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منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة للأمم  
المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of the  
United Nations

Organisation des  
Nations Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones Unidas  
para la  
Alimentación y la  
Agricultura

# COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

## TWENTY-FIRST SESSION

Rome, Italy, 24-28 September 2012

### Country Analysis of some Key Aspects of FAO Forestry's Work - Findings of the survey conducted during the 2011-2012 sessions of the Regional Forestry Commissions

#### I. Introduction

1. In order to help prioritize FAO's work and enable the Organization to make more informed recommendations, especially for the attention of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) in 2012, country representatives at each of the recent regional forestry commission (RFC) meetings were invited to provide their views on key aspects of FAO Forestry's work. Where possible, participants were interviewed and a questionnaire completed by the interviewer; when interviews were not possible, the questionnaire was sent to countries. Responses were recorded in numeric form (using a scale of 1–5, with 5 indicating very high satisfaction and 1 indicating very low satisfaction) and as free text – whereby countries were able to express their views in more detail. The template for the questionnaire is attached in Annex 1. Several countries belong to more than one RFC, but countries were counted only once in the analysis – in the region in which FAO operational coverage is provided.

2. The number of responses per region included in the analysis<sup>1</sup> is: African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC) = 15; Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) = 19; European Forestry Commission (EFC) = 20; Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission (LACFC) = 15; Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC) = 11; North American Forestry Commission (NAFC) = 3. Overall, about 50 percent of the total membership of all RFCs was included.

#### II. Main findings

##### General remarks

3. Some questionnaires were completed through interview, allowing a detailed discussion of the questions. In other cases, respondents filled in the forms without such discussion, allowing more room for individual interpretation of the questions. This difference may have had a bearing on responses.

4. The survey garnered diverse responses, and where possible trends and patterns have been identified. The responses represent a very broad range of views and no specific regional patterns were

<sup>1</sup> Four responses that were received late (from Ghana, Mali, Niger and Nigeria) were not incorporated in the analysis. They did not differ significantly from other responses.

observed, although responses do suggest that certain regional priorities exist. In the Asia-Pacific region, for example, there is particular interest in the provision of support to small island nations and other small countries. In NEFRC there is interest in and a focus on dryland and desert issues, while members of the AFWC showed greater interest in wildlife. Responses from members of LACFC covered a wide range, but there was notable discussion on regional synergies and the need for the Commission to interact with other key players in the sector, including rural communities, universities and the private sector. Responses from the commissions in North America and Europe were more about how to better provide assistance to developing countries.

### **Detailed analysis**

Question 1 obtained the country, name (optional), organization and position of the respondent.

### **Question 2: Areas of the regular programme that need improvement**

5. For the work under the regular programme, the average score from 81 respondents was 3.9 (range 3.8–4.2). The highest satisfaction with FAO's work was in the EFC and LACFC regions. Countries identified several areas of the regular programme as needing improvement.

6. Both capacity building and technical assistance at the country level were recommended, particularly in the areas of community forestry, climate change and poverty alleviation, climate change mitigation, extension work and education. The further provision of guidelines and recommendations, especially on monitoring, reporting and verification for REDD+, was identified as useful. Cross-cutting issues, along with watershed management and soil conservation, were identified by countries in all regions. Countries also saw great value in information-sharing and experience exchange among countries, and indicated that these should be encouraged and assisted where necessary.

7. Several countries identified a need to improve statistics, although no details were provided on what needed to be improved or how. Increased support to countries, especially for mapping and geographic information systems, was considered important to ensure more accurate data for the global forest resources assessment (FRA), and some respondents also considered that independent remote sensing would help to improve accuracy and verification. Some countries in the European region suggested the presentation of a clearer linkage between costs, products and results.

### **Question 3: Areas of project work that need improvement**

8. For project work, the overall score from 69 respondents was 3.7 (range 3.4–4.3). The highest satisfaction with FAO's project work was recorded in the EFC and LACFC regions<sup>2</sup>. The lowest satisfaction with project work came from AFWC and NEFRC.

9. Overall, countries proposed that a more strategic approach was needed in project identification, planning and prioritization. They indicated that capacity building and technical assistance should be more field-oriented and less theoretical, and there should be further development of technical guidelines. The sharing of experiences and information among experts was seen as valuable and should be further encouraged. More attention was requested on forest and landscape restoration; non-wood forest products (NWFPs) and their protection; community forestry; and sustainable development.

