

**Forestry Outlook Study for West and Central Asia (FOWECA)
Sub-regional Workshop for Central Asia and the Caucasus
26 September – 01 October 2004, Hungary, Budapest**

Record of the FOWECA Budapest Workshop

BACKGROUND

The Forestry Outlook Study for West and Central Asia (FOWECA) is one of a series of regional forestry sector outlook studies initiated by FAO in collaboration with member countries to examine the direction of development of forests and forestry. FOWECA covers 23 countries in the region, including eight countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus, i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Upon invitation from FAO's Director-General to the Ministers responsible for forestry of the 23 countries to nominate a focal point for the study, 20 countries have already nominated their focal points and initiated activities at the country level, i.e. producing a country outlook paper by involving all related sectors within and outside of the forestry sector.

The FOWECA Planning Workshop for Central Asia and the Caucasus targeted the focal points of the countries from Central Asia and the Caucasus to accelerate their FOWECA implementation at the country level. A similar meeting was already held in Beirut in May 2004, in conjunction with the 16th session of the Near East Forestry Commission, at which the FOWECA West Asian countries participated and discussed and agreed on the general framework of FOWECA implementation.

OBJECTIVE

The Planning Workshop for Central Asia and the Caucasus for the Forestry Outlook Study for West and Central Asia (FOWECA) was held at the FAO Sub-regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe (SEUR) from 27 to 30 September 2004. The FOWECA focal points from eight countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus were invited and seven focal points and one representative participated in the Workshop. For the list of participants, see Annex 1.

The main purpose of the workshop was to assist the participants to (i) understand FOWECA's objectives, its process, its expected outcomes and the framework of country outlook paper preparation, (ii) identify topics/issues for thematic outlook papers and (iii) agree on activities for producing country outlook papers.

RESULTS

The Workshop was structured around (i) country presentations on their major forestry issues and driving forces, (ii) presentations on experiences in other countries and the European Forestry Sector Outlook Study, (iii) FAO presentations on FOWECA and outlook studies in general (iv) discussion on common forestry issues among the participating countries and (v) discussion of the framework of FOWECA implementation, especially country outlook paper preparation. English-Russian simultaneous interpretation was provided. In addition, with support from the Hungarian Government, a one-day field trip was organized to the forests close to the city. The Workshop agenda is attached as Annex 2.

1. Country Presentations

All participants presented current issues in their respective countries' forests and forestry. FAO FOWECA team had advised them to analyze driving forces and specifically, to present major past and current issues/problems that had an impact on forestry development, key issues or problems that are expected to impact on the forest sector in the coming ten years and information management on forests and forestry in their respective countries.

However, it was found that the driving forces were not fully analyzed in a systematic manner, though the participants often implied/mentioned them in their presentations. Main issues raised during the country presentations are summarized as follows.

Armenia

The energy crisis has resulted in a high level of deforestation, while prevailing illegal logging has resulted in actual forest harvesting about ten times higher than the official figures. Insufficient forest education and inappropriate forest inventory are two immediate constraints. Concepts of communal and private forests are expected to be integrated into the new forest law.

Azerbaijan

Forests cover 18% of the land area, about a quarter of which is subject to erosion. High unemployment rate, lack of sufficient energy supply and uncontrolled development by farmers are the major pressures on forests. Conflicts with Armenia over the territory have resulted in displaced people and refugees, which also puts further pressure on forests.

Georgia

Due to the energy crisis and the lack of alternative resources, forests have been over-harvested for firewood. Lack of consistent and comprehensive policy, a decline in state budget, overall economic difficulty are some of the major issues that have increased pressure on forests. Georgia is trying to adapt to European standards.

Kazakhstan

Forest covers 4.6% of the total land area. Deforestation caused by illegal logging and forest fires is one of the major issues, both of which closely relate to demands from neighboring countries, i.e. Russia and China, and prevailing poor economic opportunities in local areas.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan's forestry is under transition. Currently, reforms in institution, legislation and information are being undertaken. Also, the country is trying to involve local communities in forest management. Inadequate economic development, under-developed energy sector and high population density near forests are some major constraints related to forestry development.

Tajikistan

Forests cover only 3% of the total land area, while 93% of the land is mountainous. Inappropriate forest management, lack of accurate data, lack of resources, lack of employment opportunities, improper regulations, overgrazing, unsatisfactory forest protection, overuse of forest resources are major challenges.

