

Dear Dr Rammig,  
Please find the detailed answer to the reviewers, followed by the revised manuscript.

## **Reviewer 1:**

### **Specific comments**

*Both the manuscript and scientific community would benefit from a further extension of the sections regarding merging fire and precipitation datasets (more detailed explanations including alternatives tried but not chosen).*

In order to better inform the reader about the precipitation merging methods we have included the results of our time frame tests (l. 178-180). In lines 218 we explained that we could have used GFED burned area but instead opted for using only night-time MODIS active fire observations to ensure compatibility with ATSR. In fact, one of our key findings is that this led to a different ratio between the years 1997 and 2015 when comparing our work with GFED. Finally, the decision to use the ATSR-MODIS and GPCP-TRMM datasets was largely predicated on the ability to merge the datasets and their temporal availability. ATSR- MODIS were mainly chosen due to their similar acquisition times at 10.30pm (l. 186-194). GPCP-TRMM was chosen to improve spatial resolution. GPCP was available for the entire study period but at only 1 degree spatial resolution, making it difficult to observe spatio-temporal variances at regional scale. Using TRMM combined with the 1997 GPCP allowed us to improve the spatial resolution to 0.25 degree (160-171). This comment was not fully clear to us and we have tried to answer it as completely as possible according to our understanding.

*Although there is now a brief sentence on the use of ENSO and IOD in methods, Fig. 9 is still not mentioned in results and appears only in the discussion.*

We included a short sentence in the result section (l. 326). We did not include extensive discussion of Figure 9 in the results because these results do not originate from our study. The purpose of this figure is more descriptive and reminds the reader about the strong El Niño events of the past two decades.

### **Technical corrections**

*line 26 fierce: consider a more objective expression*  
We changed 'fierce' to 'severe'

*line 56 change kg C per m-2 to kg C m-2*  
corrected

*line 215 consider revising Indonesia en the resulting R2*  
corrected

*line 227 what the accumulated rainfall for rehphrase dropping 'what'*  
corrected

*line 238 sea temperature fluxes Are these really fluxes or merely fluctuations?*  
corrected

*line 294 Northern Sumatra had rainfall accumulation insert 'a'*  
corrected

## **Reviewer 2:**

*I thank the authors for their response to my specific comments. However, they did not address my general comments, in particular my suggestion to include land-use change in the analysis or, if not, to tune down the conclusion of the paper.*

We did not include land use change because of a lack of available datasets during the entire timeframe of our study. This explanation is now included in the “dataset and method” section (l. 240-243). Furthermore, we do provide more anecdotal information, for example regarding the influence of the mega rice project on the 1997 fires. We now not only mention it in the discussion (l. 344-346) but also in the conclusion (l. 399-400). By adding this section in the conclusion, it tunes down our findings by informing the reader that precipitation is not the only driver and we highlight the role of land use change, but we also note that this is not included in our analysis

*The authors write “We also tested whether different time frames gave different results and ended up with the 4-month time window.” (L. 269-270) but do not show additional results to support their statements. I think the authors should improve transparency in the description of their methodology and better justify their statements.*

For better transparency in our methodology, we have included the results arising from the different time frames that were tested. These are reflected, along with the chosen timeframe, in Table 1 (l. 178-180). You will notice that the chosen time frame does not significantly impact the result.

# Precipitation-fire linkages in Indonesia (1997-2015)

Thierry Fanin<sup>1</sup> and Guido R. van der Werf<sup>1</sup>

[1] Faculty of Earth and Life Sciences, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

*Correspondence to:* T. Fanin (t.fanin@vu.nl)

## Abstract

Over the past decades, fires have burned annually in Indonesia, yet the strength of the fire season is for a large part modulated by the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO). The two most recent very strong El Niño years were 2015 and 1997. Both years involved high incidences of fire in Indonesia. At present, there is no consistent satellite data stream spanning the full 19-year record, thereby complicating a comparison between these two fire seasons. We have investigated how various fire and precipitation datasets can be merged to better compare the fire dynamics in 1997 and 2015 as well as in intermediary years. We combined night-time active fire detections from the Along Track Scanning Radiometer (ATSR) World Fire Atlas (WFA) available from 1997 until 2012 and the night-time subset of the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) sensor from 2001 until now. For the overlapping period, MODIS detected about 4 times more fires than ATSR, but this ratio varied spatially. Although the reasons behind this spatial variability remain unclear, the coefficient of determination for the overlapping period was high ( $R^2=0.97$  based on monthly data) and allowed for a consistent time series. We then constructed a rainfall time series based on the Global Precipitation Climatology Project (GPCP, 1997-2015) and the Tropical Rainfall Measurement Mission Project (TRMM, 1998-2015). Relations between antecedent rainfall and fire activity were not uniform in Indonesia. In southern Sumatra and Kalimantan, we found that 120 days of rainfall accumulation had the highest coefficient of determination with annual fire intensity. In northern Sumatra, this period was only 30 days. Thresholds of 200 mm and 305 mm average rainfall accumulation before each active fire were identified to generate a high fire year in southern Sumatra and southern Kalimantan, respectively. The number of active fires detected in 1997 was 2.2 times higher than in 2015. Assuming the ratio between night-time and total active fires did not change, the 1997 season was thus about twice as **severe** as the one in 2015. Although large, the difference is smaller than found in fire emission estimates from the Global Fire Emissions Database (GFED). Besides different rainfall amounts and patterns, the two-fold difference between 1997 and 2015 may be attributed to a weaker El Niño and neutral IOD conditions in the later year. The fraction of fires burning in peatlands was higher in 2015 compared to 1997 (61% and 45%, respectively). Finally, we found that the non-linearity between rainfall and fire in Indonesia stems from longer periods without rain in extremely dry years.

Keywords: night-fires, Rainfall, Indonesia, Peatland, El Niño

## 1 Introduction

High forest clearing rates, drainage of carbon-rich peatlands, and lack of compliance with existing laws have made Indonesia the country with the highest density of fire emissions world wide. These fires impact air quality (Johnston et al., 2012; Marlier et al., 2013) and establish Indonesia as one of the world's largest greenhouse gas emitters when combining fossil fuel, deforestation, fire, and peat oxidation emissions (Andres et al., 2011; Hansen et al., 2013; van der Werf et al., 2008a; Hooijer et al., 2010). In Sumatra, large fires have occurred since at least the 1960s, while in Kalimantan (the Indonesian part of Borneo), large fires began to occur two decades later, most likely due to changes in land use and population density (Field et al., 2009). After 1996, Kalimantan's fire condition deteriorated when the Indonesian government initiated the mega rice project. The objective was to convert one million hectares of tropical swamp forest to rice paddy fields and promote transmigration. This resulted in large scale deforestation and peatland drainage mostly in the province of Central Kalimantan (Putra et al., 2008).

Fires are generally not a natural occurrence in tropical rain forests due to their high humidity. This is especially true for most of Indonesia, which is located on the equator and therefore most of the country has high rainfall rates year-round and thus low natural fire incidences. Nevertheless, human-induced fires are frequently used as an inexpensive method for clearing forest and maintaining an open landscape. In 1997-98, the last very strong El Niño event recorded before 2015, 117,000 km<sup>2</sup> was burnt according to Tacconi (2003) and 100,000 km<sup>2</sup> according to Global Fire Emissions Database (GFED4s) (Randerson et al., 2012; Giglio et al., 2013). Biomass burning fuel consumption reached up to 20 kg C m<sup>-2</sup> burned (Page et al., 2002).

The high fuel consumption stems from the extended peat deposits in Indonesia. Peat is a layer of partially decomposed plant material with a high proportion of organic matter. Tropical peatlands represent one of the major near-surface terrestrial organic carbon reserves. Peat thickness in Indonesia can extend to 20 m (Page et al., 2002). Page et al. (2007) estimated the area of peatland in Indonesia to be between 168,250 and 270,000 km<sup>2</sup>, storing between 10 to 32 Pg (Petagram or 10<sup>15</sup> gram) of carbon, although other studies have produced higher values (Jaenicke et al., 2008). Peatlands on Sumatra represent 15% of the island surface area (Wahyunto et al., 2003), while for Kalimantan it is 11% (Wahyunto et al., 2004). Peatlands support the growth of peat swamp forests, which rarely burn under natural conditions. Drainage and deforestation causes peatlands to become drier and more susceptible to fires (Page et al., 2002). The depth of burning into the peat layer varies. Ballhorn et al. (2009) reported that in 2006 the average depth of burning was 33±18 cm for a study region in Central Kalimantan, and field reports found burning depth up to 1.5m in certain locations (Boehm et al., 2001). Peat fires release a large amount of carbon. During the 1997 event, within a 2.5 million hectare area in central Kalimantan, 0.19-0.23 Pg of carbon was released from peat combustion and 0.05 Pg from overlying vegetation according to Page et al. (2002). These peat fires that burn predominantly in the smouldering phase are the main reason for deteriorated air quality during the fire season (Aouizerats et al., 2015). A study conducted between 2002 and 2010 in

Palangkaraya, located in central Kalimantan, showed that the longest hazardous air pollution episode occurred in 2002 and lasted for about 80 days (Hayasaka et al., 2014). By 2010, 23,000 km<sup>2</sup> of peat swamp forests were clear-felled, becoming degraded lands (Koh et al., 2011).

