

60 years of *Unasylva* – weaving knowledge into development

U*nasylva* turns 60 in 2007. With this special double issue we celebrate the rich history of FAO's longest-running periodical.

Unasylva has changed in contents, format and look over the years, but it has always provided a lively chronicle of global issues and concerns in forestry. Its goal remains the same: to bring the latest news about forest science and policy to a broad range of readers – policy-makers, forest managers, technicians, researchers, students, teachers. Authors of the more than 1 000 articles published include presidents of countries, heads of national forest services, field workers and university professors.

The journal also documents the history of FAO's activities in forestry. Every FAO Director-General and every head of the FAO Forestry Division, which later became the Forestry Department, has contributed to *Unasylva*. The results of hundreds of FAO field projects have been recorded in these pages.

The number of issues per year has fluctuated from three to six, although for most of its life *Unasylva* has been quarterly. For years, *Unasylva* was a priced publication. As the Internet grew in popularity, FAO made *Unasylva* available free of charge online, leading to the recent decision to stop charging for hard copies. Since that decision was taken, requests for *Unasylva* – especially from developing countries where online access may be difficult – have rapidly increased.

As FAO membership has grown, from 48 countries – mostly in the industrialized world – to 190 (including one member organization, the European Community), so has the emphasis changed, from wood production and wood technology (early issues had a section on “Equipment”, for example) to sustainability concepts and awareness of forestry's social role. The first few decades emphasized assistance to Europe in the recovery after the Second World War. Authors in the early years were predominantly European and North American men. By the 1980s, the balance was changing as women increasingly entered the field of forestry, and contributions from developing countries were increasingly welcomed. Today's *Unasylva* celebrates diversity and is truly global; each issue, to the extent possible, has authors, male and female, from every region of the world and from a variety of academic and

research institutions, other UN agencies, non-governmental organizations and civil society.

At the eighteenth session of the FAO Committee on Forestry in March 2007, a slogan was launched for FAO Forestry: “Weaving knowledge into development”. This not only characterizes FAO's aims; it is what *Unasylva* has been doing for 60 years.

For this sixtieth anniversary issue, we have chosen to reprint articles or excerpts from past issues of *Unasylva* that demonstrate how knowledge is woven into development in forestry.

Ideas have evolved over the decades covered here. But perhaps more surprising is the extent to which concepts considered emblematic of certain decades had already been discussed long before. The concept of sustainability, codified in the 1990s after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), was already the basis of concerns back in the 1940s. The human dimension, much highlighted in the 1980s and 1990s, was already considered in the earliest articles.

This anniversary issue opens with an introduction from FAO Director-General, Jacques Diouf, who shares thoughts on FAO's ever-growing role as a knowledge organization, and on the changes he is introducing in the Organization to enhance this role and the contribution of *Unasylva*.

We begin our amble through the past by reprinting the first article in the first issue of *Unasylva* (1947), written by then FAO Director-General Sir John Boyd Orr, who introduced the concept of one world, one forest. The new review, he said, would “attempt to shed light on all manner of problems in the field of forestry and forest products, to compare methods that are being used in different countries, and to present the opinions and suggestions of experts in the various fields”.

From the 1950s, an article on “What is technical assistance?” shows how the Organization sought to use its knowledge in aid of developing countries. It was a different age in terms of global politics – but an editorial on “Spreading knowledge” indicates that the philosophy behind today's “knowledge organization” was already in place more than half a century ago.

We emphasize two themes in the 1960s. One is the growing awareness of the role of forestry in world economic development, with many ideas expressed here by Egon Glesinger (head of FAO Forestry) and Sir Henry Beresford-Peirse still ringing true today. The other is the growing faith in technology as a novel means for assisting development. Articles on “The electronic digital computer in forestry” and “The promise of technology” reflect an optimistic period of history.

In the mid-1970s, an article from K.F.S. King, previously Minister of Development in Guyana and at the time Assistant

Director-General of FAO's Forestry Department, reflects FAO's increasing concern with the role of supportive forestry policies in national development.

Women authors didn't appear in the pages of *Unasylva* until 1980 (see Box p. 42). We highlight an article on women in community forestry from that year. In the same decade, *Unasylva* began to print more articles from developing countries, which often share practical on-the-ground experience. An article on forest management practices from a forest administrator in Indonesia is a good example.

The 1990s were a pivotal decade in forestry, with the birth of the sustainable forest management concept at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 and the beginnings of the international arrangement on forests – the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), which subsequently led to the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). From an issue published just prior to UNCED, we present an article by Jag Maini, one of the key players in the international dialogue, on sustainable development of forests; and an article on its social dimensions.

Political changes in the 1990s also created new needs – as demonstrated in an article on safeguarding forest resources during the transition to a market economy. Concepts on how to make forestry extension effective were shifting away from one-way offering of solutions. The forestry world was recognizing the need to work with pluralism – the inevitable existence of differing, often conflicting, positions among many groups with an interest in forest management. And the Internet was a new tool for spreading information. All of these themes are represented in this issue.

By 2000, FAO had broadened its concern with food security to an emphasis on sustainable livelihoods. The overview article from *Unasylva's* issue on "Forests, food security and sustainable livelihoods" synthesizes key issues concerning the dependence of people on the forest for food, employment, income or subsistence, and the implications for sustainable forest management. This paved the way for later focus on forests' role in poverty alleviation within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals.

What is the influence of knowledge sharing? Another article from 2000 examines the extent to which seminal publications influence international or national forest policies by influencing conventional wisdom. We believe that *Unasylva* has a similar influence, by disseminating experience and best practices that then enter the mainstream of accepted knowledge.

The anniversary issue closes with a story literally about weaving knowledge into development: an illustrated review of a project that has helped develop the basket willow sector in Chile for enhanced local livelihoods.

One of the most direct ways in which *Unasylva* weaves knowledge into development is through education: teachers and trainers use it in the classroom, students use it for research, project staff and extensionists use it in the field. If it is not in the library nearest you, please let us know.