

The role of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in international forestry

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Introduction

Forestry around the globe is being affected by globalisation, the expansion of forest products trade, increased transnational investments, improved information and communication technology, increased population growth and urbanisation, and a changing climate. Forestry has also become more people-centred and societal perceptions are increasingly valuing environmental, social and cultural functions of forests. The FAO's 196 member countries and the European Union guide the FAO's Forestry Department to respond to these changes by reaching outside the traditional forestry sector, engaging in partnerships with new stakeholders, collaborating with other sectors, and adopting more multi-disciplinary and integrated landscape approaches.

Balancing multiple values and demands

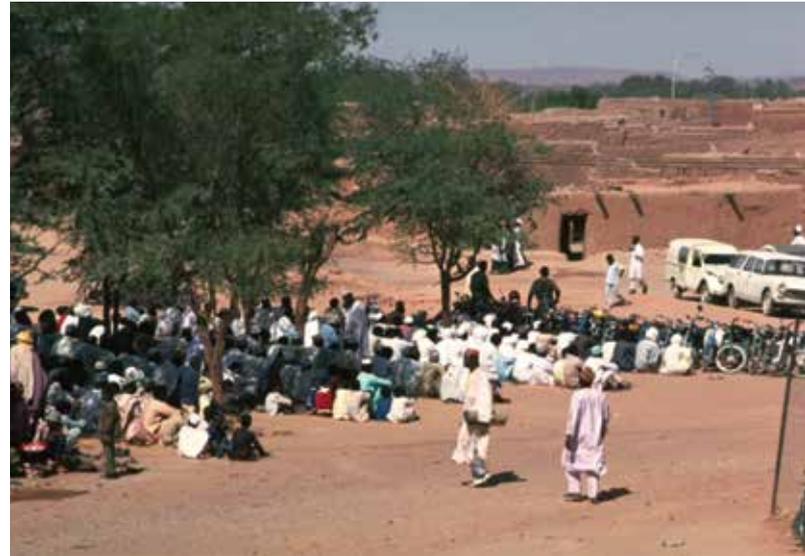
The continuing loss of forests and forest degradation in developing countries, especially in tropical regions, poses a critical challenge. Rural livelihoods depend upon productive forests that provide a wide range of forest products and ecosystem services that support employment, income, poverty reduction and environmental protection. However increasing demand for food, fibre and fuel can lead to unsustainable forest management practices and unplanned land-use change, including deforestation and forest degradation that negatively impacts on the environment and people's livelihoods.

In many industrialised countries the conservation of biodiversity, the protection of soils, water and carbon, and the recreational benefits and services of forests are increasingly being accorded higher priority. The challenge for the FAO is to help more countries to balance the sustainable management of the multiple values of forest and tree resources with sustainable development, whilst facing ever-increasing and multiple demands on forests.

Mission 2010–2013

The Forestry Department, through the FAO Strategy for Forests and Forestry 2010, identified priority goals including:

- Better informed, coordinated, transparent and participatory decision-making
- Improved recognition and appreciation of the role of forests and trees in livelihoods, poverty alleviation, food security, and the sustainable supply of raw materials and energy



The benefit of tree shade outside a Mosque in arid conditions in Niger, FAO FPL ref FO-9089

- Increasing the contribution of forests and trees to mitigating climate change, combating desertification, conserving biodiversity, and ensuring water quality through integrated landscape approaches.

The FAO Conference 2010 approved a Strategic Objective on the Sustainable Management of Forests and Trees for the 2010–2013 planning period, including six Organizational Results:

- Policy and practice affecting forests and forestry based on timely and reliable information
- Policy and practice affecting forests and forestry reinforced by international cooperation and debate
- Institutions governing forests strengthened and forest stakeholders involved in integrating forest policies and legislation into wider land-use and national development plans and processes
- Sustainable management of forests and trees more broadly adopted to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, and increase livelihood and environmental benefits, and adapt to and mitigate climate change
- Social and economic values and livelihood benefits of forests and trees enhanced and markets for forest products and services contribute to more economic land-use options

- Environmental values of forests and trees realised and implemented, including conservation of forest biodiversity and genetic resources; climate change mitigation and adaptation, rehabilitation of degraded lands, and water and wildlife management.