Turkmenistan

Forestry does not play a major role in the country's economy, but is of importance for ecological and recreational purposes. To reduce forest products consumption, substitutes are introduced, such as gas for fuel and window frames made of metal. The climate is very harsh for natural regeneration. Drop irrigation has been introduced and the government is encouraging people to plant trees.

Uzbekistan

Forests cover 5.3% of the land area in Uzbekistan. Major issues include the need to rehabilitate the dried bed of the Aral Sea to stabilize sand erosion, plantations surrounding agricultural fields to protect crops and poplar plantation for industrial use.

2. Presentations on experiences in other countries and European Forestry Sector Outlook Study

Mr. Lebedys, FOPE consultant, explained the major changes that have taken place in Lithuanian forestry during the past decade, such as the introduction of the market economy and privatization. Mr. Holdampf, Deputy Director-General of the Hungarian Department of Forestry, also described the country's experience in the transitional period. Mr. Sasse, Forestry Officer, SEUR, introduced the major findings of the European Forestry Sector Outlook Study.

3. FAO presentations on FOWECA and outlook studies

A series of presentations were made by the FAO staff on FOWECA and outlook studies in general (i.e. "overview of outlook studies," "FOWECA approach," "anticipating the future" and "FOWECA country outlook paper") in order for the participants to fully understand outlook studies and the FOWECA approach.

4. Discussion on changes which could impact the forestry sector in the region over the next 20 years

As a follow-up exercise to the presentations for strengthening forward looking capacities, the participants were requested to reflect on and discuss possible changes which could impact the forestry sector over the next 20 years. The participants worked in two groups. The results which were presented at the plenary session included the following:

- All participants anticipate positive and significant changes in the economic, social and environmental setup of the regional development. Expectations for improvement are high;
- On the economic side, the participants foresee an increase in development investment, in the role of private sector, (in particular small businesses), and international cooperation. They also anticipate increasing importance of alternative energy sources, oil production and growing construction and tourism sectors. They think that wood products will be progressively substituted by other products (e.g. plastic, aluminum), the price of wood will increase and the timber felling will diminish;
- On the social side, living standards are expected to increase, which could lead to an increase in wood products consumption;
- On the environmental side, the participants foresee impacts from climate change and environmental education. Consequently, they anticipate increasing reforestation and afforestation programmes.

To conclude, the need to document these perceptions and the importance of the actors in creating and monitoring these changes were emphasized.

5. Discussion on the framework of FOWECA implementation

The process of country outlook preparation was introduced and a draft outline put forward for the paper for consideration. Explanation on how FAO would support country-level activities and the next steps was provided. The participants agreed to produce draft country outlook papers both in English and Russian and submit them to FAO by 28 February 2005. Translation arrangements will be made where necessary.

6. Next steps

Preparation of country outlook paper

Many focal points did not seem to have properly understood outlook studies and the FOWECA approach before participating in the Workshop. The Workshop helped them to better understand the outlook study approach and in particular, FOWECA. As most of the participating countries have not yet started the preparation of country outlook papers, FAO FOWECA team needs to follow up and support their activities, including visits to the countries, if necessary.

Next workshop

FAO FOWECA team needs to plan and organize the next workshop, where the countries will discuss and improve their draft country outlook papers. Given the agreed timeframe, this should be planned some time in April or May next year. In addition to technical matters, logistics such as working language and venue should be considered in advance for effective meeting organization.

Regional outlook report

FAO FOWECA team should start producing the FOWECA regional outlook report as early as possible, some findings of which are to be presented and discussed during the next workshop mentioned above.

Thematic outlook papers

At the end of the technical sessions, the participants were requested to reflect on the common issues which they foresee in forestry sector development and which deserve specific attention as topics for thematic outlook papers. The following issues were proposed during the group discussions by sub-region, i.e. Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Central Asia	Caucasus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role of forests and trees in preventing soil erosion (focus on the Aral Sea problem) - Forest inventory and monitoring - Forest related legislation at national and regional levels: development and harmonization - Policies for improving wood products supply and utilization - Biodiversity protection in forestry (genetic resources) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governance in forestry: impact of conflicts, illegal logging and energy crisis - Forest inventory and monitoring - Biodiversity protection in forestry (transboundary issues) - Climate change effects on forests - Funding mechanisms for forestry development

Networks

Partly due to the small number of participants and the common language of communication (i.e. Russian), positive and close group dynamism throughout the Workshop was observed. The Workshop provided an excellent opportunity for the participants to create a good network among themselves and with FAO. FAO should strengthen the network throughout the FOWECA process, also involving other interested partners, which could contribute to sustainable forest management in the region even after the termination of FOWECA.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All participants to the workshop extended their appreciation to SEUR colleagues for their considerate and efficient support to the workshop organization, and the Hungarian Government for sharing its experiences and organizing a field-trip.