### **Question 4: Future development of country cooperation with FAO**

10. Country cooperation with FAO Forestry was reported as 'increasing' by 61 percent, 'stable' by 30 percent, and 'decreasing' by 8.5 percent of respondents. Several countries stated that their level of cooperation may be influenced in the future by resource constraints. Eighty percent of respondents in the LACFC and NEFRC regions reported 'increasing' cooperation. The region with the most marked decrease in cooperation with FAO Forestry was AFWC, with 20 percent of respondents reporting a decrease.

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<sup>2</sup> Note that there were fewer responses from EFC on project work (12) than on the regular programme (20), as little project work is undertaken in the EFC region.

11. Some countries reported that other organizations are easier to collaborate with. It was noted that FAO needed to adjust its strategy and priorities of work according to changing circumstances; however, there was no elaboration on the nature of these changing circumstances.

**Question 5: As a global organization dealing with forestry, does FAO play the role that you expect it to? (This question is intended to learn whether FAO plays the role it should, based on its mandate, strengths, comparative advantages and what other international organizations do in forestry.)**

12. The extent to which FAO plays the role that countries expect of it scored an average response of 3.7 from 80 respondents. The range of average scores between regions was 3.4–4.1, with the EFC region giving the highest rating.

13. Countries described FAO as having increased responsibility in global forestry issues and an important role as a leader in networking at the global and regional levels. It was suggested that FAO should increase the profile of forestry in the international agenda, be an anchor for international policy and the RFCs, and give more visibility to forestry.

14. Respondents felt that FAO could help to better align, prioritize and address global forestry issues, and to broker between policy-makers and scientists. FAO has a strategic role as a technical “anchor” in international forest policy (e.g. at the United Nations Forum on Forests). FAO has significant global and regional roles, providing two-way communication between global and regional interests (e.g. the RFCs). FAO also has an important role to play in providing linkages to and synergies with other sectors, such as agriculture.

15. As chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), FAO needs to be a key facilitator of efforts to increase cooperation and effectiveness and reduce overlaps and duplication in the work of CPF members. Some members of the EFC and NAFC suggested that the CPF is not used effectively and that FAO, as lead, is not playing a strong-enough role. No suggestions were made as to how this could be improved, however.

**Question 6. Do you perceive any gaps in FAO’s current forestry work (Y/N)?**

**(This question intends to contribute directly to identifying areas of emphasis or de-emphasis in the Organization’s programme and budget. Considering the current work areas, the intention is that gaps be identified and areas listed that should receive more or less attention in the future.)**

16. Overall, 68 percent of respondents – 100 percent of respondents in the NAFC region and 80 percent in the LACFC, NEFRC and AFWC regions – perceived gaps in FAO’s current programme of work.

17. **Gaps in current FAO Forestry work that need to be emphasized.** Several points made here reflect responses to other questions. Capacity development – i.e. education and training, institutional strengthening and extension – was one gap identified. Cross-sectoral gaps included the need to create linkages and integrate approaches through outreach to other sectors, particularly in watershed management, sustainable land management and forests and food security. Other gaps were sustainable livelihoods and forest community development, the contribution of forest management to food security, the impact of agricultural expansion on forests, and proactive work with stakeholders and civil society.

18. Gaps pertaining to sustainable forest management included the importance of biodiversity for resilience and the production of goods and services; integrating sustainable forest management into other agendas (e.g. climate change, agriculture and rural development); support for strategies of adaptation of forests to climate change; REDD+, particularly in the context of SFM; and identifying values for carbon.

19. Other important areas that required more attention were the provision and valuation of forest ecosystem services; soil conservation; value and production of NWFPs; forest inventory; commercial forest products; forest industries; and sustainable production and consumption.

20. **Areas that should be de-emphasized.** Some countries suggested that the focus should move away from carbon to the multiple role of forests. Some commented on the number of unnecessary meetings and workshops. It was suggested that, in some cases, collaboration rather than direct involvement may be needed. Some respondents felt that too much attention was being paid to climate change, for which the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change already existed.

**Question 7: Statutory bodies – whether they respond to countries’ needs, and areas that need improvement**

21. Respondents were generally satisfied with the main statutory bodies. COFO scored an average of 3.6 from 75 responses and the RFCs scored 3.7 from 78 responses.