Indonesia has high inter-annual fire variability, closely related to the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) (Saji et al., 1999; Diaz and Markgraf, 2000; Field and Shen, 2008). ENSO represents a mode of inter-annual variability in the Earth system related to the strength of the Walker circulation governing sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific ocean (Rasmusson and Wallace, 1983). An El Niño event corresponds to the warm phase of ENSO, La Niña to the cool phase (Trenberth, 1997). El Niño, coupled with reversed Walker circulation, leads to drought over most of Indonesia, while La Niña events bring increased rainfall. El Niño and La Niña can be classified in various ways, one approach relies on the magnitude of the sea surface temperature anomalies over the equatorial Pacific region: Weak (with a 0.5° to 0.9° sea surface temperature anomaly), moderate (1.0° to 1.4°), strong (1.5° to 1.9°) and very strong ( $\geq 2.0^\circ$ ) (Zopf et al., 1978). Extreme El Niño events occurred last in 1997 and 2015 with different level of intensity. In 1997 large anomalies were already occurring in July (2.8°C), reaching highs at 3°C in August and September, while in 2015, the highest anomaly was 2.5°C in September. IOD is another air-sea coupled climate mode active in the tropical Indian Ocean influencing rainfall in the region. The Indian Ocean Dipole Mode Index (IODMI) was established to quantify IOD. It was defined using the difference in sea surface temperature between the tropical western Indian ocean and the tropical south-eastern Indian Ocean (Saji et al., 1999).

Rainfall sensitivity to ENSO and IOD varies throughout Indonesia, and to study these sensitivities, Indonesia is often separated into three climatic regions (Aldrian and Dwi Susanto, 2003). ENSO is an important driver for droughts on Kalimantan (Harrison, 2001). There, 58% of the variability in mean July–November precipitation between 1948 and 2006 could be explained using a linear model based on Niño 3.4 region (5°N–5°S, 120°W–170°W) (Field et al., 2009). Rainfall in Sumatra, on the other hand, was explained for 61% by IOD (Field et al., 2009). According to Aldrian and Dwi Susanto (2003), Sumatra itself is again divided into two climatic regions. Both of them have varying sensitivity to the two climate modes (Iskandar et al., 2013).

Using NOAA AVHRR Global Area Coverage (GAC) Earth Observation satellite data, Wooster et al. (2012) found two to three times more active fires in Kalimantan during the 1997–98 very strong El Niño event than in the next largest fire years (e.g., 2002) due to extreme drought at the time. However, fires do not solely occur during strong ENSO events. In 2006 for example, with only a weak El Niño, MODIS active fire data (Giglio, 2010) detected about 149,000 fires over the whole of Indonesia, against 151,000 in the 2015 very strong El Niño year. Most of Indonesian fires burn on Kalimantan and Sumatra. In 2006, both regions generated 84% of all fires in Indonesia (47% and 37%, respectively, Yulianti et al. (2012)). Although Kalimantan has higher emissions, Sumatra contributes more to smoke concentrations in populated areas in Southeast Asia outside of Indonesia due to its location west of the Malaysian peninsula

(Marlier et al., 2015) making Singapore and Malaysia most vulnerable to fire emissions from Sumatra (Hyer and Chew, 2010; Salinas et al., 2013; Aouizerats et al., 2015). Under future climate change scenarios and without changing fire management practice, Indonesia could become even more vulnerable to fire (Herawati and Santoso, 2011).

Previous studies have investigated the relationship between precipitation and fires. Field and Shen (2008), using cross-calibrated ATSR, TRMM, and MODIS active fire detections and the Global Precipitation Climatology Project (GPCP) data set for rainfall for the 1997-2006 period, showed that there was a risk of severe burning when, for a period of 4 months, precipitation falls below a threshold of 350 mm in southern Sumatra and 650 mm in southern Kalimantan. Van der Werf et al. (2008a) found a strong nonlinear relation between fire and rainfall, where active fire detections increased exponentially below 100 mm month<sup>-1</sup> of rainfall during the dry season. Using visibility records from Sumatra and Kalimantan's World Meteorological Organization (WMO) meteorological stations, Field et al. (2009) calculated monthly mean light extinction coefficients between 1960 and 2006. The optimal timeframe to explain variances in extinction coefficients on Sumatra was after 5 months of rainfall accumulation. With a piecewise linear regression, this could explain 67% of the observed patterns with a threshold of 609 mm, between 1960 and 1983, and 85% with a threshold of 631 mm between 1984 and 2006 on Sumatra. On Kalimantan, 4 months' rainfall accumulation explained 78% of the extinction coefficient variances with a threshold of 672 mm between 1984 and 2006.

For the last two decades, the large fire season of 1997-98 has frequently been used as a reference point. Since then, fire years have been relatively low, except for moderate or weak El Niño events (2002, 2006, 2009, 2012). The amount of fires in 2013 was below our study period average, but northern Sumatra experienced a large amount of fires over a very short period of time (Gaveau et al., 2014). In 2014, fire activity was for the first time above average despite that year being ENSO neutral followed by the very strong El Niño event of 2015 with disruption of regular life in large parts of Indonesia due to dense smoke from the large number of fires. The aim of this study is to better understand the fire-precipitation dynamics in general and focus on the dynamics of 2015, 2014, 2013, and 1997 in particular, based on a merged but consistent fire and rainfall dataset.

## **2 Datasets and Methods:**

Our study region includes all of Indonesia, but we focused primarily on the islands of Sumatra and Kalimantan, as they generate most of the fire activity within the country (Fig. 1). Sumatra is situated between 6°N-6°S and 95°E-107°E. Between 1990 and 2010, 75.400 km<sup>2</sup> of primary forest was cleared (Margono, 2013), but primary forests remain on the mountainous coastal range of the island facing the Indian Ocean. The other side of the island with the provinces of Riau, Jambi, and South Sumatra is largely covered with rainfed agriculture for subsistence and commercial forestry with agricultural activities (114.928 km<sup>2</sup> and 44.307 km<sup>2</sup> respectively, (LADA, 2008)). With approximately 77.000 km<sup>2</sup>, peatlands are

abundant in this region (Wahyunto et al., 2003), especially in the low-lying areas towards the Northeast. Kalimantan is the Indonesian part of Borneo. It is located between 5°N-4°S and 108°E-118°E. Intact forest remains in the northern part of Kalimantan, but most of southern Kalimantan consists of forestry with agricultural activities or rainfed agriculture for subsistence and commercial (115.351 km<sup>2</sup> and 92.858 km<sup>2</sup> respectively, (LADA, 2008)). An approximately 10.000 km<sup>2</sup> deforestation scar remains in the south, due to the mega rice project (Boehm and Siegert, 2001; Aldhous, 2004). This widespread area contains some of the deepest peat in Indonesia but has been extensively drained.

To better understand the rainfall patterns preceding and coinciding with the fire season, we based our analysis on a somewhat modified division of the three climatic regions identified by Aldrian and Dwi Susanto (2003) to better account for differences in fire patterns: Their first region is the southern part of Indonesia, from southern Sumatra to Timor island, southern Kalimantan, Sulawesi and part of Irian Jaya. Their second is northwest Sumatra and northwest Kalimantan, and finally the last one includes Maluku and northern Sulawesi. We separated their first region into southern Sumatra (SoSu) and southern Kalimantan (SoKa). Our third region is Sumatra north of the equator (NoSu). Finally, their last region and the area not included in our analysis was classified as “Other” due to less fire activity (Fig. 1).

One key issue when aiming to compare 1997 with 2015 is that there is no fire dataset covering the full period of time based on one satellite stream. There is one for precipitation, but its resolution is relatively coarse (1° spatial resolution). To obtain rainfall data across Indonesia for the 1997-2015 period we combined two datasets: for 1997, the One-Degree Daily (1DD) product from the Global Precipitation Climatology Project (GPCP, (Huffman et al., 2001)) and from 1998 until 2015, the Tropical Rainfall Measurement Mission Project (TRMM) 3B42 data version 7 (Simpson et al., 1996; Huffman et al., 2007). We merged these two datasets (explained below) to have the higher spatial resolution from TRMM for most of the time period and still cover the full time period. TRMM data is produced at a 0.25° spatial resolution and is based on a combination of TRMM precipitation radar (PR) and TRMM microwave imager (TMI) and rain gauge measurements (Kummerow et al., 1998; Islam and Uyeda, 2007). It lost radar data after mid-2015. TRMM 3B42 has a 3-hourly temporal resolution available since 1998. For the purpose of this study, TRMM 3B42 data was cumulated to daily temporal resolution.

Daily GPCP uses the Threshold Matched Precipitation Index (TMPI) and geostationary infrared satellite data to determine the daily rainfall rate at 1° spatial resolution from the monthly data produced from gauge stations, satellites and sounding observations (Pendergrass, 2015). To aggregate 1997 GPCP data with the remaining TRMM data, we calculated a correction factor for each 1° grid cell derived from a linear regression between GPCP and TRMM data based on the 4 driest months of each year between 1998 and 2014. We used a 4-month time period because this yielded the highest correlation ( $R^2 = 0.69$ ). However, the results are relatively insensitive to this time period, lowering or lengthening the time period gave comparable results (Table 1). We then used the slope to make the 1997 GPCP rainfall data consistent with the TRMM data. We found a slope relatively homogenous over the country (average slope over Indonesia:

1.1) (Fig. 2). The coefficient of determination showed large spatial variability. South of the equator, it was high; with most areas having  $R^2$  values exceeding 0.8. North of the equator and in mountainous regions,  $R^2$  was lower, for a large part related to lower interannual variability here, but it still exceeded 0.5 in most areas (93% of the grid cells in our study region had an  $R^2$  higher than 0.5).