Forestry Department governance

The Committee on Forests (COFO), established by the FAO Conference in 1971, is the highest FAO statutory body advising medium and long-term actions in international forestry. Biennial sessions of the committee bring together heads of forestry, senior government officials and partner organisations to identify emerging policy and technical issues, seek solutions and advise the FAO on recommended actions.

Six regional forestry commissions meet biennially to highlight national, regional and global policy and technical issues of relevance to their region to provide input to the Committee on Forests and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). In recent years, world and regional forestry weeks held in association with the Committee on Forests and regional forestry commissions have proven popular in holding debates, workshops, seminars, launches and knowledge sharing events between key forestry stakeholders such as government, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, civil society and donors.

Forest-related policies and processes

The FAO has been centrally active in shaping global and regional forest objectives, policies and processes for many years. It is recognised for informing the

international forest policy-related negotiations with the Rio Earth Summit, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, and the follow up Rio+20 held in 2012.

The FAO has collaborated with the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF), the International Forum on Forests (IFF) and the United Nations Forum on Forests in addressing their recommended actions on sustainable forest management and in negotiation of the non-legally binding instrument for all types of forests, and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development Forest Principles and Agenda 21, Chapter 11. The FAO chairs the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, comprised of 14 international agency members, which promote international collaboration and strengthen long-term political commitment to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. See www.cpfweb.org/en/ for a list of agency members.

The initial focus of the FAO in the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD) partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was in developing the tools and strengthening country capacity in monitoring, review and verification (MRV). However now a framework for governance diagnostics and indicator development has been initiated with the World Bank, the World Resources Institute (WRI), the European Forestry Institute (EFI) and the Program on Forests (PROFOR), and the United Nations Collaborative



Community forestry seedling production in the shade in a small village nursery in Angola



Conversion of primary *dipterocarp* forest to *acacia mangium* plantations for high productivity fibre production for pulp and paper in Sumatra, Indonesia, FAO FPL ref FO-6930

Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries/ Chatham House Framework for Monitoring REDD+ Governance has been developed.

The FAO has global partnerships with the Programme on Forests, the Billion Tree Campaign, the Growing Forest Partnership, the Model Forests Network, the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration, the Global Forest Information Service (GFIS) and Forest Connect. It also engages with non-governmental organisations, other civil society, research and academic institutions and the private sector in different mechanisms including expert consultations, technical advisory groups, multi-stakeholder fora and international meetings. The FAO hosts the secretariats for forestry-related technical statutory bodies (International Poplar Commission, Advisory Committee on Paper and Wood Products and *Silva Mediterranea*) and other global partnerships (Mountain Partnership, Forest and Farm Facility and Sustainable Wildlife Management Partnership).

The FAO organises the World Forestry Congress with a host country every six years as a forestry mega-event for all stakeholder groups to exchange views and experiences and to recommend regional or global actions in forests and forestry. It was a co-convenor, with the United Nations Forum on Forests, of the International Year of Forests in 2011 and was instrumental in having

21 March each year proclaimed the International Day of Forests by the United Nations to raise awareness on the importance of forests around the world.

National forest policies, programmes and institutions

With the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the FAO co-hosted regional workshops on forest governance and law enforcement in illegal logging and trade hotspots in the Amazon, Central America, Central Africa, South East Asia and West Africa regions. The FAO and the Programme on Forests prepared a Framework for Assessing and Monitoring Forest Governance. Two regional workshops on integrating climate change into national forest programmes were held in the Congo and in the Near East. The Forestry Department contributed to the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security.