22. According to respondents, FAO needs to improve its communication with member countries regarding its statutory bodies. It should follow country recommendations for reporting and provide more support for the participation of countries in FAO statutory and expert bodies. There needs to be better in-country coordination with FAO representatives.

23. **COFO – areas that need improvement.** It was proposed that the Organization’s flagship publication, *State of the World’s Forests*, should be available six months prior to COFO so that issues raised in it could be discussed at COFO.

24. It was suggested that COFO meetings need to be more dynamic and involve more interaction among participants. It was also suggested that FAO could involve heads of forestry in a substantive and influential way, whereby they could engage in detailed discussions of FAO activities related to the management and conservation of forests. It was suggested that a portion of COFO meetings could be devoted to in-depth discussion of specific FAO Forestry activities and the options and opportunities for going forward.

25. It was suggested that more systematic and thorough reporting should be used both by countries and FAO on how the requests and recommendations made at COFO sessions have been followed up.

26. **RFCs – areas that need improvement.** It was suggested that RFCs should be careful to avoid overlap with activities carried out by other international bodies.

27. Materials need to be published earlier on the website. It was suggested that observers should have more chances to speak, and that FAO should increase the payments made to support delegates, in line with other agencies.

28. Countries saw a need to encourage regional synergies through increased exchange of regional experiences in forest plantations and industry; and focus on how forestry can contribute to improving livelihoods. Recognizing that FAO cannot be involved in every forestry issue in a region, it was proposed that during RFC meetings FAO should encourage members to prioritize needs.

**Question 8: Overall satisfaction with FAO’s work in forestry**

**(Note: this is a synthesis of previous responses, indicating the overall satisfaction with FAO’s work in forestry. Few textual responses were received for this section.)**

29. The average overall satisfaction with FAO’s work in forestry was 3.9 (range 3.7–4.2) from a total of 77 respondents. There was little difference between regions. The highest satisfaction with FAO’s work was in the EFC and LACFC regions.

30. Communication efforts should ensure that the results of FAO work reach all stakeholders. FAO should place more emphasis on concrete actions and the transfer of knowledge. There is a need to better exercise the catalytic role of FAO and to stimulate dialogue between countries.

31. FAO is regarded as a prominent institution in forestry, especially in regards to global statistics, data analysis and FRA. FAO is also good at collaborating with other institutions. The voluntary guidelines it produces through such collaboration contribute to improved practices. More thought should be given to encouraging countries to use and implement such guidelines.

### III. Conclusions

32. The survey obtained useful information from countries on what they perceive as being important for the FAO forestry programme in the near future. There was considerable positive feedback about the role of FAO Forestry, as well as proposals for improvement.
33. A challenge for FAO is to find a balance between its focus on the core forestry matters of sustainable forest management, and a potentially greater role in emerging issues (e.g. climate change, tenure, forest governance, and water). In every region, capacity building and communication were identified as the areas most in need of improvement.
34. Respondents indicated that greater support for capacity building, institution building, training and knowledge transfer was required, and that this should be responsive to the needs of countries. FAO should further address cross-cutting issues that link to other sectors; for example, it could do more to highlight the role of forests in providing ecosystem services that are essential for agriculture, food production and livelihoods; and the importance of integrated approaches, including watershed management.
35. Communication in all forms was seen by many respondents as a high priority, in particular the production and distribution of information. Areas where improvements in communication are needed include the website (both layout and content); the distribution of publications (some constituents do not receive publications or do not hear about them); the ways and means of packaging information for other sectors; the better dissemination of information regarding achievements and highlights; and more proactive and efficient communication to policy-makers and decision-makers.
36. While appreciating the good technical guidelines that have been produced to date, respondents indicated that FAO should continue to produce such informative and useful tools.
37. Some countries requested that FAO Forestry keep its core focus on forest conservation and sustainable forest management and should not be distracted by the emerging issues of climate change and REDD+; and that FAO should not over-extend itself by trying to cover every forestry issue and create new mechanisms that do not relate to its key strengths. Conversely, other countries requested the opposite – that FAO play an increasing role in emerging issues (climate change, tenure, governance and water). Others suggested that such emerging issues should be considered in terms of the core focus on sustainable forest management.
38. Overall, respondents generally agreed that FAO should maintain sustainable forest management as its core rationale, while increasing the cross-sectoral visibility of forests. There was a range of views on the extent to which FAO Forestry should be involved, at the international policy level, in issues such as food security, agricultural expansion, climate change, governance, tenure and water.
39. The 21<sup>st</sup> session of COFO provides an excellent opportunity to review the findings of this survey, together with the results of the evaluation of FAO's role and work in forestry, and to make full use of them in discussing the programme priorities for FAO Forestry in the coming biennium.