To cover our study period we also had to merge two fire datasets. We used the Along Track Scanning Radiometer (ATSR) World Fire Atlas (WFA) algorithm 2 (Arino et al., 2012) available from 1995 until 2012, and the Thermal Anomalies/Fires product MOD14A1 (Terra) from the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) available from 2001 until 2015 (Justice et al., 2002). The ATSR fire algorithm (in the remainder referred to as ATSR) detects active fire data at 10:30 PM local time, avoiding flagging hot surfaces or solar reflection as fire. Using the 3.7-micrometer band, it observes hot spots warmer than 308 Kelvin. Because of night-time detection, it underestimates the total number of fires due to the strong diurnal cycle of fires with in general a peak in the afternoon (Giglio, 2007).

Terra MODIS acquires data twice daily (10:30 AM and PM) at 1km spatial resolution using three different tests to identify fire activity. The first is an absolute threshold test (Kaufman et al., 1998), where grid cells with temperatures higher than 360K during daytime or 320K at night are potentially fires. The second is a background characterisation; the neighbouring pixels of the potential fire pixel are used to estimate a background value. Using different statistical techniques it inspects neighbouring pixels to identify fire activity comparing the potential fire pixel with the background value to flag the pixel as burned or to eliminate false alarms. Finally, if previous tests are successful, it looks for characteristics in the active fire signature with the 4 $\mu$ m brightness temperature (T4) to find variations from non-fire backgrounds applying various thresholds (Giglio et al., 2003). These methods are highly effective at identifying smaller fires, yielding near-time information (Roy et al., 2008).

For consistency in data acquisition time, we limited our use of MODIS data to night-time (10:30PM) to have late evening fires at nominal and high confidence. While MODIS revisits the same site every day, ATSR overpasses the same grid cell only once every 3 days (Mota et al., 2006). To combine ATSR and MODIS we used a correction factor based on the fire detection ratio between monthly ATSR and MODIS observations for the period of 2001 and 2011 averaged over 1° grid cells. We also investigated regression methods (ie. linear, exponential) but with lower  $R^2$  when applied to ATSR, mainly in areas with lower fire activity. We then multiplied the ATSR data with the correction factor for the period 1997 – 2000 for all grid cells within the 1° grid cells. This correction factor showed substantial spatial variability. In most high fire regions, ATSR was around 4 times lower than MODIS, although in some grid cells the difference was a factor 12 (Fig. 3). The grid cells with high correction factors were often those that burned relatively little, in general less than 500 fires during the full time period. This represents 18% of grid cells burning during our study period. After applying the correction factor to the whole ATSR dataset, our fire correction factor compensated for the lower sampling rates from ATSR over MODIS between 2001 and 2011 across all of **Indonesia**. The resulting  $R^2$  between monthly MODIS active fire detections and those based on ATSR with



the correction factor applied was 0.97 for the full time period. We have not used the burned area or emissions dataset from the Global Fire Emissions Database (GFED) because it relies on the ratio between all MODIS data and ATSR, not just the night time subset. In the remainder of this paper, we will refer simply to the number of active fire detections instead of the number of nighttime fires from the merged product.

Previous work has shown that 4 months of rainfall accumulation has the best coefficient of determination to identify the potential risk of high fire activity in southern Sumatra and Kalimantan (Field and Shen, 2008). However, this period may be different in other regions including northern Sumatra because of different rainfall patterns (Aldrian and Dwi Susanto, 2003). We therefore investigated different lengths of rainfall accumulation to identify the most appropriate time window for different regions. Using the daily rainfall data, we calculated the accumulated precipitation of rain prior to each fire on time frames of 0, 7, 15, 30, 60, 90 and 120 days. We calculated for each fire detection and grid cell the accumulated rainfall for the different time frames ending on the day of active fire detection.

In our analyses we used two additional datasets. To better understand the diurnal fire dynamics, we calculated the fraction of daytime fires burning overnight between 2003 and 2015. Daytime fires were acquired from the Thermal Anomalies/Fires product MYD14A1 (Aqua) from MODIS. It uses the same detection algorithm as MOD14A1 (Terra) mentioned above but with an acquisition time at 2.30 PM and AM. To estimate the number of daytime active fire detections, we only kept the 2.30 PM fires. To observe the proportion of daytime fire burning through the night we compared the annual day and night fire. Due to data availability, this could only be done for the 2003 onwards period. We used the Wetlands International (WI) PeatAtlas of Sumatra, Kalimantan and Papua (Wahyunto et al., 2003, 2004) to better understand peat fire dynamics. Finally we used ENSO and IOD data to observe how our different regions were influenced by **fluctuations** in sea temperature (NOAA, 2016; OOPC, 2016). While land cover and land cover change influences fire patterns, we have not included this in our analysis due to a lack of consistent data.

### **3 Results**

Indonesia's position on the equator, surrounded by two ocean basins, caused substantial regional variability in the fire season. In southern Sumatra and Kalimantan, the dry season lasted from June until heavier rainfall started again sometime in October for a total of 4-5 months (Fig. 4). During our study period, the months with the highest incidence of active fires were September and October. Average rainfall during the dry season was 140 mm per month in southern Sumatra, compared to 170 mm in southern Kalimantan, but with substantial regional variation. Northern Sumatra, on the other hand, had two fire seasons, a first one in February – March (early dry season) followed by a second in June lasting up to 3 months, depending on the year (late dry season).

The dataset covering the 1997- 2015 period enabled us to observe several large fire years, including two during very strong El Niño events (1997 and 2015). In 1997, approximately 119,000 active nighttime fire

detections were made according to our merged dataset, compared to less than half that number in 2015. The number for 1997 was to some degree a virtual number based on the observed ATSR fires and the correction factor to bring the ATSR fires in line with those observed by MODIS at night. These two extreme drought years mainly affected southern Sumatra and southern Kalimantan, with approximately 50,000 active fires in 1997 and 20,000 active fires in 2015 in both regions (Fig. 5). Other relatively high fire years in these two regions occurred during weak or moderate El Niño events in 2002, 2006, 2009 and 2014.

Northern Sumatra's inter-annual variability was very different from that of the other regions. Years of strong active fire activity did not always line up with El Niño events as shown earlier by Gaveau et al. (2014). Fires there were also less frequent than in southern Sumatra and Kalimantan. Nevertheless, in 2005 and 2014 more than 10,000 active fires were detected in northern Sumatra. Northern Sumatra had a large proportion of active fire detections in peatlands (Table 2). During our study period, on average 75% of the total active fires occurring in northern Sumatra were on peatland, with higher values of 87% and 88% in 2005 and 2014, respectively. In Indonesia south of the equator, the proportion of peat active fires was lower, averaging 61% in southern Sumatra and 50% in southern Kalimantan. Between 1997 and 2015, our dataset indicated 192,000 active fires in the 127,425 km<sup>2</sup> of peatland in Sumatra and Kalimantan.

The number of active fires burning through the night across Indonesia (expressed as the ratio between nighttime and daytime active fires) varied from 11% in 2003 up to 36% in 2015, on average 20%. Northern Sumatra, although having fewer active fires than the southern regions, had between 14% (low fire year) up to 52% (high fire year) of daytime fires burning overnight, and on average 33%. Southern Sumatra and southern Kalimantan had a lower proportion of fires burning through the night with years as low as 4%, but on average 23% and 22% respectively. In both of these regions, 2015 had the highest proportion of fires burning through the night with 53% and 43% respectively (Table 3).

Using daily rainfall and active fires, we observed that in southern Sumatra and southern Kalimantan, the fire season and dry season (defined here as the period with the 120 days with lowest rainfall accumulation, based on daily data) followed relatively similar patterns on both islands but still had important differences. In 1997, the dry season started in early July on both islands, but while days with more than 500 active fires began in mid-August in southern Kalimantan, the fire season in southern Sumatra began almost one month later, potentially because rainfall still occurred in Sumatra (Fig. 6). On both islands most active fires burned during the driest 120 days. 2006 had a weak El Niño, with more days with rainfall during the dry season than in 1997 and 2015, resulting in lower fire activity. In southern Sumatra, strong rainfall in late October 2006 ended the fire season earlier in that year than in 1997. In southern Kalimantan, the late October rain did not exceed 8 mm/day, which enabled further burning before the return of the monsoon with higher rainfall. In 2015, the dry season as defined here began earlier than in 1997 while active fires started mildly in mid-August, rising in September for about two months, as had occurred in 1997. During the dry season, however, there were more days with rainfall and the number of fires detected was lower than in 1997.

Furthermore, in 2015 active fires stopped already late October, while in 1997 they burned for another week in November.

The amount of rainfall during the dry season did not influence the number of active fires equally in the different regions. In other words, there was large spatial variability in the vulnerability to fire. In 1997, all of Indonesia was dry, but most active fires occurred south of the equator, northern Sumatra being only mildly affected by fires. Obviously, all high fire years in southern Sumatra and southern Kalimantan had a relatively low amount of rainfall during the entire dry season, but rainfall amount differed between the high fire years. While in 1997 no grid cell in these two regions exceeded 50 mm of rainfall during the driest 120 days period, 2015 almost reached 150 mm in both regions (147 mm in southern Sumatra and 149 mm in southern Kalimantan). Northern Sumatra had a rainfall accumulation of 194 mm during the dry season in 2005, while 2014 was drier with only 147 mm (Fig. 7).

