pre-disturbance Landsat	Pre-disturbance high resolution imagery from Google Earth [™]	Pre-disturbance vegetation type		Pre-disturbance Landsat	Pre-disturbance high resolution imagery from Google Earth™
Dense (>60% canopy cover) tropical forests	Primary			Woodlands (40-60% canopy cover) and parklands (10-40% canopy cover)	Natural (primary)		
	Secondary	•	•		Secondary		
				Forest plantations and other tree crops			



Proximate causes of forest loss in Brazil

Cropland conversion



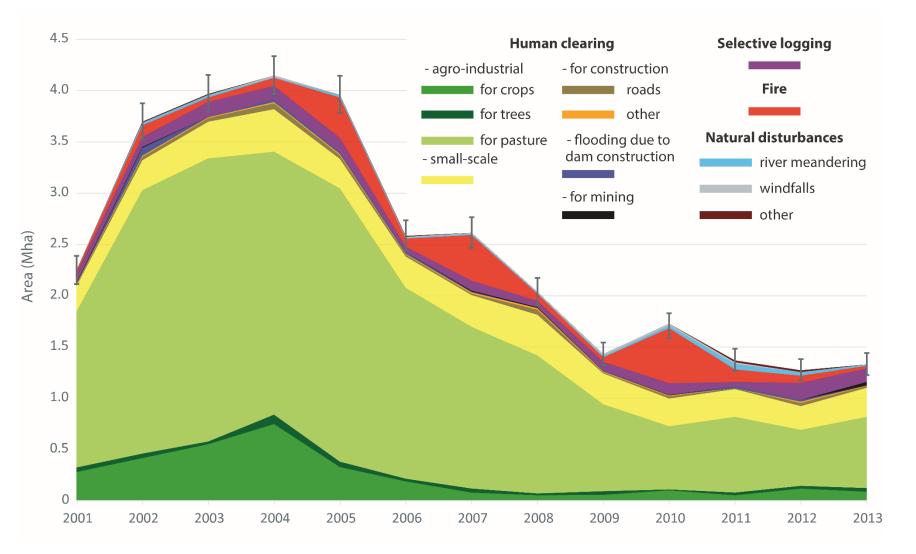
Selective logging

Construction



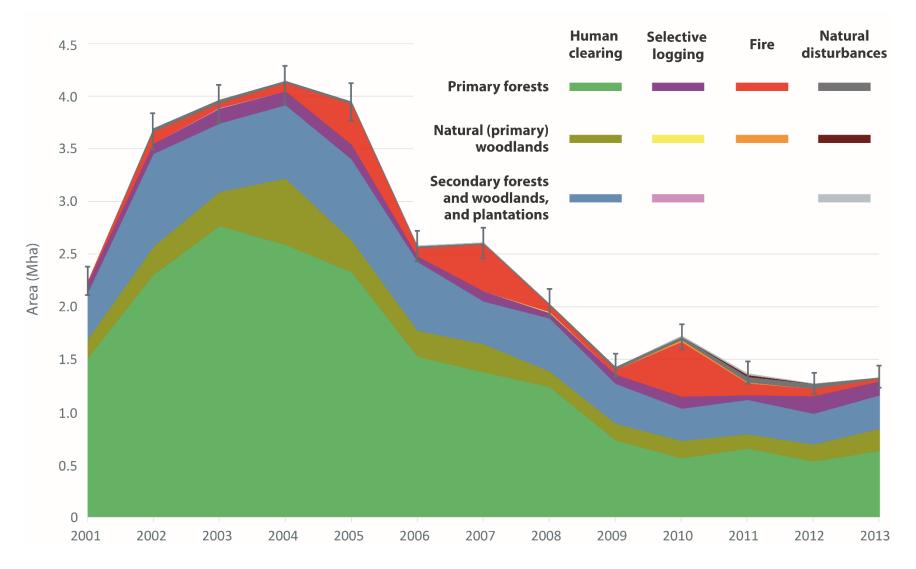


Annual tree cover loss in BLA by disturbance cause





Annual tree cover loss in BLA by pre-disturbance forest type and disturbance cause group





Sample interpretation legend (to be discussed)

Year 2000

- Tree cover (yes/no or percent of the pixel)
- Forest type (primary/secondary/plantation/agroforestry or forest/woodland/shrub)

Change 2000-2016

- Tree cover loss (yes/no or percent of the pixel)
- Date of the (first) disturbance event
- Disturbance type (logging, plantation rotation, conversion (outcome), landslide, fire)

