



منظمة الأغذية  
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Food  
and  
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of  
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Organisation  
des  
Nations  
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pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

### THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION

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### FORESTS AND WATER

1. Forests influence the amount of water available and regulate surface and groundwater flows while maintaining high water quality. Forested watersheds supply a high proportion of the water for domestic, agricultural, industrial and ecological needs in both upstream and downstream areas. The availability and quality of water in many regions of the world is increasingly threatened by overuse, misuse, pollution and projected negative impacts of climate change.
2. A key challenge faced by land, forest and water managers is to maximize the wide range of forest benefits without detriment to water resources and ecosystem function, particularly in the context of adaptation to climate change, which increasingly reinforces the importance of sustainable forest management.
3. To address this challenge, enhanced synergy is needed between the water and forest communities, through institutional mechanisms aimed at implementing action programmes at the national and regional levels. Similarly, there is an urgent need for greater understanding of the interactions between forests and water, and for embedding the research findings into policy agendas.
4. As part of the follow-up to the endorsement in November 2007 of the [Warsaw Resolution 2 "Forests and Water"](#) of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (FOREST EUROPE), many events on this topic were organized during the course of 2008 and 2009:
  - The 26th Session of the European Forestry Commission's Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds, August 19-22 2008, Oulu, Finland;
  - The III International Conference on Forests and Water, September 14-17 2008, Mragowo, Poland;
  - The Plenary Session on Forests and Water held during the European Forest Week October 20-24 2008, FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy;

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- The International conference “Water and Forests: a Convenient Truth?” October 30-31 2008, Barcelona, Spain;
- The workshop on Forests and Water held May 12-14 2009, Antalya, Turkey; and
- The Forests and Water Sessions and Side Event October 18-25 2009, at the XIII World Forestry Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

5. These events highlighted the gaps and misconceptions which still persist and the need to translate scientific knowledge into tools that can be used by policy-makers, the need to create national and transboundary institutions able to bring together all actors as well as to share among countries existing experiences related to joint forest and water management, with a particular focus on economic considerations. In close collaboration with key partner institutions which were the drivers of the different events mentioned above (Finnish Research Institute (METLA), *Instytut Badawczy Leśnictwa, Poland* (IBL), UNECE Water Convention, FOREST EUROPE, Government of Switzerland, European Forest Institute (EFIMED) and the Government of Turkey), FAO is synthesizing the recommendations resulting from this process in order to address future action and develop a relevant international forests and water agenda.

6. Recommendations to forest and water policy-makers and technicians can be divided into three main categories: policy, financial mechanisms and research.

***Policy:***

- Develop an overview of existing national management schemes, legislative guidelines and principles with regard to forests and water, and on this basis assess the possibility for developing guidelines on forests and water;
- Review national legislation relevant to forest and water management to harmonize the provisions and unify the terminology between the forest and water sectors;
- Strengthen institutional mechanisms enabling management of transboundary water resources;
- Encourage a cross-sectoral approach, in particular at the transboundary level, in order to prevent possible conflicts between different sectors. Related to climate change, trade-offs and synergies between adaptation and mitigation measures need to be considered.

***Financial Mechanisms:***

- Explore the mechanisms, feasibility and financial benefits of payment schemes for water-related forest services;
- Develop efficient economic tools to evaluate water-related ecosystem services provided by forests;
- Develop cross-sectoral projects on payments for ecosystem services (PES), embedding strategies to address adaptation to climate change when appropriate. In this context, take account of the “Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change<sup>1</sup>” and the “Recommendations on Payments for Ecosystem Services<sup>2</sup>” developed by the UNECE Water Convention with a wide range of stakeholders.

***Research:***

- Develop long-term monitoring systems to detect quantitative and qualitative changes of water resources within and from forested catchments.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.unece.org/env/documents/2009/Wat/mp\\_wat/ECE\\_MP.WAT\\_30\\_E.pdf](http://www.unece.org/env/documents/2009/Wat/mp_wat/ECE_MP.WAT_30_E.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/documents/PES\\_Recommendations\\_web.pdf](http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/documents/PES_Recommendations_web.pdf).

- Assess the impacts of specific stand structures and compositions on water uptake.
- Develop alternatives to high density monoculture plantations that do not compromise water consumption.
- Further investigate climate change associated disturbances in the water cycle and the role of forests in mitigating these impacts.
- Ensure an effective communication of research results to policy-makers.

7. In the context of the Thirty-fifth Session of the European Forestry Commission, recommendations related to policy and financial mechanisms are particularly relevant. Therefore, two questions for discussion are proposed with the intent to help countries and institutions exchange views and agree upon future course of action:

- How can international bodies such as the Timber Committee, the EFC, the UNECE Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, FOREST EUROPE and FAO better assist countries in developing harmonized policies and legislations between the forest and water sector?
- What recent cases of success can countries mention in connection to PES and valuation of water-related forest services?