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**ANNEX :**  
**COVER LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE**

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Dear Colleague, [or person]

In preparing for the next biennium and the meetings of the FAO governing bodies in forestry we would like to conduct a small satisfaction survey to help better prioritize our work and make more informed recommendations especially for the attention of COFO in 2012. For this purpose we have developed a questionnaire, or rather an interview template that could be used on the occasion of the meetings of the Regional Forestry Commissions to collect your views on some key aspects of FAO Forestry's work.

Unfortunately it was not possible to interview you in person during the recent session of the European Forestry Commission, so I would like to take this opportunity to share with you this template and ask your kind response to it at your earliest convenience. Since it was designed to support an interview, let me provide a little more background on the questions.

In Question 2 we would like to get your views on our regular programme. The list of issues is just an indicative one highlighting some of the key areas, but the focus of this question is everything we do in the programme. After indicating your level of satisfaction, please give us ideas on which areas would need further attention, where improvement would be needed.

In Question 3 we try to obtain similar information but now with specific focus on non-regular programme, i.e. project activities in developing countries.

Question 4 asks your views on the development of your countries cooperation with FAO, and a brief explanation on the likely reasons for whatever direction this cooperation takes.

Question 5 aims to learn whether in your views on whether FAO plays the role it should based on its mandate, strengths, comparative advantages and what other international organizations do in forestry. You are also invited to indicate areas where improvement would be needed or possible.

Question 6 intends to contribute directly to identifying areas of emphasis and de-emphasis. As you may recall, this is one of the most important input from COFO and through it the Regional Forestry Commissions, to developing the Organizations programme and budget. You are invited to identify gaps in the current work and list area which would deserve more or less attention in the future. Of course this question cannot replace the relevant discussions at COFO but could serve as a strong material for preparing supporting documentation for those discussions.

In Question 7 the emphasis is on the statutory and expert bodies. The list is indicative and you are kindly invited to mention any other body whose work you consider relevant and evaluate the performance of these bodies identifying where their performance could be improved.

Question 8 should be seen as synthesis of all the previous responses where the overall satisfaction level is expected to be identified.

Let me inform you that we have conducted several interviews during the EFC and APFC sessions and found the discussions extremely helpful and informative. I truly miss this opportunity for a personal interaction with you but I would encourage you to be as elaborate and detailed in the response as you can and please use as much space as needed. Also, I am more than happy to be at your disposal to discuss further the questionnaire, either over the phone or if you see an opportunity for a personal encounter in the near future.

I look forward to receiving your valuable input.

**Questionnaire: SURVEY ON FAO FORESTRY ACTIVITIES**

(Please note that on the scale 5 represents the highest level of satisfaction. In case of textual responses please feel free to use as much space as needed and label the text by using the question's serial number.)

## 1. Your

Country

Name (optional)

Organization

Position

2. Satisfaction with FAO's normative work in forestry (e.g. statistics, FRA, guidelines, policy advice, capacity building, thematic/technical workshops, statutory meetings, publications, web, communication, etc.)? (1-5):

Indicate areas of improvement

3. Satisfaction with FAO's project work in developing countries? (1-5):

Please indicate areas of improvement

4. Is the interest of your country regarding cooperating with FAO in forestry increasing, decreasing or stable)? (I, D, S):

Please explain the reasons briefly

5. As a global UN organization dealing with forestry, does FAO play the role that you expect it to? Please rate its performance (1-5):

Indicate areas of improvement

6. Do you perceive any gaps in FAO's current forestry work (Y/N)?:

Which thematic areas should be emphasized?

Which thematic areas which should be de-emphasized?

7. Do statutory and expert bodies respond to your country's needs? Please evaluate their performance (1-5)

Statutory/Expert Body	Mark
COFO	
RFC	
Poplar Commission	
...	
...	

Indicate areas of improvement

8. Overall satisfaction with FAO's work in forestry? (1-5):