Year 2016 land cover outcome (in case of disturbance)

- Tree cover restoration (yes/no or percent of the pixel)
- Forest type or land cover type

For all samples

- Certainty (overall or each category)
- Boundary (edge) pixel (separate for tree cover 2000 and change)



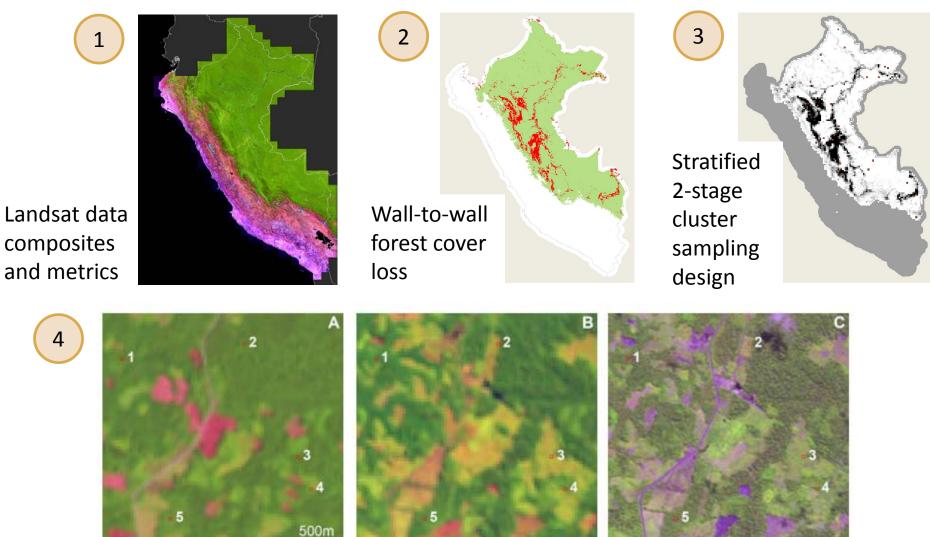
Good practice recommendations and step-by-step calculation guidelines:

- 1. GFOI (2014) Integrating Remote-Sensing and Ground-Based Observations for Estimation of Emissions and Removals of Greenhouse Gases in Forests: Methods and Guidance from the Global Forest Observations Initiative Version 1 (January 2014) (Geneva, Switzerland: Group on Earth Observations)
- 2. Olofsson P., Foody G.M., Stehman S.V., Woodcock C.E. Making better use of accuracy data in land change studies: Estimating accuracy and area and quantifying uncertainty using stratified estimation. Remote Sensing of Environment 129, 122-131 (2013)
- 3. Stehman S.V. Estimating area from an accuracy assessment error matrix. Remote Sensing of Environment 132, 202-211 (2013)
- 4. Stehman, S. V. Estimating area and map accuracy for stratified random sampling when the strata are different from the map classes. International Journal of Remote Sensing 35.13 (2014)

General principles of sampling design:

- 1. Cochran W.G. Sampling Techniques. New York: Wiley (1977)
- 2. Stehman S.V. and Czaplewski R.L. Design and analysis for thematic map accuracy assessment: fundamental principles. Remote Sensing of Environment 64, 331-334 (1998)
- 3. Stehman S.V. Sampling designs for accuracy assessment of land cover. International Journal of Remote Sensing 30 (20), 5243-5272 (2009)
- 4. Stehman S.V. Impact of sample size allocation when using stratified random sampling to estimate accuracy and area of land-cover change. Remote Sensing Letters 3 (2), 111-120 (2012)

Example of wall-to-wall mapping and sample-based validation in Peru



Individual sample block analysis (2-stage clustered sampling design)

