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LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

THIRTIETH SESSION

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Forests in the SDGs (Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management)

Secretariat note

I. Introduction

1. In September 2015, United Nations Member States adopted a new global framework for sustainable development: 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. This is a universal, inclusive and comprehensive plan that contains perspectives and responsibilities reflecting the priorities and needs of all countries. The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, to be achieved by 2030. The different objectives and targets are integrated and indivisible and balance the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability.
2. The 2030 Agenda recognizes the importance of sustainable food systems and new ways of working on land and managing natural resources to build a viable future for humanity, and constitutes a general framework to align management and governance at the territorial level, leaving no one behind.
3. Goal 15 that refers to terrestrial ecosystems relates forests with two indicators: coverage and sustainable management. In line with the SDGs, the 2050 vision for forests and forestry adopted by the XIV World Forestry Congress in Durban (South Africa) in 2015, points out that forests are essential for food security, improvement of the quality of life and generation of jobs and income, and represent an important part of the solution to problems related to climate change and its mitigation, and which, when managed in a sustainable manner, increase ecosystems' and societies' resilience. Experience shows that forests, when properly managed, not only have enormous potential as contributors to food security, human health and livelihoods, but also provide important ecosystem services, such as soil protection, climate and water cycles regulation, conservation of biodiversity, and are the home of numerous species of animals and plants. In addition, forests offer options for reducing the carbon footprint and alternatives for a more sustainable consumption.
4. Forests are relevant for most SDGs. Forests contribute to the elimination of poverty and improve livelihoods by providing income estimated in USD 125 billion just from informal forest products production (Goal 1). Forests also contribute at least 3.6 million tonnes of animal protein each year and a variety of micronutrient-rich foods from forests such as wild meat, fruits, vegetables, tree nuts and seeds, medicinal plants (Goals 2 and 3). Sustainable forest management plays a key role in the provision

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of clean water: watersheds and wetlands are estimated to supply 75% of the world's accessible freshwater to meet domestic, agricultural, industrial and ecological needs (Goal 6). Wood energy accounts for more than half of the energy supply in at least 29 countries and about 2.4 billion people use wood fuel for food preparation (Goal 7). Forests also provide a source of raw materials for at least 1.3 billion people living in houses with floors, ceilings or walls made of forest products, what is relevant to promote a debate on sustainable consumption and production (Goal 12). Although agriculture and deforestation account for about a quarter of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from human activities, forests are an essential solution to problems related to climate change and the mitigation of and adaptation to its impact, since sustainable forest management increases the resilience of ecosystems and communities, allowing the storage of carbon and, at the same time, provides other ecosystem services (Goal 13). In spite of their important roles, the quantification of these contributions continues to be a challenge due to the considerable information gaps.

5. Goal 15, together with Goals 6, 7, 11 and 12, will come to prominence in the 2018 High-Level Political Forum: 'Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies'. This Forum, held annually, is the global mechanism for reviewing and monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

II. Indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals related to forests and monitored by FAO

6. According to COFO 2016, forest data will directly contribute to monitoring progress of 12 SDG targets and 13 forest-related indicators, as per list in Annex I. These indicators mention forest or forest products or refer to clean technologies, cleaner and more sustainable supply chains, or reduced CO₂ emission per unit of value added, where forest products can be part of the set of outcomes to be accounted for. In addition, forests contribute to most of the SDGs through the improvement of rural livelihoods and socio-economic conditions of forest dependent communities as well as more sustainable consumption patterns and options to reduce carbon footprint. The collection of forest socioeconomic data can improve overall quality of indicators, including in-kind income and increase of forest products use in value chains.

7. FAO was designated a custodian agency¹ with responsibility for monitoring 21 SDG indicators, including three indicators of Goal 15: (i) 15.1.1 Forest area; (ii) 15.2.1 Progress towards sustainable forest management; and (iii) 15.4.2 Mountain Green Cover Index. In addition, FAO committed to collaborate with indicators related to degraded lands (15.3.1) and fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources benefits (15.6.1).

8. The information in Indicator 15.1.1 comes mainly from the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA), which FAO produces every five years since 1990. The available information corresponds to 234 countries and territories and the quality of information has progressively improved, as more and more countries have fresh information on their forests based on forest inventories.

9. Measuring and monitoring progress towards sustainable forest management (indicator 15.2.1) is more complex since the current sub-indicators may not be sufficient to fully reflect the progress made towards achieving sustainability in all three dimensions.

10. The Mountain Green Cover Index (15.4.2) is an indirect indicator designed to measure vegetation changes in mountainous areas - forests, shrubs and farmland. In addition to providing information on

¹ Custodian agency is responsible to collect data and source of national information to report at global level, to develop and document methodologies, contribute for the development of reporting capacities on statistics and coordinate with other relevant actors. The complete list of indicators under FAO responsibility can be find on page 14 of the publication "FAO and ODS. Indicators: Monitoring 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6919s.pdf>.

progress towards conservation and the ability of mountain ecosystems to fulfil their ecosystem functions, it is also relevant for target 6.6 on the protection of water-related ecosystems and target 15.1 on conservation, restoration and use of terrestrial ecosystems.

III. Challenges towards sustainable forest management in the context of Agenda 2030

Promote dialogue on enhanced reporting

11. Over the last decades, the vision of sustainable forest management has evolved towards a broader and more inclusive concept, with greater emphasis on its contribution to sustainable development. Hence, forest management is increasingly conceptualized and practiced under a comprehensive and multipurpose ecosystem view, with an integrated approach and multiple use, looking toward sustainable efficiency and a provider of a broader variety of good and services and integrated to other alternatives of land use and production systems. In this context, it is essential to promote dialogue on definitions and terms related to forests and forest resources to keep up with the evolution of the same and support the policies and actions related to forest and land management in a timely and effective manner.