Annex 1

List of Participants

Note: * indicate FOWECA country focal points.

Armenia

Mr. Ruben Petrosyan*
Chief Forester, Ministry of Agriculture, "Hayantar" SJSC

Azerbaijan

Mr. Bahadir Vakilov*
Head Specialist, Communication Center at the Forest Development Department, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources

Georgia

Mr. Giorgi Chkonia*
Vice-Chairman, Department of Forestry, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection

Kazakhstan

Mr. Kairat Ustemirov*
Head of Department of Regulation and Control of Forestry and Protected Areas, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Hunting Committee, Forestry and Specially Protected Areas Regulation and Control Service

Kyrgyzstan

Ms. Venera Surappaeva*
Chief of the Monitoring and Intercooperation Department. State Forest Service

Tajikistan

Mr. Ivan Ustyan
Head of Science, Monitoring and Ecological Education Department, State Directorate of protected areas "Tajik National Park", State Committee on Environment Conservation and Forestry

Turkmenistan

Mr. Akmurad Atamuradov*
Head of the Forest Seed Growing and Natural Parks Protection Service, Ministry of Nature Protection

Uzbekistan

Mr. Murat Sh. Ganiev*
Deputy Director of the Main Forestry Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources

Hungary

Mr. Gyula Holdampf
Deputy Director-General, Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development

FAO (SEUR)

Mr. Volker Sasse, Forestry Officer
Ms. Constanze Schaaff, Consultant

FAO (HQs)

Mr. Jean-Louis Blanchez, Forestry Officer, Forest Economics Service
Ms. Makiko Uemoto, Forestry Officer, Forest Economics Service
Mr. Arvydas Lebedys, Consultant, Forest Economics Service

Annex 2

Workshop Agenda

Monday 27 September

- 09:00-10:00 1) Opening
- Welcome remarks
 - Introduction of participants
 - Overview of outlook studies and Workshop
- 10:00-10:30 Coffee/tea break
- 10:30-12:30 2) *What shapes forestry?—driving forces affecting forestry sector*
- Presentation on Lithuanian experience
 - Country presentation by participants
- 12:30–14:00 Lunch
- 14:00-15:30 2) Cont.
- Country presentation by participants
- 15:30–16:00 Coffee/tea break
- 16:00–17:30 2) Cont.
- Country presentation by participants
- 3) *Plan future forestry development— the FOWECA approach*
- Presentation by FAO
 - Discussion
- 18:30 Reception hosted by FAO

Tuesday 28 September

- 09:00 – 11:00 4) *Adapt to changes— country experiences*
- Presentation on Hungarian experience
 - Presentation on European experience
 - Discussion
- 11:00 – 11:30 Coffee/tea break
- 11:30 – 12:30 5) *Anticipating future forestry development—trends and issues*
- Presentation by FAO
 - Discussion
- 12:30–14:00 Lunch
- 14:00–15:30 5) Cont.
- Group exercise
- 15:30–16:00 Coffee/tea break

- 16:00–17:30
- 5) Cont.
 - Group exercise
 - 6) ***Think beyond country boundaries—thematic outlook studies***
 - Group discussion to identify and prioritize topics/issues for the thematic studies

Wednesday 29 September

Field Trip to Hungarian forests

Thursday 30 September

- 09:00-10:00
- 6) Cont.
 - Group discussion and sharing the results
- 10:00-10:30
- Coffee/tea break
- 10:30-12:00
- 7) ***Define future forestry development in your own country—preparation of country outlook paper***
 - Presentation by FAO
 - Discussion
- 12:00-13:00
- 8) Wrap-up session
 - 9) Closing
- 13:00-
- Lunch
- 19:30-
- Farewell Party hosted by FAO