Observations of the accumulation of rain before active fires showed that in all regions studied, extreme fire years had less than 1 mm of rain on the day of fire detection (Fig. 8). Yet, this also applies to some very mild fire years and is therefore not a good predictor for high fire years. In line with previous studies, we have therefore examined up to 120 days of rainfall preceding active fire observations in order to observe the influence of rainfall on fires. The novelty in our approach is that we used daily data for this instead of monthly. In southern Sumatra and southern Kalimantan this did not lead to new results; cumulative rainfall for 120 days prior to active fires were the most effective to identify fire vulnerability to rainfall. On the other hand, in northern Sumatra, a 30-day timeframe was more appropriate (Table 4). This shows that northern Sumatra is more responsive to relatively short-term drought periods, or that droughts last shorter.

This method allowed us to observe rainfall thresholds to generate high fire years. In northern Sumatra, we found that years with less than 120 mm of cumulated rainfall within 30 days prior to active fires could generate a high fire year. Analysing high fire years in 2005 and 2014, we found substantial differences. In 2005, 93 mm of cumulated rainfall prior to active fire detections was measured against only 33 mm in 2014. This shows that the vulnerability of fires to rainfall is harder to evaluate in this region. For example, in 1997, with 12 mm less cumulated rainfall within 30 days prior to active fires than in 2005, northern Sumatra had 42% less burning, highlighting the role of other factors. In Sumatra, south of the equator, **both very strong El Niño events of 1997 and 2015 (Fig. 9)** were high fire years with less than 200 mm of cumulated rainfall within 120 days prior to active fires. For these two years in Kalimantan, the threshold was higher at around 300 mm. In both southern regions we observed that 1997 burned much more than 2015, with in absolute terms a relatively small difference in rainfall accumulation prior to active fires (118,685 and 53,659 active fires respectively).

#### **4 Discussion**

The use of a correction factor to merge two rainfall and fire datasets enabled us to obtain a relatively consistent 19-year time series covering two very strong El Niño episodes. Interannual variability in fire

activity in Indonesia was not solely linked to ENSO and varied between regions. The regions that were most closely linked to droughts associated with El Niño events, such as in 1997 and 2015, were those south of the equator in Sumatra and Kalimantan. We found that 2015 had only about half the number of active fires observed in 1997 (Fig. 5). This large difference came mostly from lower rainfall in 1997 between mid-July and mid-September. The dry season in the areas south of the equator lasted for approximately 4 months in those two years but 2015 saw more relatively minor rain events of a few mm day<sup>-1</sup> during the dry season (Fig. 6). These minor events could be one of the causes of the strong non-linearity found in previous studies (van der Werf et al., 2008b); they add relatively little rainfall but are apparently capable of pausing the fire season for some time.

We have shown that in southern Sumatra and southern Kalimantan rainfall accumulation over 120 days had the best coefficient of determination to estimate the number of fires observed. The amount of rainfall during the transition between the wet and dry season was essential to estimate the beginning of the fire season. The El Niño during this transition period was stronger in 1997 than in 2015 and may be part of the explanation for 2015 having only half the number of active fires detected in 1997 (Fig. 9). Although both years were very strong El Niño years, their temporal dynamics were different. In 2015, the highest sea surface temperature anomaly in the Pacific occurred in September (2.5°C). In 1997, however, anomalies were already at 2.8°C in July, rising to above 3°C in August and September. A second difference was that the Indian Ocean temperature anomalies in 1997 were twice as high as in 2015. Here we can only show that the ENSO and IOD dynamics were different between the two years and hypothesize this to be the root cause for the difference in rainfall. Another factor in explaining the large difference in number of active fires detected may be that the 1997 event occurred just after the mega rice project, which increased the flammable area substantially. However, according to Field et al. (2015) Kalimantan as a whole has become even more vulnerable to fire over the years.

While in the southern hemisphere IOD and ENSO dynamics and their impact on 120-day rainfall amounts could explain the variability in active fires detected between the various years, in northern Sumatra, the number of active fires annually detected was more closely correlated with shorter periods of rainfall. The dry season in general lasts shorter there, but northern Sumatra has two of them in some years (Yulianti et al., 2013) making comparisons between various years difficult. 2005 and 2014 saw active fires during both dry seasons but the early dry season had most fires (Fig. 5). In 2013, burning only occurred in the late dry season with the months of May and June being drier than usual. This short period contained most of the yearly fire activity and generated more atmospheric pollution over Singapore than the 1997 fires because the winds carried smoke from this region directly to Singapore (Gaveau et al., 2014).

We observed that in northern Sumatra more active fires burned overnight than in southern Sumatra and Kalimantan. Linked to this, the southern regions also had a relatively low fraction of active fires burning overnight, except in 2015, coinciding with a very strong El Niño event. Unfortunately, due to data availability we do not know whether the same holds for the 1997 El Niño (Table 3).

Having focused exclusively on active fires detected at night, this study is not readily comparable with Field and Shen (2008) rainfall accumulation threshold of 350 mm in southern Sumatra and 650 mm in southern Kalimantan. In southern Sumatra, the threshold of 350 mm within 4 months prior to active fire detected by Field and Shen's (2008) was valid for high fire years. While our estimate of 200 mm seems much lower, there were no years with rainfall accumulation in between 200 mm and 350 mm rainfall accumulation within 4 months prior to active fire (Fig. 8).

This study relied exclusively on nighttime data in order to remain consistent with the datasets used to cover the entire study period. One uncertainty for this methodology is an eventual change in diurnal cycle within similar climatic and ENSO conditions. We found that 36% of active day fires burned overnight in 2015, compared to only 21% in 2006, yet 2006 had a much weaker El Niño. Unfortunately, no consistent daytime fire data was available to evaluate the diurnal cycle extending back to 1997.

Our approach carries a number of uncertainties. First, the focus on night time fires enabled a consistent time series but, as mentioned above, potential changes in the number of fires observed during the day without impacting the number of night time fires (i.e. a change in the number of fires that burn through the night) would remain undetected. Whether this is the reason behind the different ratio between 1997 and 2015 found here (just over 2) and in the GFED carbon emission estimate (almost 3) cannot be resolved. Second, active fire datasets have a large omissions rate. Tansey et al. (2008) compared MODIS data (MOD14A1) hotspots with disaster monitoring constellation (DMC) and Landsat TM data. They found an omission error of 60% during the 2002, 2004 and 2005 dry seasons. The advantage of using active fires is the high temporal resolution, which enabled us to better study fire-precipitation rates. Finally, our approach of stitching together different datasets revealed the substantial spatial variability in ratios mostly between ATSR and MODIS active fires for which we do not have a plausible explanation but potentially impacted the time series. In addition, the lower sampling rate of ATSR means that the daily time step for 1997 is actually a constructed one, the actual data has a 3 days revisit time.

## **5 Conclusions:**

We have constructed a rainfall and active fire dataset by combining two datasets for each to cover the 1997 – 2015 period thus capturing two strong El Niño events. The dataset provides daily temporal resolution and focused on night time fires to provide consistency over the full time period. We analysed the fire patterns in Indonesia by identifying 4 regions with different spatio-temporal variability in fire activity. The main findings can be summarized as follow:

- While most fires in southern Sumatra and Kalimantan occurred between August and October, northern Sumatra had two fire seasons: a short one in February followed by a longer one between June and August. In high fire years northern Sumatra most active fires occurred in the early dry season, except in 2013 when almost all active fires occurred during the later dry season.

- The 2015 El Niño event involved approximately 52,000 active fires, compared to approximately 119,000 in 1997. This difference came mostly from southern Sumatra and Kalimantan. While both 1997 and 2015 were very strong El Niño years, the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) was more favourable for droughts and the El Niño event in 1997 occurred somewhat earlier, thus aligning closer to the start of the fire season. While 1997 was anomalous in the sense that **the mega rice project was just initiated in 1996 in Kalimantan and greatly extended the flammable area which may have been another factor explaining the difference, our study did not explicitly take land cover changes into account.**
- While amounts of rainfall in 1997 and 2015 were relatively similar 120 days prior active fires (respectively 281 mm and 303 mm in southern Sumatra and 248 mm and 269 mm in southern Kalimantan), there were more days with rainfall in 2015 than in 1997. This may be one of the key reasons behind the strong non-linear response of fires to rainfall; while those days with little rainfall do not add much to the total dry season rainfall, they are capable of halting fires.
- Northern Sumatra, with approximately 42,000 km<sup>2</sup> of peatland, had the highest proportion of active fires observed in peatland (75%), compared to 61% in southern Sumatra. Although southern Kalimantan has the largest peatland area, with more than 50,000 km<sup>2</sup>, the incidence of active peat fires in that region was 50% of all active fires, which is also the average percentage when considering all of Indonesia.
- In agreement with other studies, we found that 120 days of rainfall accumulation prior to an active fire was the best correlated timeframe to a severe fire year in southern Sumatra and Kalimantan. In northern Sumatra this period was lower, 30 days. Part of the reason is that the dry season there is shorter. However, the response time is faster than in other parts of Indonesia as well.

#### **Acknowledgements:**

This research was supported by the European Research Council, grant number 280061.