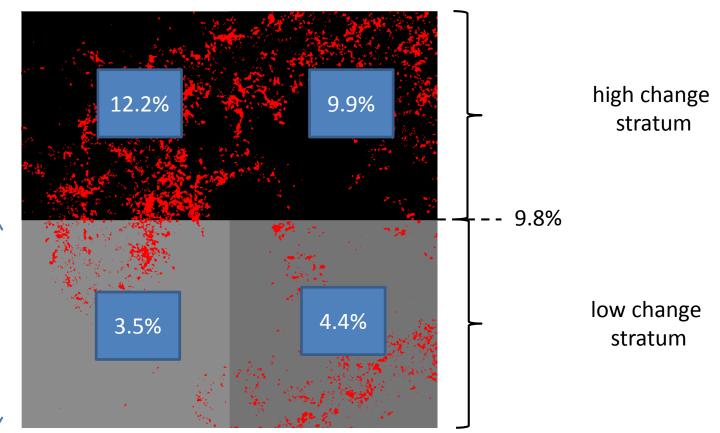
Sampling frame

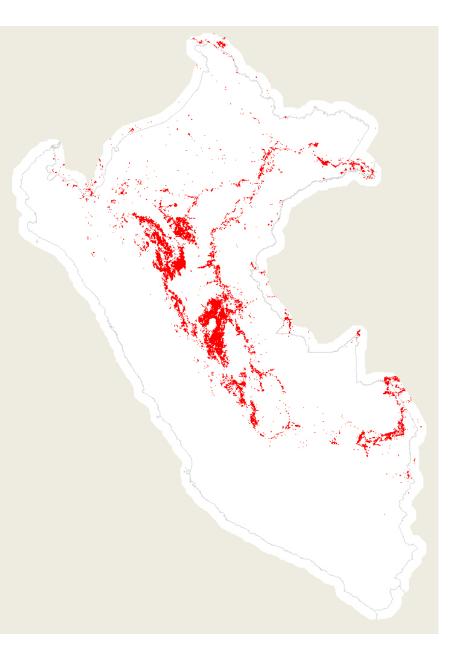
Two-stage cluster sampling:

- 1. 12x12 km blocks (30 RapidEye scenes)
- 2. 100 random points within a block
 - 1. Stratified random sampling, based on proportion forest cover change within a block:

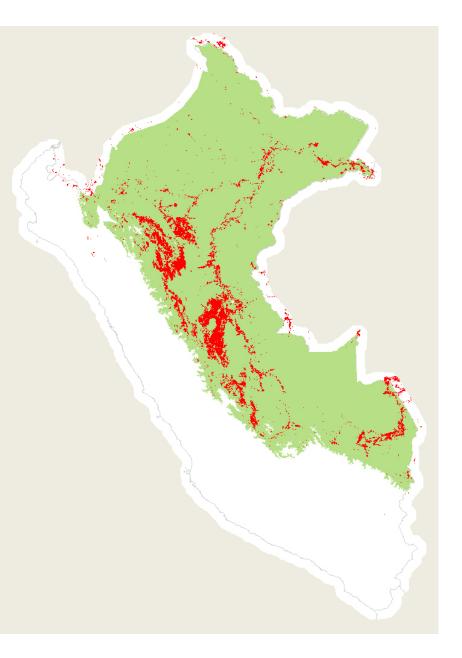
Red – change mapped using 30m Landsat data

> Sample block (12x12 km)



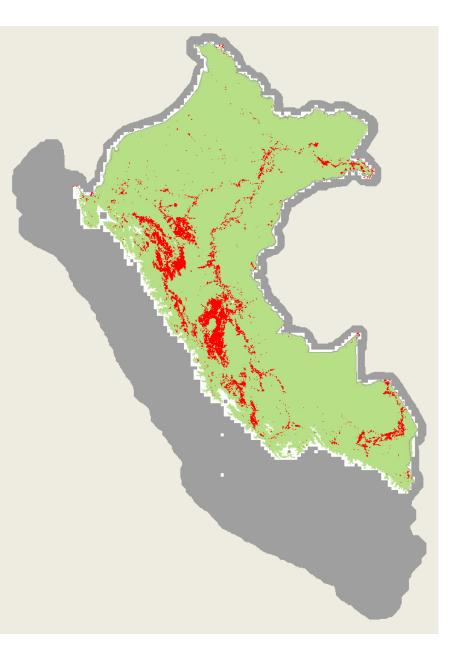


Forest cover loss mask at 30m, 2000-2011



Forest cover loss mask at 30m, 2000-2011

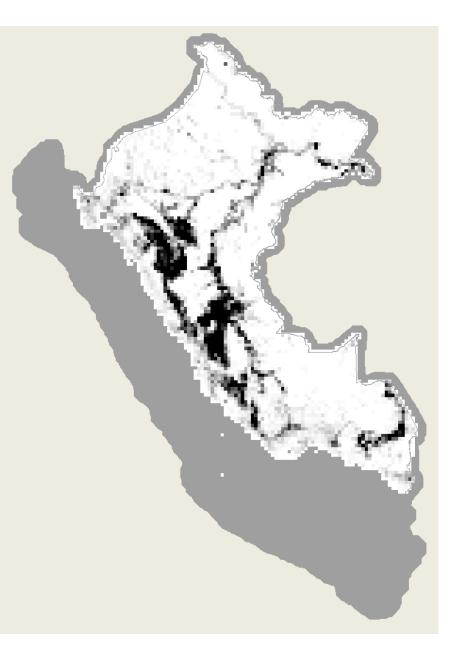
Humid tropics mask, 2000



Forest cover loss mask at 30m, 2000-2011

Humid tropics mask, 2000

Sampling frame. Blocks with any proportion of forest mask are shown. Blocks with <40% forest mask were excluded from sampling.