12. In the light of the methodologies, technologies and tools available in the short and medium term, this dialogue should include stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in forest management, along with the multiple forest management objectives and the various goods and services provided by them. This must also consider the rights and visions of local communities; the provision of ecosystem services, such as genetic resources and biodiversity, carbon sequestration, water quality and regulation, erosion control, soil fertility, cultural identity and traditional knowledge, among others; its contribution to the adaptation and mitigation of climate change; the status of natural forests and their remnants; and the particularities of primary forests and forest plantations.

Monitor progress towards sustainable forest management

13. The effort to monitor progress towards sustainable forest management (Indicator 15.2.1) is not new. FAO, in collaboration with the main forest partners, has been working on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management through several initiatives, among which the project ‘Strengthening criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and its use in forest policies and practices’² and the regional project ‘Exemplary cases of sustainable forest management in Latin America and the Caribbean’³, both finalized in 2016.

14. While these and other initiatives made substantial contribution to the methodological proposal developed by FAO for indicator 15.2.1, which, to date, includes change in forest cover and carbon stocks, area designated to biodiversity conservation and area under forest management plans as sub-indicators, there are still challenges to their appropriate measurement and monitoring, especially due to the complexity of assessing forest management sustainability in economic, social and environmental terms. To face these challenges, it is essential to support processes to define and agree on criteria and indicators at the national level to generate sound and country-managed information, including but not limited to the global indicator system of SDGs and current global assessments and statistics. This could lead to the development of reliable and chronologically coherent sources of information.

Strategic alliances as a basis for intersectoral action

15. Sustainable forest management, integrated and sustainable food production require strategic alliances and inclusion of all productive sectors in the territory: agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries. This approach requires a mutual understanding and better dialogue and collaboration between

² More information on <http://www.fao.org/forestry/ci/88504/es/>.

³ Exemplary cases published on <http://www.fao.org/alc/file/media/pubs/2010/casejes.pdf> and <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6003s.pdf>

different sectors that depend on ecosystem services, including the private sector and civil society. It also requires the consolidation of institutional mechanisms and capacities and strategic alliances and partnerships (Goal 17) to adopt effective measures that reflect a more integrated vision of the rural environment and consider reciprocal trade-offs and synergies among the different productive sectors.

Agreement on basic principles to promote SFM and its contribution to the ODS

16. To achieve the transition towards sustainability, an enabling environment is required through policies, institutional structure and intersectoral governance. In keeping with the same, FAO proposes five interrelated principles as a common framework to support dialogue on policies and sustainability-related issues: (1) Improve efficiency in the use of resources; 2) Conserve, protect and improve natural resources and ecosystems; (3) Improve and protect livelihoods, ecosystems and human well-being; 4) Strengthen the resilience of people, communities and ecosystems; and, 5) Promote and leverage effective governance. An appropriate measurement of these indicators will allow countries to measure the progress for the implementation of this goal and its contribution with others.

IV. Points for consideration

17. The Commission may consider to:

- Recognize that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires the adoption of a much more comprehensive approach to sustainable development than in the past and that forests and sustainable forest management contribute significantly to the achievement of SDGs.
- Invite countries to strengthen sustainable management of both forests and agriculture, livestock and fisheries and their integration into land use plans to achieve the SDGs, food security and address climate change;
- Request FAO support to strengthen cross-sectoral dialogue and coordination to achieve SDGs in countries, highlighting the role of forests in intersectoral policies;
- Request FAO support to promote enhanced and consistent reporting on forests.
- Request FAO support to enable the countries to improve analysis and used of forests and ecosystem services data, with the view to support the SDGs implementation.

Targets and indicators related to forests (the list is not exhaustive)

<p>Target 2.3</p> <p>By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment</p>	<p>Indicator 2.3.1 (under responsibility of FAO)</p> <p>2.3.1 Volume of production per labour unit by classes of farming/pastoral/forestry enterprise size.</p>
<p>Target 6.6</p> <p>By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.</p>	<p>Indicator 6.6.1</p> <p>Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time.</p>
<p>Target 7.1</p> <p>By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services</p>	<p>Indicator 7.1.2</p> <p>Proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology.</p>
<p>Target 7.2</p> <p>By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.</p>	<p>Indicator 7.2.1</p> <p>Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption.</p>
<p>Target 9.4</p> <p>By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities.</p>	<p>Indicator 9.4.1</p> <p>CO2 emission per unit of value added</p>
<p>Target 11.c</p> <p>Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials</p>	<p>Indicator 11.c.1</p> <p>Proportion of financial support to the least developed countries that is allocated to the construction and retrofitting of sustainable, resilient and resource-efficient buildings utilizing local materials.</p>
<p>Target 15.1</p> <p>By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.</p>	<p>Indicator 15.1.1 (under responsibility of FAO)</p> <p>Forest area as a proportion of total land area</p>
<p>Target 15.2</p> <p>By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally</p>	<p>Indicator 15.2.1 (under responsibility of FAO)</p> <p>Progress towards sustainable forest management.</p>
<p>Target 15.3</p> <p>By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.</p>	<p>Indicator 15.3.1 (FAO as a contributor agency)</p> <p>Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area.</p>
<p>Target 15.4</p> <p>By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development.</p>	<p>Indicator 15.4.1</p> <p>Coverage by protected areas of important sites for mountain biodiversity.</p> <p>Indicator 15.4.2 (under responsibility of FAO)</p> <p>Mountain Green Cover Index.</p>