



FAO FORESTRY



FAO FORESTRY DEPARTMENT, C. HUIJING, ANYONGE

Sixteenth session of FAO's Committee on Forestry

Delegates from 113 member countries gathered at FAO headquarters in Rome from 10 to 14 March 2003 for the sixteenth session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO). Also in attendance were observers from one United Nations Member State, the Holy See, representatives of eight United Nations agencies and programmes and observers from 23 intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The Committee on Forestry is the most important of the FAO Forestry statutory bodies. Meeting biennially, COFO brings together heads of forestry services and other senior government officials to identify emerging policy and technical issues, to seek solutions and to advise FAO on appropriate action and priorities.

This session of COFO was structured to allow more participation than in the past. A number of side and satellite meetings, hosted by FAO, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and governments, were held to promote informal exchange of views and experiences and to inform discussions in plenary.

Strengthening the Regional Forestry Commissions

A major focus of the Committee was the need to strengthen the role of the Regional Forestry Commissions in achieving sustainable forest management, particularly through the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) proposals for action. The Committee recommended that FAO Regional Offices be strengthened to support the Regional Forestry Commissions more effectively; that the regional commissions strengthen their links with other regional organizations and processes working in forestry, wildlife and related areas; and that the private sector and NGOs be more involved in the activities of the

commissions. The Committee also recommended that the Regional Forestry Commissions be used to facilitate the flow of information between the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and countries.

Forests and freshwater – issues and options

Increasingly, it is recognized that watershed conditions and water management can be improved if forests are managed with hydrological objectives in mind. In 2003, the International Year of Freshwater, COFO explored the available options to support the management of both forests and water. The Committee supported FAO's strengthened focus on water and forests in its next five-year programme of work.

This work will involve, for example, raising awareness on forest hydrology; identifying the elements of effective watershed management; disseminating related knowledge and research findings; and helping countries build capacity to implement and enforce related policies and action programmes.

The Committee recommended that FAO facilitate better national and international coordination to help ensure that forests contribute to and benefit from developments related to freshwater management. It also recommended that FAO explore ways to report on the linkages between forests and water in its future Global Forest Resources Assessments.

National forest programmes as a mechanism to implement key sustainable development goals

The Committee recommended that national forest programmes cover all types of forests and trees outside forests that would contribute to the socio-economic and environmental goals of the World Food Summit: *five years later* (WFS: *fyf*) and the World Summit on Sustainable



Development (WSSD). It stressed the need for verifiable goals and milestones for reviewing progress and for assessing the contributions of national forest programmes to sustainable forest management.

Review of FAO programmes in the forest sector

The Committee also reviewed FAO programmes and objectives in the forest sector. The Committee recommended that FAO continue its work on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management; model and demonstration forests; participatory forestry; forest fire control; wildlife management; forest biological diversity; support to national forest programmes; the links between forests, trade and sustainable forest management; and assistance to countries to prevent and control forest pests and diseases. It supported increased attention to cross-cutting areas such as forests and water; forests and climate change; and forests, poverty alleviation and food security.

The seventeenth session of COFO will be held from 14 to 18 March 2005 at FAO headquarters in Rome.

The report and background documentation from the sixteenth session are available on the Internet at www.fao.org/forestry/cofo, or by writing to the Meetings Officer, Forestry Department, FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy.

Trade and sustainable forest management : impacts and interaction

The links between trade in forest products and sustainable forest management are complex. The impacts – both positive and negative – of various trade policies on the sustainable management of forests remain unclear. Yet despite these uncertainties, trade policies continue to be suggested as a major means of overcoming problems of unsustainable forest use.

To investigate how trade policies and market developments will influence the sustainability of forest management, and how efforts in sustainable forest management are changing trade patterns and market shares, an Expert Consultation on Trade and Sustainable Forest Management: Impacts and Interactions was held at FAO headquarters in Rome from 3 to 5 February 2003. The meeting was attended by 73 participants from 26 countries, representing governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector.

There was considerable debate on the direct and indirect impacts of trade on sustainable forest management, and on dependencies and interactions between sustainable forest management and national economic growth, free trade, demand, markets and supply. It was agreed that the potential of trade and trade-related agreements to advance sustainable forest management continues to be important.

In the area of trade, finance and industrial structure, participants emphasized the need for: long-term insurance to ensure industry

confidence; improved technology and training; improved cooperation with relevant stakeholders, particularly NGOs; and assistance from government or other public institutions to help with environmental costs associated with sustainable forest management. Participants emphasized the need for industry to improve its public image and to promote the renewability of wood in comparison with competing non-renewable substitutes.

The meeting considered the broad relationship between governance, trade and sustainable forest management and recommended increased transparency in trade and forest governance decision-making; improved collection of trade and forest statistics; and required impact assessments for trade agreements that regulate land use.

The participants also discussed intersectoral influences that can directly or indirectly affect trade in forest products and services, as well as the forest sector as a whole. Relevant sectors include agriculture, finance and investment, technology, forest product demand and infrastructure.

This expert consultation constitutes one of the activities within the framework of FAO's global project "Impact Assessment of Forest Products Trade in the Promotion of Sustainable Forest Management", financed through a trust fund arrangement with the Government of Japan. FAO will publish the results of the project and will convene a second expert consultation later in 2003 at which trade policy-makers and trade specialists will discuss a new International Tropical Timber Agreement, the implementation of the World Trade Organization's Doha Declaration, regional trade agreements and national trade policy-making.

New forest valuation database

FAO is frequently queried about the value of the benefits provided by forests. As part of the EC-FAO Partnership Programme on data collection and analysis, FAO has created a database of studies on forest valuation from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The database includes studies in which an estimate of the value of a forest product or service has been produced.

The database can be queried by country, by product or service valued or by valuation methodology used. Information is currently restricted to developing countries and to studies that can be obtained online in full.

The database will be updated periodically. Comments, new information or updates to existing information on the database would be appreciated; e-mail Adrian.Whiteman@fao.org

The studies included in the database will be valuable for use in "benefits transfer", i.e. in forestry policy and project appraisals for similar types of forest.

The database is available at: www.fao.org/forestry/valuation