#### **References**

- Aldhous, P.: Land remediation: Borneo is burning, *Nature*, 432, 144-146, doi: 10.1038/432144a, 2004.
- Aldrian, E., and Dwi Susanto, R.: Identification of three dominant rainfall regions within Indonesia and their relationship to sea surface temperature, *International Journal of Climatology*, 23, 1435-1452, doi: 10.1002/joc.950, 2003.
- Andres, R. J., Gregg, J. S., Losey, L., Marland, G., and Boden, T. A.: Monthly, global emissions of carbon dioxide from fossil fuel consumption, *Tellus B*, 63, 309-327, doi: 10.1111/j.1600-0889.2011.00530.x, 2011.
- Aouizerats, B., van der Werf, G., Balasubramanian, R., and Betha, R.: Importance of transboundary transport of biomass burning emissions to regional air quality in Southeast Asia during a high fire event, *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics*, 15, 363-373, doi: 10.5194/acp-15-363-2015, 2015.

Arino, O., Casadio, S., and Serpe, D.: Global night-time fire season timing and fire count trends using the ATSR instrument series, *Remote Sensing of Environment*, 116, 226-238, doi: 10.1016/j.rse.2011.05.025, 2012.

Ballhorn, U., Siegert, F., Mason, M., and Limin, S.: Derivation of burn scar depths and estimation of carbon emissions with LIDAR in Indonesian peatlands, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 106, 21213-21218, doi: 10.1073/pnas.0906457106, 2009.

Boehm, H., and Siegert, F.: Ecological impact of the one million hectare rice project in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, using remote sensing and GIS, Paper presented at the 22nd Asian Conference on Remote Sensing, 2001, 9,

Boehm, H., Siegert, F., Rieley, J., Page, S., Jauhiainen, J., Vasander, H., and Jaya, A.: Fire impacts and carbon release on tropical peatlands in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, Paper presented at the 22nd Asian Conference on Remote Sensing, 2001, 9,

Diaz, H. F., and Markgraf, V.: *El Niño and the Southern Oscillation: multiscale variability and global and regional impacts*, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Field, R. D., and Shen, S. S. P.: Predictability of carbon emissions from biomass burning in Indonesia from 1997 to 2006, *Journal of Geophysical Research: Biogeosciences*, 113, doi: 10.1029/2008jg000694, 2008.

Field, R. D., van der Werf, G. R., and Shen, S. S. P.: Human amplification of drought-induced biomass burning in Indonesia since 1960, *Nature Geosci*, 2, 185-188, doi: 10.1038/ngeo443, 2009.

Gaveau, D. L. A., Salim, M. A., Hergoualc'h, K., Locatelli, B., Sloan, S., Wooster, M., Marlier, M. E., Molidena, E., Yaen, H., DeFries, R., Verchot, L., Murdiyarso, D., Nasi, R., Holmgren, P., and Sheil, D.: Major atmospheric emissions from peat fires in Southeast Asia during non-drought years: evidence from the 2013 Sumatran fires, *Scientific Reports*, 4, 6112, doi: 10.1038/srep06112, 2014.

Giglio, L., Descloitres, J., Justice, C. O., and Kaufman, Y. J.: An Enhanced Contextual Fire Detection Algorithm for MODIS, *Remote Sensing of Environment*, 87, 273-282, doi: 10.1016/S0034-4257(03)00184-6, 2003.

Giglio, L.: Characterization of the tropical diurnal fire cycle using VIRS and MODIS observations, *Remote Sensing of Environment*, 108, 407-421, doi: 10.1016/j.rse.2006.11.018, 2007.

Giglio, L.: MODIS collection 5 active fire product user's guide version 2.4, Science Systems and Applications, Inc, 2010.

Giglio, L., Randerson, J. T., and Werf, G. R.: Analysis of daily, monthly, and annual burned area using the fourth-generation global fire emissions database (GFED4), *Journal of Geophysical Research: Biogeosciences*, 118, 317-328, doi: 10.1002/jgrg.20042, 2013.

Hansen, M. C., Potapov, P. V., Moore, R., Hancher, M., Turubanova, S. A., Tyukavina, A., Thau, D., Stehman, S. V., Goetz, S. J., Loveland, T. R., Kommareddy, A., Egorov, A., Chini, L., Justice, C. O., and Townshend, J. R. G.: High-Resolution Global Maps of 21st-Century Forest Cover Change, *Science*, 342, 850-853, doi: 10.1126/science.1244693, 2013.

Harrison, R. D.: Drought and the consequences of El Niño in Borneo: a case study of figs, *Popul Ecol*, 43, 63-75, doi: 10.1007/pl00012017, 2001.

Hayasaka, H., Noguchi, I., Putra, E. I., Yulianti, N., and Vadrevu, K.: Peat-fire-related air pollution in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, *Environmental Pollution*, 195, 257-266, doi: 10.1016/j.envpol.2014.06.031, 2014.

Herawati, H., and Santoso, H.: Tropical forest susceptibility to and risk of fire under changing climate: A review of fire nature, policy and institutions in Indonesia, *Forest Policy and Economics*, 13, 227-233, doi: 10.1016/j.forpol.2011.02.006, 2011.

Hooijer, A., Page, S., Canadell, J., Silvius, M., Kwadijk, J., Wösten, H., and Jauhiainen, J.: Current and future CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from drained peatlands in Southeast Asia, doi: 10.5194/bg-7-1505-2010, 2010.

Huffman, G. J., Adler, R. F., Morrissey, M. M., Bolvin, D. T., Curtis, S., Joyce, R., McGavock, B., and Susskind, J.: Global precipitation at one-degree daily resolution from multisatellite observations, *Journal of Hydrometeorology*, 2, 36-50, doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1175/1525-7541\(2001\)002%3C0036:GPAODD%3E2.0.CO;2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1175/1525-7541(2001)002%3C0036:GPAODD%3E2.0.CO;2), 2001.

Huffman, G. J., Bolvin, D. T., Nelkin, E. J., Wolff, D. B., Adler, R. F., Gu, G., Hong, Y., Bowman, K. P., and Stocker, E. F.: The TRMM multisatellite precipitation analysis (TMPA): Quasi-global, multiyear, combined-sensor precipitation estimates at fine scales, *Journal of Hydrometeorology*, 8, 38-55, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1175/JHM560.1>, 2007.

Hyer, E. J., and Chew, B. N.: Aerosol transport model evaluation of an extreme smoke episode in Southeast Asia, *Atmospheric Environment*, 44, 1422-1427, doi: 10.1016/j.atmosenv.2010.01.043, 2010.

Iskandar, I., Irfan, M., Syamsuddin, F., Johan, A., and Poerwono, P.: Trend in precipitation over Sumatra under the warming Earth *International Journal of Remote Sensing and Earth Sciences (IJReSES)*, 2013.

Islam, M. N., and Uyeda, H.: Use of TRMM in determining the climatic characteristics of rainfall over Bangladesh, *Remote Sensing of Environment*, 108, 264-276, doi: 10.1016/j.rse.2006.11.011, 2007.

Jaenicke, J., Rieley, J. O., Mott, C., Kimman, P., and Siegert, F.: Determination of the amount of carbon stored in Indonesian peatlands, *Geoderma*, 147, 151-158, doi: 10.1016/j.geoderma.2008.08.008, 2008.

Johnston, F. H., Henderson, S. B., Chen, Y., Randerson, J. T., Marlier, M., DeFries, R. S., Kinney, P., Bowman, D. M., and Brauer, M.: Estimated global mortality attributable to smoke from landscape fires, *Environmental health perspectives*, 120, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1289/ehp.1104422> 2012.

Justice, C., Giglio, L., Korontzi, S., Owens, J., Morisette, J., Roy, D., Descloitres, J., Alleaume, S., Petitcolin, F., and Kaufman, Y.: The MODIS fire products, *Remote Sensing of Environment*, 83, 244-262, 2002.

Kaufman, Y. J., Justice, C. O., Flynn, L. P., Kendall, J. D., Prins, E. M., Giglio, L., Ward, D. E., Menzel, W. P., and Setzer, A. W.: Potential global fire monitoring from EOS-MODIS, *Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres* (1984–2012), 103, 32215-32238, doi: 10.1029/98JD01644, 1998.

Koh, L. P., Miettinen, J., Liew, S. C., and Ghazoul, J.: Remotely sensed evidence of tropical peatland conversion to oil palm, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108, 5127-5132, doi: 10.1073/pnas.1018776108, 2011.



Kummerow, C., Barnes, W., Kozu, T., Shiue, J., and Simpson, J.: The tropical rainfall measuring mission (TRMM) sensor package, *Journal of atmospheric and oceanic technology*, 15, 809-817, doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1175/1520-0426\(1998\)015%3C0809:TTRMMT%3E2.0.CO;2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1175/1520-0426(1998)015%3C0809:TTRMMT%3E2.0.CO;2), 1998.

LADA. Mapping Land Use Systems at global and regional scales for land Degradation Assessment Analysis, 2008.

Margono, B. A.: Mapping deforestation and forest degradation using Landsat time series: a case of Sumatra—Indonesia, 2013.

Marlier, M. E., DeFries, R. S., Voulgarakis, A., Kinney, P. L., Randerson, J. T., Shindell, D. T., Chen, Y., and Faluvegi, G.: El Nino and health risks from landscape fire emissions in southeast Asia, *Nature Clim. Change*, 3, 131-136, doi: 10.1038/nclimate1658, 2013.