The National Forest Programme Facility (nfp Facility) and the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) are multi-donor trust funded programmes providing support to strengthen institutional capacities in forest policies and national forest programmes. Seventy countries and four regional organisations signed letters of agreement with the National Forest Programme



Full tree harvesting with integrated grapple skidder extraction, on-site chipper and chip liner trucking, VCP Company, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Facility between 2002 and 2011. In 2012, the Forest and Farm Facility superseded the National Forest Programme Facility to encourage greater integration of forests in wider landscape and land-use policies, planning and practices.

Forest assessment, monitoring and information

The Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) has been published three times since 2000 and the 2015 version is well advanced in preparation. A complement to the 2010 version was the Global Forest Land-use Change 1990–2005 published in 2011. The Global Forest Resources Assessment has an interactive database giving access to country and consolidated reporting tables. To strengthen country capacity to provide timely and quality forest, forest change and user information, the National Forest Monitoring and Assessment programme was established.

Direct support has been provided to 17 countries to undertake forest inventories and integrated land-use assessments and capacity building has been provided to over 50 countries. Since the launch of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries in 2007, monitoring, review and verification technical support has been provided to 12 countries through it. The MRV Carbon Unit is the fastest expanding unit within the Forestry Department.

With the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the International Tropical Timber Organization, the FAO jointly produces the *Forest Products Statistics* and market reviews. The *State of the World's Forests* is published biennially to inform public debate, introduce topical issues, and encourage

policy-making at national and international levels. *Regional Outlook Studies*, published every five to 10 years, provide forestry information on large economic and social contexts in each of the FAO's six regions.

The Forestry Department has a comprehensive website (www.fao.org/forestry/en/) which is a repository of flagship publications (*State of the World's Forests, 2012*; *State of Mediterranean Forests, 2011*, *Global Forest Resources Assessment, 2010*; *FAO Forestry Papers*; and *Unasylva* journal), electronic newsletters, interactive databases, working papers, other publications, and a Forestry Information Centre that posts *Infosylva* on a bi-weekly basis in English, French and Spanish.

Forest resources management

The FAO's work on forest resources management provides tools to help countries to sustainably manage their forest and tree resources. The work is extensive and covers all forest biomes, including mountain ecosystems, in all regions of the world. The key technical areas include:

- Knowledge creation and sharing – implications for forest management of ecology and relevant sciences, soils and climate at species and forest stand levels, as well as information on and systems for determining its potential to deliver products and services on a sustainable basis
- Systems for the effective regeneration and management of native and planted forests and trees for a range of different purposes and users, including restoration and the conservation and use of forest genetic resources

- Protection and security of forest resources from fire, pests, diseases, and increasingly adaptation to and mitigation of climate change and extreme weather events.

The State of the World Forest Genetic Resources preparatory process – country reports, thematic studies, regional workshops and analyses – is well advanced and FAO Forestry Papers (see <http://www.fao.org/forestry/58718/en/>) and Working Papers on topical issues have been published on a wide range of forest resources management topics. Global assessments have been undertaken for fire management, planted forests and forest health, and best practices guidelines prepared through multi-stakeholder processes in phytosanitary standards in forestry, fire management, responsible management of planted forests, sustainable forest management in the drylands of sub-Saharan Africa, and good forestry and range practices in the arid and semi-arid zones of the Near East.

An interactive database on planted forests and a forest management database to share sustainable forest management case studies have been prepared. Publications on forests and climate change include: forest management and climate change, a literature review, managing forests for climate change, what wood-fuel can do to mitigate climate change, and forests and climate change after Cancun and Copenhagen from an Asia-Pacific perspective. Commercial books recently published include: *Planted Forests: Uses, Impacts and Sustainability*, *Teak Plantations in Latin America*; *Teak: New Trends in Silviculture, Commercialization and Wood Utilization*; and *Poplars and Willows: Trees for Society and the Environment*. A comprehensive FAO publications library is available online (www.fao.org/forestry/publications/en/).

