



MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENTS

DID YOU KNOW?

SOCIAL



Mountains cover 24 percent of the world's surface and 12 percent of the world's population in 120 countries. They are also hotspots of cultural diversity and cultural heritage. In the Hindu Kush Himalaya region alone, it is estimated that people speak over 1000 different languages and dialects.

ENVIRONMENT



Mountains are also important water reservoirs, storing water in the form of glaciers (which are shrinking in most regions), snow, wetlands, lakes and sub-surface deposits. Supplying about 50 percent of all fresh water, mountains are of strategic importance for agriculture, food security and biodiversity. Mountains are also very biodiverse, as just climbing a 100 meters mountain slope can offer a climatic variety equal to travelling 100 km across a flat terrain.

ECONOMY



Mountain tourism accounts for 15-20 percent of the world's tourism industry, amounting up to an estimated USD 70 to 90 billion per year.

GOVERNANCE



Since 2002, the 11th of December has been officially designated as International Mountain Day (IMD), addressing a different theme each year. In 2012, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Mountains 2002, the theme of IMD will be sustainable mountain development.



**International
MOUNTAIN DAY 2012**
SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT

The International Mountain Day is an opportunity to create awareness about the importance of mountains to life, to highlight the opportunities and constraints in mountain development and to build partnerships that will bring positive change to the world's mountains and highlands. The International Mountain Day builds on the efforts of national committees in 78 countries and alliances such as the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions, known as the Mountain Partnership. Currently, 50 countries, 16 intergovernmental organizations and 130 Major Groups are members of the Mountain Partnership. FAO is mandated to lead observance of the International Mountain Day.



WHY DO MOUNTAINS MATTER FOR SUSTAINABILITY?

- More than half of the world's population, from mountains to downstream population, relies on freshwater coming from mountains for drinking, cooking and washing, irrigation, hydropower, industry and transportation.
- One way to reduce the number of hungry people living in mountain areas - 80 percent live below the poverty line and an estimated 300 million are food insecure - is to empower them to protect mountain ecosystems and to promote stability in mountain regions.
- Mountain products are vital for reducing poverty. For example, tea has been one of the main mountain export items for many developing countries, such as Sri Lanka, India, China, Kenya and Turkey. In addition to cultivation, tea-picking and processing have provided job opportunities to millions of people in tea-growing countries. The same applies to coffee, saffron, rice, berries, medicinal plants and other products.
- Billions of people depend upon mountain food crop and medicinal and aromatic plant diversity for survival. Such diversity is particularly important today, as rare seed collected from the mountains, from once-forgotten crops, could help us adapt to climate-stressed times.



HIGHLIGHT

MULTIPLE BENEFITS OF PROTECTING LOCAL MOUNTAIN FORESTS IN NEPAL

In 2009, the Forest Carbon Trust Fund (FCTF) was established to improve governance for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) at the community level. The pilot project has conceived and established a payment system for sequestering carbon in Nepal's community-managed forests. Carried-out in three watershed districts of Nepal, the project covered an area of over 10 000 hectares, involved 105 community-managed forests and provided benefits to 18 000 households. The participating districts were chosen in part because of their conservation work and in part for the inclusion of women, victims of caste-based discrimination, indigenous communities and other disadvantaged groups in community forestry user groups.

To protect local mountain forests and increase forest carbon stocks, the project has:

- introduced alternative energy technologies, such as biogas and improved cooking stoves;
- supported the plantation of tree seedlings in the community and on private forest lands; and
- established improved grazing and forest fire management systems.

Calculations made by the community forestry user groups on changes in forest carbon stocks over two years indicated that a total of nearly eight million tonnes of carbon had been sequestered. The FCTF has distributed USD 100 000 among the participating communities on the basis of their performance.

The FCTF is an initiative by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), collaborating with the Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal (FECOFUN) and the Asian Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources (ANSAB). It is partly supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation's Climate and Forest Initiative.





PRODUCERS

- Help re-green mountains, choosing indigenous plants that preserve biodiversity and expand forests.
- Enhance irrigation efficiency and prefer traditional crops that produce more using less water.
- Choose mountain crops to buy carbon credits; these can be resold on the global market to benefit the community.

CONSUMERS

- Eat nutritious, locally grown food when visiting mountains.
- Opt for ecotourism when travelling and respect the environment.
- Purchase organically grown mountain products, such as coffee and rice.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

FOOD INDUSTRY

- Source and process more mountain products, as they add a healthy offer to the food basket.
- Promote mountain products and services as a brand of choice for environmentally-aware consumers.
- Engage into development projects rewarding mountain people for their stewardship services.

POLICY-MAKERS

- Facilitate public-private partnerships for mountain protection, including clean energy, sustainable forest management, environmentally-sound agriculture, sustainable tourism and floods and natural hazards' mitigation.
- Create an enabling environment for the promotion of high-quality natural products from mountain areas and facilitate small producers direct access to markets.
- Trigger international funding mechanisms and private sector participation into sustainable mountain development at the global, regional, national and community levels.

RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

- Improve understanding of the drivers of change affecting mountain regions.
- Promote the collection of disaggregated data from mountain areas as the basis for informed decision and policy-making.
- In the context of climate change, increase efforts to monitor glaciers and runoff patterns in mountain areas, in order to assess future water availability and impacts on lowland areas.



The Mountain Partnership is a voluntary alliance of partners dedicated to improving the lives of mountain people and protecting mountain environments around the world. It addresses the challenges facing mountain regions by tapping the diversity of resources, knowledge, information and expertise, in order to stimulate concrete initiatives at all levels.

For more details: www.mountainpartnership.org