Marlier, M. E., DeFries, R. S., Kim, P. S., Gaveau, D. L. A., Koplitz, S. N., Jacob, D. J., Mickley, L. J., Margono, B. A., and Myers, S. S.: Regional air quality impacts of future fire emissions in Sumatra and Kalimantan, *Environmental Research Letters*, 10, 054010, doi: 10.1088/1748-9326/10/5/054010, 2015.

Mota, B., Pereira, J., Oom, D., Vasconcelos, M., and Schultz, M.: Screening the ESA ATSR-2 World Fire Atlas (1997–2002), *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics*, 6, 1409-1424, doi: 10.5194/acp-6-1409-2006, 2006.

NOAA, Multivariate ENSO Index: <http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/psd/data/correlation>, access: July 5, 2016.

OOPC, Dipole Mode Index (DMI): <http://stateoftheocean.osmc.noaa.gov/sur/ind/dmi.php>, access: July 5, 2016.

Page, S. E., Siegert, F., Rieley, J. O., Boehm, H.-D. V., Jaya, A., and Limin, S.: The amount of carbon released from peat and forest fires in Indonesia during 1997, *Nature*, 420, 61-65, doi: 10.1038/nature01131, 2002.

Page, S. E., Banks, C. J., and Rieley, J. O.: Tropical peatlands: distribution, extent and carbon storage-uncertainties and knowledge gaps, *Peatlands International*, 2, 26-27, 2007.

Pendergrass, "The Climate Data Guide: GPCP (Daily): Global Precipitation Climatology Project.", access: 08/12/2015, 2015.

Putra, E., Hayasaka, H., Takahashi, H., and Usup, A.: Recent peat fire activity in the mega rice project area Central Kalimantan Indonesia, *Journal of disaster research*, 3, 1-6, 2008.

Randerson, J., Chen, Y., Werf, G., Rogers, B., and Morton, D.: Global burned area and biomass burning emissions from small fires, *Journal of Geophysical Research: Biogeosciences*, 117, 2012.

Rasmusson, E. M., and Wallace, J. M.: Meteorological Aspects of the El Niño/Southern Oscillation, *Science*, 222, 1195-1202, doi: 10.1126/science.222.4629.1195, 1983.

Roy, D. P., Boschetti, L., Justice, C. O., and Ju, J.: The collection 5 MODIS burned area product — Global evaluation by comparison with the MODIS active fire product, *Remote Sensing of Environment*, 112, 3690-3707, doi: 10.1016/j.rse.2008.05.013, 2008.

Saji, N. H., Goswami, B. N., Vinayachandran, P. N., and Yamagata, T.: A dipole mode in the tropical Indian Ocean, *Nature*, 401, 360-363, doi: 10.1038/43854, 1999.

Salinas, S. V., Chew, B. N., Miettinen, J., Campbell, J. R., Welton, E. J., Reid, J. S., Yu, L. E., and Liew, S. C.: Physical and optical characteristics of the October 2010 haze event over Singapore: A photometric and lidar analysis, *Atmospheric Research*, 122, 555-570, doi: 10.1016/j.atmosres.2012.05.021, 2013.

Simpson, J., Kummerow, C., Tao, W.-K., and Adler, R. F.: On the tropical rainfall measuring mission (TRMM), *Meteorology and Atmospheric physics*, 60, 19-36, doi: 10.1007/BF01029783, 1996.

Tacconi, L.: Fires in Indonesia: causes, costs and policy implications, CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia, 2003.

Tansey, K., Beston, J., Hoscilo, A., Page, S., and Paredes Hernández, C.: Relationship between MODIS fire hot spot count and burned area in a degraded tropical peat swamp forest in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, *Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres*, 113, 2008.

Trenberth, K. E.: The Definition of El Niño, *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 78, 2771-2777, 10.1175/1520-0477(1997)078<2771:tdoen>2.0.co;2, 1997.

van der Werf, G. R., Dempewolf, J., Trigg, S. N., Randerson, J. T., Kasibhatla, P. S., Giglio, L., Murdiyarso, D., Peters, W., Morton, D. C., Collatz, G. J., Dolman, A. J., and DeFries, R. S.: Climate regulation of fire emissions and deforestation in equatorial Asia, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 105, 20350-20355, doi: 10.1073/pnas.0803375105, 2008a.

van der Werf, G. R., Randerson, J. T., Giglio, L., Gobron, N., and Dolman, A. J.: Climate controls on the variability of fires in the tropics and subtropics, *Global Biogeochemical Cycles*, 22, GB3028, 10.1029/2007gb003122, 2008b.

Wahyunto, S, R., and Subagio, H.: Maps of area of peatland distribution and carbon content in Sumatera, 1990–2002, *Wetlands Int-Indonesia Programm and Wildl Habitat Canada*, Bogor, Indonesia, 2003.

Wahyunto, S, R., and Subagio, H.: Map of peatland distribution area and carbon content in Kalimantan, 2000–2002, *Wetlands International—Indonesia Programme & Wildlife Habitat Canada (WHC)*, Bogor, Indonesia, 2004.

Wooster, M., Perry, G., and Zoumas, A.: Fire, drought and El Niño relationships on Borneo (Southeast Asia) in the pre-MODIS era (1980–2000), *Biogeosciences*, 9, 317-340, doi: 10.5194/bg-9-317-2012, 2012.

Yulianti, N., Hayasaka, H., and Usup, A.: Recent Forest and Peat Fire Trends in Indonesia The Latest Decade by MODIS Hotspot Data, *Global environmental research*, 16, 105-116, 2012.

Yulianti, N., Hayasaka, H., and Sepriando, A.: Recent Trends of Fire Occurrence in Sumatra (Analysis Using MODIS Hotspot Data): A Comparison with Fire Occurrence in Kalimantan, *Open Journal of Forestry*, 3, 129, doi: 10.4236/ojf.2013.34021, 2013.

Zopf, D., Short, K., and Yang Kuo, R.: Historical trends and statistics of the Southern Oscillation, El Niño and Indonesian droughts, *Fish. Bull*, 76, 663-678, 1978.

## Tables

Table 1: Mean coefficient of determination between TRMM and GPCP precipitation for various lengths of the dry season between 1998 and 2015.

Time period (number of months)	Mean R <sup>2</sup>
2	0.697
3	0.685
4	0.688
5	0.681
6	0.675
7	0.665

5

Table 2: Number of active fire detections for the different regions including the number of fires detected in peatlands, with percentage of peatland. For each region the total surface of peatland is shown on top of each column.

Year	North Sumatra (41,792 km <sup>2</sup> )			South Sumatra (35,546 km <sup>2</sup> )			South Kalimantan (50,087 km <sup>2</sup> )			Others (100,441 km <sup>2</sup> )			Total (227,866 km <sup>2</sup> )		
	Peat fire	Non-peat fire	%	Peat fire	Non-peat fire	%	Peat fire	Non-peat fire	%	Peat fire	Non-peat fire	%	Peat fire	Non-peat fire	%
1997	4,031	2,881	58	24,645	21,842	53	22,624	30,349	43	2,228	10,085	18	53,528	65,157	45
1998	1,714	1,322	56	138	378	27	599	3,126	16	873	19,952	4	3,324	24,778	12
1999	1,691	990	63	918	841	52	494	654	43	103	1,111	8	3,206	3,596	47
2000	1,624	2,496	39	215	564	28	146	332	31	83	904	8	2,068	4,296	32
2001	1,287	553	70	257	243	51	1,600	766	68	54	1,187	4	3,198	2,749	54
2002	3,720	1,063	78	1,220	697	64	7,336	5,836	56	134	3,579	4	12,410	11,175	53
2003	1,582	685	70	1,054	557	65	1,125	1,249	47	17	996	2	3,778	3,487	52
2004	2,138	915	70	2,100	786	73	2,543	3,497	42	200	2,389	8	6,981	7,587	48
2005	9,627	1,497	87	559	187	75	1,032	770	57	226	1,402	14	11,444	3,856	75
2006	2,649	741	78	5,518	2,872	66	8,309	8,521	49	394	2,418	14	16,870	14,552	54
2007	968	146	87	219	519	30	90	409	18	91	1,175	7	1,368	2,249	38
2008	777	263	75	551	980	36	42	195	18	57	996	5	1,427	2,434	37
2009	2,686	985	73	1,831	1,436	56	4,928	4,232	54	476	2,529	16	9,921	9,182	52
2010	655	176	79	69	94	42	7	93	7	29	789	4	760	1,152	40
2011	1,339	373	78	2,191	1,284	63	1,116	914	55	280	865	24	4,926	3,436	59
2012	1,898	540	78	2,195	1,867	54	1,320	701	65	147	1,355	10	5,560	4,463	55
2013	5,320	1,133	82	263	791	25	357	196	65	106	957	10	6,046	3,077	66
2014	10,807	1,453	88	4,147	1,185	78	3,549	2,262	61	783	3,651	18	19,286	8,551	69
2015	1,551	608	72	17,312	5,577	76	13,227	7,757	63	579	7,048	8	32,669	20,990	61
total	56,064	18,820	75	65,402	42,700	61	70,444	71,859	50	6,860	63,388	10	395,537	196,962	67

10

Table 3: MODIS Terra (10:30pm) and MODIS Aqua (2:30pm) active fire detections.