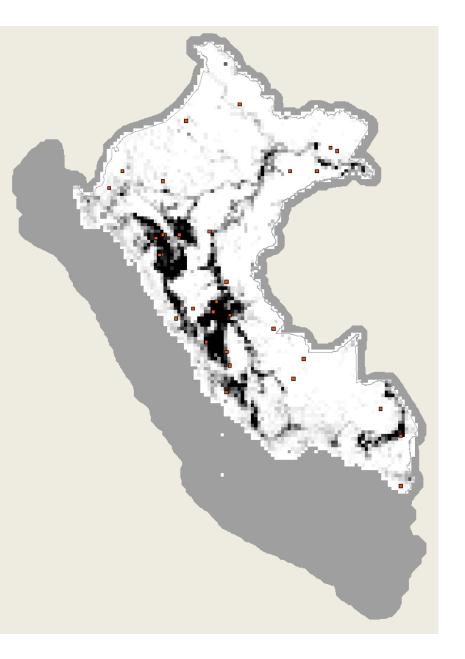


Forest cover loss mask at 30m, 2000-2011

Humid tropics mask, 2000

Sampling frame. Blocks with any proportion of forest mask are shown. Blocks with <40% forest mask were excluded from sampling.

% forest loss per 12x12 km sample block within sampling frame.



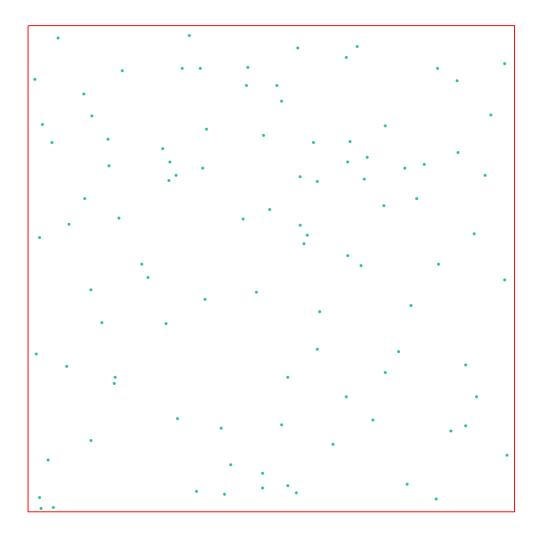
Forest cover loss mask at 30m, 2000-2011

Humid tropics mask, 2000

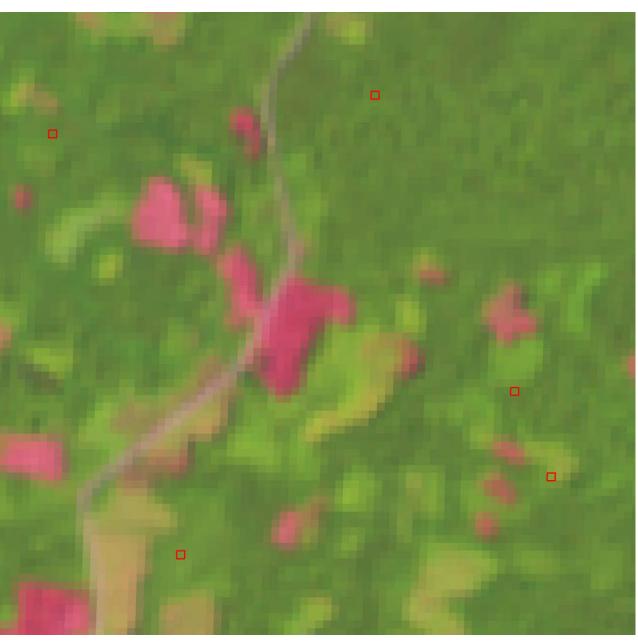
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% forest loss per 12x12 km sample block within sampling frame.

