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AFRICAN FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION
NINETEENTH SESSION
THIRD AFRICAN FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE WEEK
WINDHOEK, REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA 30 September - 4 October 2013
Theme: Development of the Forest and Wildlife Sectors for effective contribution to Food Security and a Green Economy in Africa
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF FORESTRY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Background

1. In 1964, FAO established an Advisory Committee on Forest Education (ACFE) that operated until 1997, when the FAO Conference decided to reduce the number of advisory committees within FAO. The abolition of the ACFE occurred in parallel with a decline in FAO activities relating to forest education.
2. Despite this, the 2010 and 2011-2012 FAO Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs) and attendees at COFO sessions (1999, 2005 and 2010), the XIII World Forestry Congress in 2009, have called upon FAO to re-establish its forest education programme, potentially through an enlarged project portfolio. At COFO21, in 2012, members requested further information on the modalities and financial implications for the establishment of a possible Advisory Panel on Forest Knowledge (APFK).
3. This note provides an overview of activities to further FAO Forestry's education initiatives globally and steps taken to establish an APFK to promote education and knowledge initiatives worldwide.
4. FAO is tasked to provide highest quality technical output. Working at the frontiers of knowledge requires close collaboration with research institutions. In forestry, despite close collaboration with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) institutes (including the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)), International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), the European Forest Institute (EFI) and various others, there are many education institutions that remain outside FAO's

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reach. A more institutionalized and focused approach would result in more valuable research-based information inputs to FO's work and added-value to forestry initiatives around the world.

5. Recent feedback from educational experts and stakeholders suggested FAO to seek further feedback on its potential approach to forest education, research and knowledge work. Taking into consideration that various regional networks of forest education already exist and the limited staff resources, FAO activities in education could be carried out through an enlarged project portfolio and coordinated at the global level, including through the possible APFK.

6. In this connection, an Advisory Panel seems crucial in order to coordinate guidance from the main regional stakeholders regarding complementarities and the value added that FAO could contribute in the fields of forest education and knowledge. The excellent experience of a similar body, the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest Industries (ACFSI), encourages FO to take action in this field and form an advisory panel drawing on expertise in global forestry education and research.

Meetings and Concept Development

A. 20th session of the Committee on Forestry

7. To explore the above concepts, an informal meeting of education and knowledge experts from a variety of institutions was called in October 2010, on the fringes of the 20th session of COFO. Representatives from several research and education organizations as well as FAO offices attended to informally ascertain support for the proposed APFK; agree on its scope and mandate; agree on short and mid-term actions; review the list of proposed members in order to avoid overlaps and significant gaps; and decide on further steps (e.g. next meetings). General support for the concept of an APFK was expressed by the majority of participants. They agreed that the overall purpose of the body, with FAO acting as the Chair, would be to act as a catalyst for forest education and research programmes, projects and other activities at the global and regional levels, building on the unique strengths, existing priorities, and comparative advantages of forest-related organizations and institutions.

8. Participants agreed that FAO should seek support for the APFK from its member countries and various regional stakeholders during the coming 2 years, noting that its general purpose would address two complementary aspects 1) education and 2) research to coordinate efforts on global and regional projects, programmes and research. Participants agreed that FAO should explore the possibility to convene short parallel meetings focusing on regional issues. The FAO Legal Office has also been asked to provide guidance for the appropriate short- and long-term arrangements to be followed for the establishment of the proposed new panel.

9. The APFK and broader education programme would rely on regional networks and would communicate via electronic means as a way to enhance connections and strengthen inputs to this centralized process. It is proposed that the new APFK could meet every two years on the occasion of COFO and/or regionally with the Regional Forestry Commission meetings. Members of the APFK would be from regional and/or global networks and limited membership would allow efficient meetings and strong commitment while ensuring broad representation. Proposed members could include: IUFRO; CGIAR; the International Partnership for Forestry Education; the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions; the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation; the Latin American Forestry Education Network; the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry, and Natural Resource Education; Silva/ICA in Europe; CIFOR; ICRAF; EFI; the International Students Association; the African Forest Forum; the Association of Forestry Deans; the University of British Columbia; and other networks of regional forest professionals associations and country-based institutions.

B. Follow-up meetings in 2012-2013

10. Following education and research related presentations and side events at COFO21, draft operational guidelines for the proposed APFK were disseminated to educational experts and other stakeholders. In Istanbul, on the fringes of UNFF10, a small group of experts provided initial feedback on the draft APFK operational guidelines and further information on trends in the forest education field. Participants at the meeting agreed to hold meetings at the regional level to gauge interest in the APFK, identify forest education and research trends and gaps and to receive feedback on the operational policy guidelines.

11. The first regional meeting was held on the fringes of the IUFROLAT Congress in San José, Costa Rica in June 2013. The over 35 participants at the meeting agreed that an APFK could support needed decisions and coordinate in an efficient manner issues related to the forest profession and other pressing education issues in the sector. They agreed FAO should focus on undertaking diagnostic analysis on the demand for forest expertise in the sector, facilitate and/or create a platform for information exchange and on-line education in needed subject areas, and examine the subject areas that would be needed to undertake future forest careers so that academic programmes can respond appropriately.

Points for consideration

12. Based on the strong networks of forest education institutions and groups that exist globally, the Commission could discuss ways to strengthen forestry education and knowledge initiatives in the region, drawing on recent studies and other information from regional groups such as the African Forest Forum.

13. The Commission may wish to endorse the roles of the APFK. The setting should favour the establishment of joint projects with countries and partner organizations.

14. The Commission may also wish to consider where and how forestry education and research can contribute to the implementation of FAO's new Strategic Framework in general and to the Strategic Objectives in particular.

15. The AFWC may further wish to discuss the membership and operations of such a permanent advisory body as outlined in the draft APFK operational guidelines (attachment 1) and its potential for Africa.