Year	North Sumatra			South Sumatra			South Kalimantan			Others			Total		
	day fire	night fire	%	day fire	night fire	%	day fire	night fire	%	day fire	night fire	%	day fire	night fire	%
2003	9,442	2,267	24	14,430	1,611	11	19,895	2,374	12	23,406	1,013	4	67,173	7,265	11
2004	13,395	3,053	23	21,053	2,886	14	36,234	6,040	17	41,009	2,589	6	111,691	14,568	13
2005	28,654	11,124	39	8,656	746	9	13,649	1,802	13	19,983	1,628	8	70,942	15,300	22
2006	13,045	3,390	26	42,031	8,390	20	55,614	16,830	30	38,696	2,812	7	149,386	31,422	21
2007	5,771	1,114	19	13,468	738	5	9,133	499	5	16,339	1,266	8	44,711	3,617	8
2008	7,039	1,040	15	13,391	1,531	11	6,284	237	4	14,933	1,053	7	41,647	3,861	9
2009	12,100	3,671	30	19,830	3,267	16	36,817	9,160	25	29,502	3,005	10	98,249	19,103	19
2010	5,846	831	14	3,942	163	4	2,118	100	5	8,465	818	10	20,371	1,912	9
2011	8,425	1,712	20	17,498	3,475	20	17,249	2,030	12	17,992	1,145	6	61,164	8,362	14
2012	8,661	2,438	28	21,300	4,062	19	17,691	2,021	11	21,175	1,502	7	68,827	10,023	15
2013	14,761	6,453	44	9,617	1,054	11	12,721	553	4	16,440	1,063	6	53,539	9,123	17
2014	23,736	12,260	52	18,521	5,332	29	29,484	5,811	20	35,473	4,434	12	107,214	27,837	26
2015	6,155	2,159	35	43,211	22,889	53	49,237	20,984	43	52,429	7,627	15	151,032	53,659	36
total	157,030	51,512	33	246,948	56,144	23	306,126	68,441	22	335,842	29,955	9	1,045,946	206,052	20

15

Table 4: standard error of the regression for each region according to the number of days of rainfall accumulation. NoSu is northern Sumatra, SoSu southern Sumatra, and SoKa is southern Kalimantan.

	0	7	15	30	60	90	120
NoSu	2,418	1,940	1,961	1,897	1,981	2,468	2,874
SoSu	6,638	8,254	8,579	7,299	5,933	5,053	4,550
SoKa	10,022	11,183	10,069	7,843	7,940	6,866	4,894

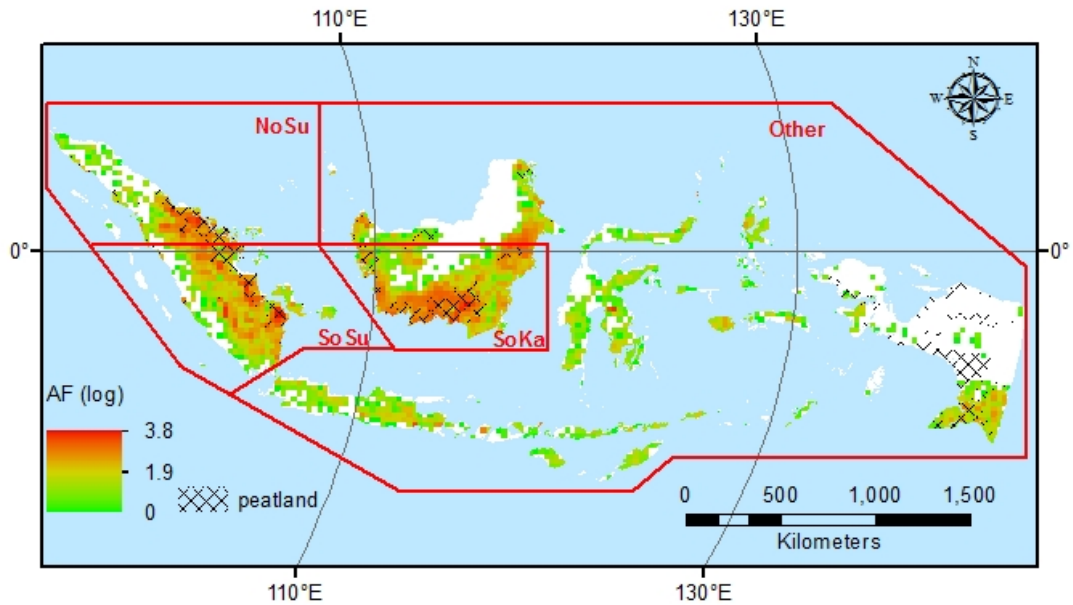


Figure 1: Region definition, number of active fires detected between 1997 and 2015 (log scale, rescaled to quarter degree) and peatland extent for Indonesia. NoSu is northern Sumatra, SoSu southern Sumatra, and SoKa is southern Kalimantan. The white areas are where no active fires were detected.

25

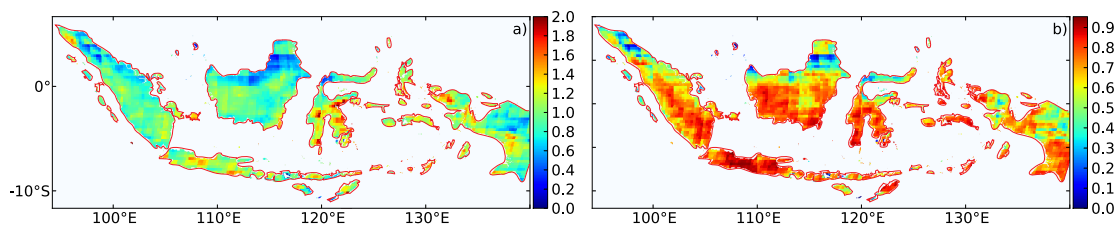


Figure 2: a) Slope and b)  $R^2$  of a linear regression between GPCP and TRMM rainfall based on the cumulated rainfall for the 4 driest months between 1998 and 2014.

30

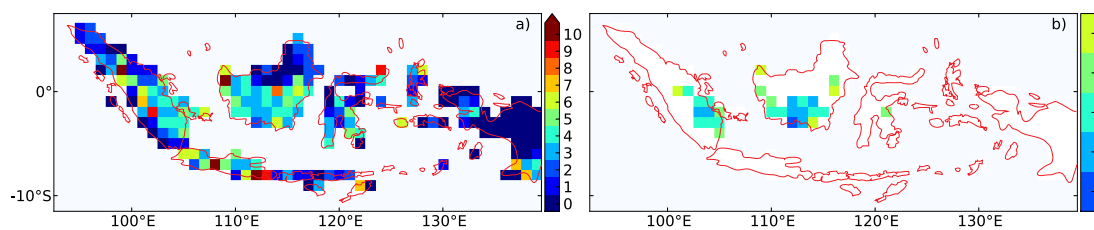


Figure 3: Ratio between MODIS and ATSR (both 10:30pm overpass) active fire detections over the 2001-2011 overlapping period for a) all grid cells with active

35 fire detections and b) only for those grid cells with more than 500 MODIS active fires detected between 2001 and 2011.

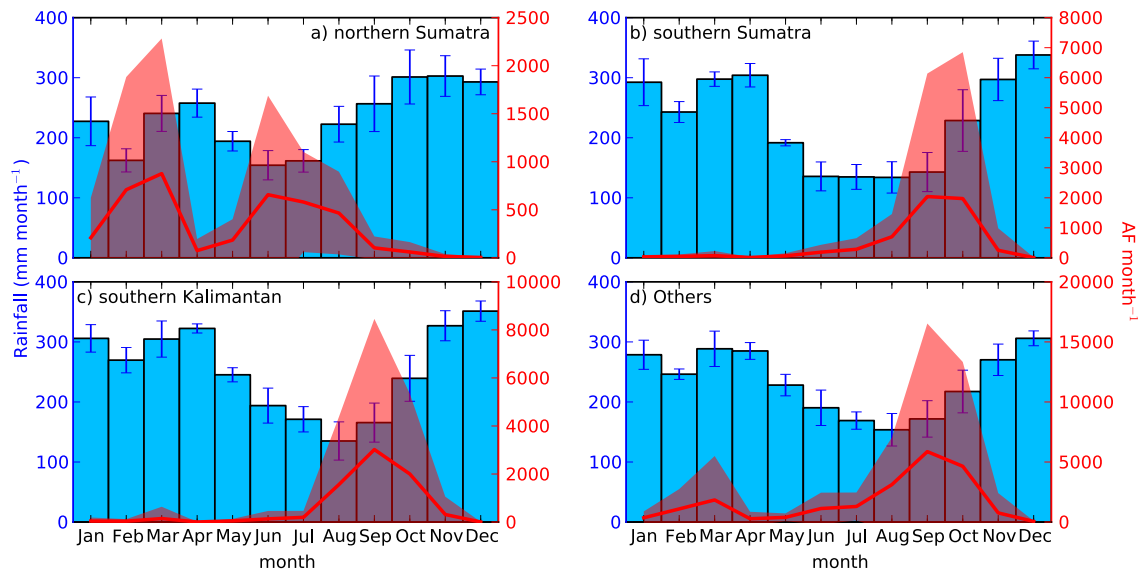


Figure 4: Monthly rainfall with standard deviation (blue) and active fire detections with standard deviation (red), averaged over 1997 -2015.