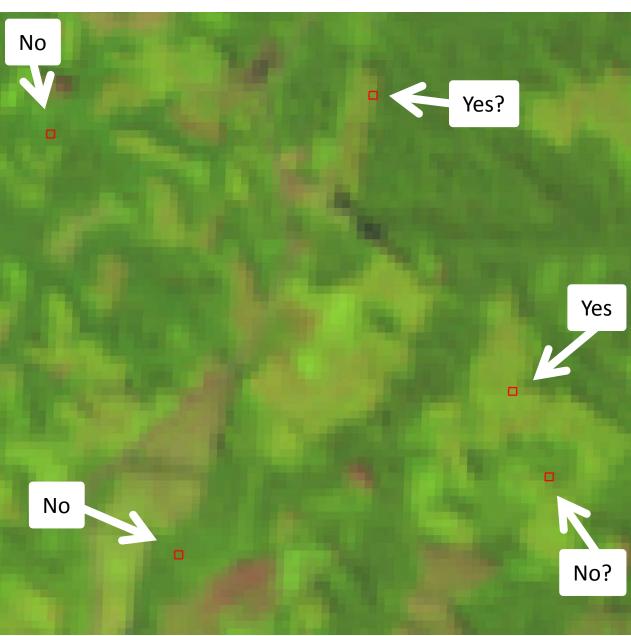
Selected sampling blocks (30 total)



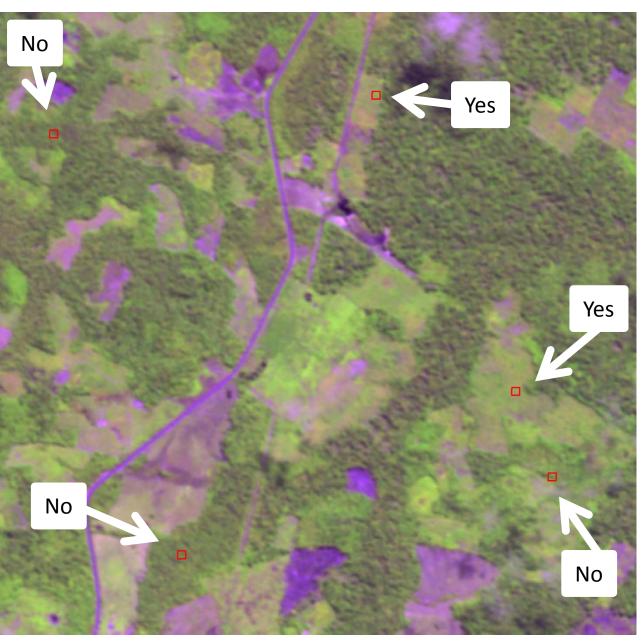
Sample block with 100 random sample points (Landsat pixels)



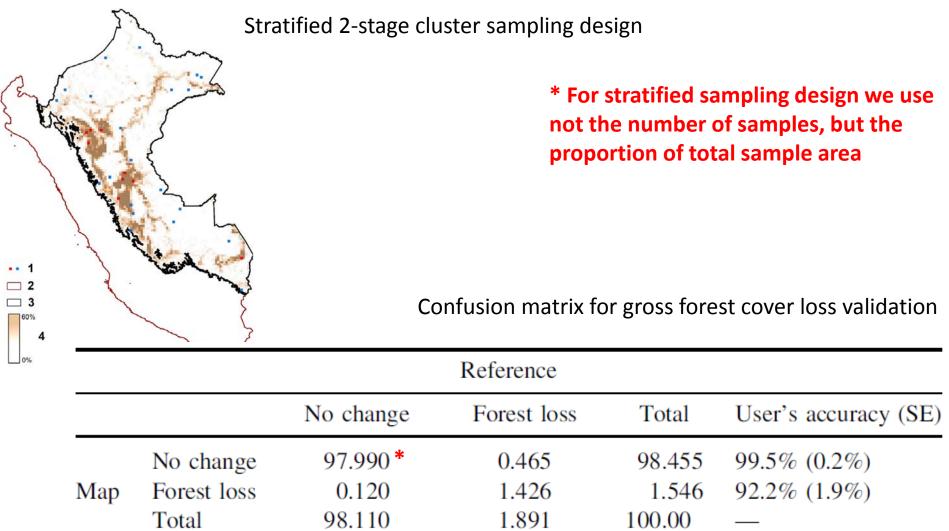
Sample points (pixels) over year 2000 Landsat image



Sample points (pixels) over year 2011 Landsat image



Sample points (30m pixels) over year 2011 RapidEye image



Producer's accuracy (SE) 99.8% (0.1%) 75.4% (2.5%) Overall accuracy (SE) = 99.4% (0.2%)