The forest resources management group has more than 100 field projects of varying scales around all regions of the world funded by the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries partnership, the Global Environment Facility

(GEF), and the governments of Finland, Sweden, Korea, France and Italy. Country representatives, stakeholders and partners recognise the importance of the FAO as a technical agency supporting countries on different aspects of forest management. The silviculture of native forests, restoring degraded forests, assisted natural regeneration, afforestation and reforestation, agroforestry, forest health and fire management are increasingly recognised for their prominent roles in sustainable forest management and REDD+ initiatives.

Forest products and economic aspects

Regular *Forest Products Statistics* are disseminated as publications and an accessible database. Best practice guidelines on contracting labour in forest operations, market analysis and development, and preparing national financing strategies for sustainable forest management have been developed. *Forest Sector Outlook Studies* have been published for Latin America (2006), *Global Bioenergy* in collaboration with the World Bank (2010), Asia Pacific (2010), Europe (2011) and North America (2012), and Russia and Africa are in preparation.

Regular newsletters and technical publications are produced for forest products markets, wood-based bioenergy, and non-wood forest products. The economics and financing team increasingly provide inputs to the preparation of *State of the World's Forests* publication, Global Environment Facility projects and support to Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade, National Forest Programmes Facility and the Forests and Farms Facility initiatives. There is an active field programme in non-wood forest products, community-based enterprise development, forest harvesting and wood energy.

Cross-cutting themes

A FAO Forestry Paper on *New Generation of Watershed Management Programmes and Projects* was followed up by companion publications and implementation of a new



Left: Storyteller entertaining villagers out of the searing heat under an *acacia albida* tree in arid Niger, FAO FPL ref CFU-000143

Right: Forest landscape providing soil, water and biodiversity conservation and wilderness recreational resource in Jostedalbreen National Park, Norway, FAO FPL ref FO-7456



Taktsang Palphug Buddhist Monastery (the Tiger's Nest) perched 900 metres above the heavily forested Paro Valley Floor in Bhutan

watershed management curriculum for universities. The forests and water programme has been active in international forest and water events which are being synthesised into an Agenda for Action. There has been an active programme in agroforestry, trees outside forests and urban and peri-urban forestry.

Guidelines for Agroforestry in collaboration with the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and a *Voluntary Guideline for Policy and Decision Making in Urban and Peri-urban Forests* are in preparation. Forests and Wildlife has an active programme, particularly in Africa, where bush meat and human-wildlife conflicts are topical issues. A tool kit for human-wildlife conflicts has been prepared and an active portfolio of field projects relating to forests and wildlife developed with a wide range of partners.

Climate change and forests have been the focus of both the Forestry and the Natural Resources Departments. The focus is to strengthen national and international action on forests and climate change and forest-related activities such as submissions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), mutual consultations on thematic issues, and regular production of a forum newsletter for sharing information and experiences on forests and climate change.

FAO's comparative advantage in influencing international forestry

The FAO has a long and broad experience in all aspects of forestry in all regions of the world. Some of its comparative advantages in influencing international forestry include:

- Governance encourages countries to identify topical issues and recommend priority actions
- Forest resources and forest products datasets and reports, outlook studies and other information services are unique
- Specialist technical knowledge in forest resources management and related sectors and integration of cross-cutting themes
- Outreach on the ground from headquarters through the six regional offices to most developing countries
- Flagship publications and events in English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic and Russian.

The FAO is the only global forestry organisation that works at all levels with all stakeholder groups to play an important neutral, professional, convening role to help bring a fragmented forestry agenda together. The disadvantage is that it has been difficult to transpose the global and regional policy and planning processes to national and local level policies, plans and practices due to a lack of regular and sustained financial and staff resources. In-country field programmes and projects are often restricted to pilots or demonstrations in the expectation that other partners, programmes and funding agencies will upscale the new tools, knowledge and technologies into expanding the sustainable management of forests and trees around the globe.

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