40

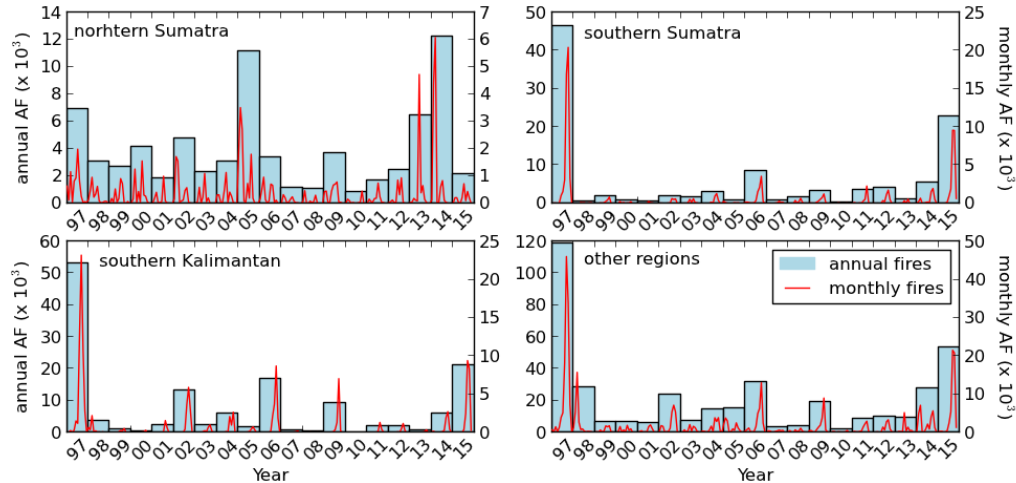
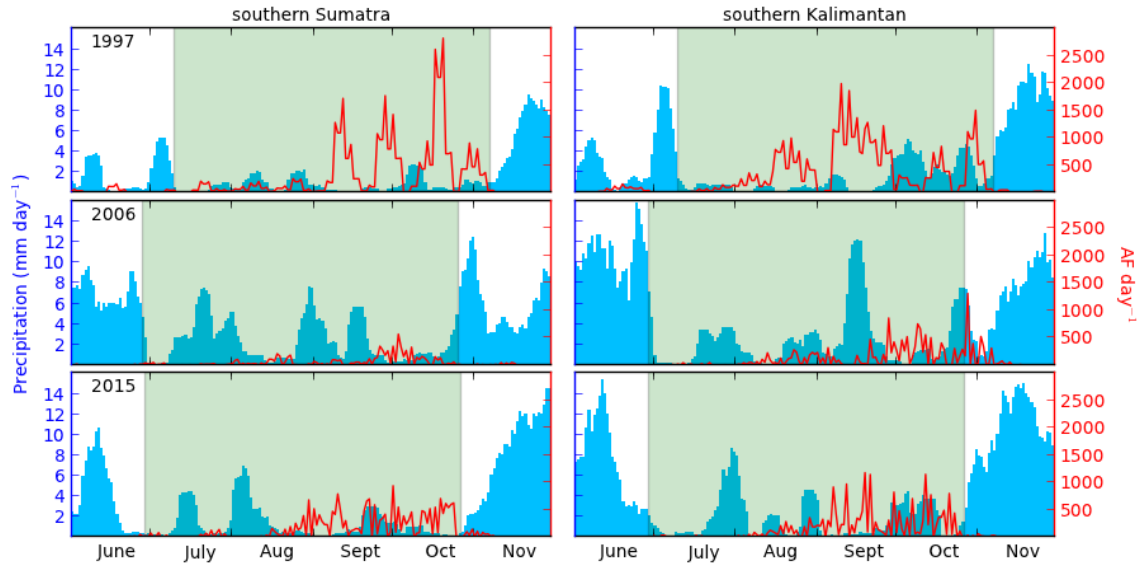


Figure 5: Number of annual and monthly active fire (AF) detections.



45

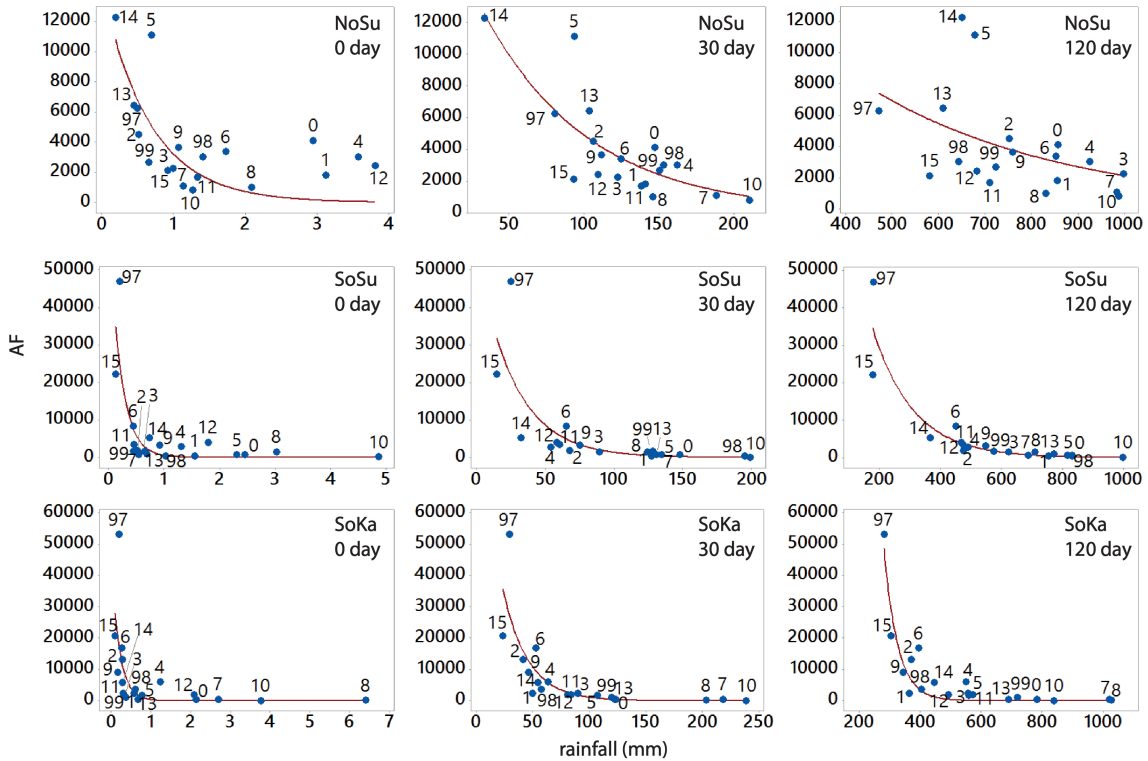
Figure 6: Daily active fire (AF) detections (red) and rainfall (blue) in southern Sumatra and southern Kalimantan during dry seasons of 1997, 2006 and 2015. The green shaded period indicates the dry season defined here as the 120 day period with lowest rainfall.

50



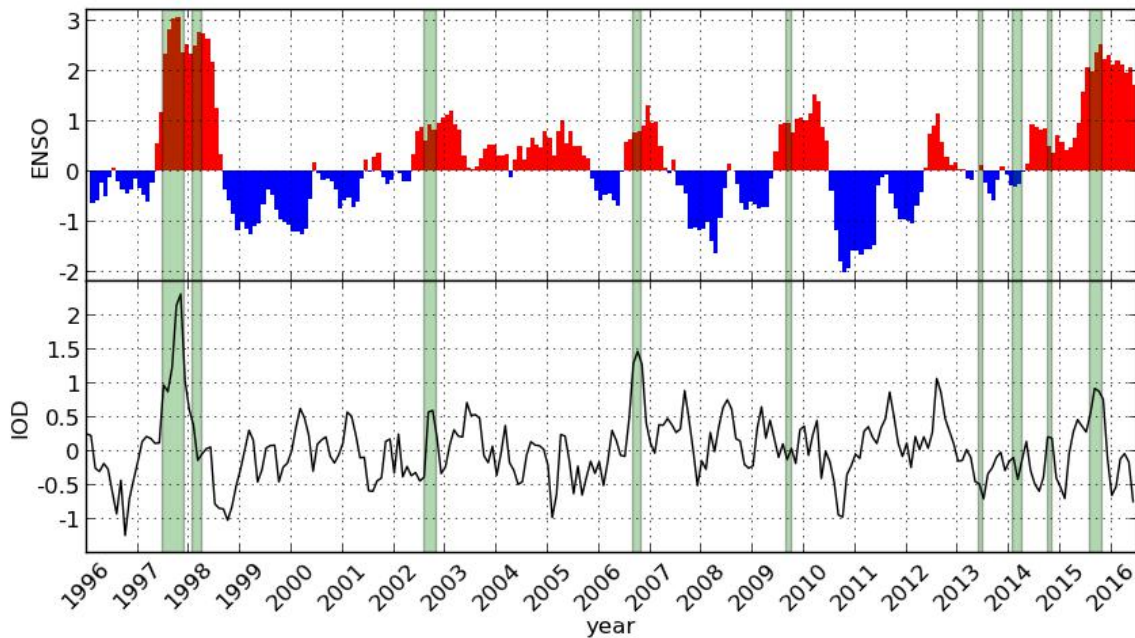
Figure 7: Rainfall and active fire detections (log scale) aggregated to 1° spatial resolution during the dry season.





55

Figure 8: mean rainfall accumulation before fire (with exponential trend line) for each climatic region with a 0, 30 and 120 days buildup. The numbers in the graph denote the year (97 is 1997, 0 is 2000, through 15 is 2015).



60

Figure 9: ENSO and IOD with periods of strongest fire activity in green (more than 5.000 AF month<sup>-1</sup>). (NOAA, 2016; OOPC, 2016)