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NORTH AMERICAN FOREST COMMISSION

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SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT (SFM) TOOLBOX

Summary

- The aim of this note is to give an account of activities related to the development of the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Toolbox. While SFM is an important aspect and component of sustainable development, progress towards SFM has been slow. The body of knowledge and experiences on SFM are quite diverse, not always easily accessible and components are oftentimes focused on one or another specific aspect of SFM. This paper introduces the concept of an SFM Toolbox to better respond to the needs and recommendations from member countries in support of SFM implementation. It presents the status of development and the next steps in the preparation of the Toolbox, and requests further guidance from the Commission.

Introduction

1. FAO's principles on SFM implementation are based on the *Forest Principles*[1] stated in Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 that was adopted at the UNCED (1992) and the Non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (NLBI) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2008[2].

2. FAO follows the UN General Assembly in recognizing that SFM, "as a dynamic and evolving concept, aims to maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental values of all types of forests, for the benefit of present and future generations".

3. FAO's support to SFM implementation builds on forestry that is people-centred, embracing participatory processes and gender equality. Interactions with other sectors and the critical roles that forests and trees play in soil and water conservation, climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, as well as a key source of bioenergy, in a landscape management approach are also well recognised together with the significant contributions of forests and trees to food security, sustainable livelihoods and eradication of poverty.

[1] A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. III) Non-legally binding authoritative statement of principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.
[2] A/RES/62/98 Non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests.

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4. SFM is applicable in all types of forests and embraces management for different purposes such as production, protection, conservation, or a combination of multiple objectives (multipurpose forest management).

5. Despite positive trends over the past decade, progress towards sustainability in managing forests is still limited, particularly in developing countries. The underlying causes are mainly due to weaknesses in capacity and lack of enabling conditions to implement SFM.

6. There is a considerable body of collective knowledge and experience which can be shared and adapted to local conditions to facilitate progress towards SFM. However, this knowledge and these experiences are not always available and accessible at the forest management unit and land use planning levels. In addition, there has been an increase in requests by member countries for technical support to facilitate progress towards SFM.

The SFM Toolbox

7. FAO is developing a comprehensive technical package of knowledge tools, best practices, processes and their examples of application to facilitate the implementation of SFM under varied contexts, hereafter referred to as the *SFM Toolbox*.

8. The target audience for the Toolbox are primarily forest managers, who are actively involved in managing forests within national forest services, as well as land use planners interested in the role of forests in sustainable development, and those who support them including civil-society organizations and non-governmental organizations and private sector associations.

9. The concept of the SFM Toolbox was presented to the Committee on Forestry (COFO) in September 2012. The Committee "requested FAO to further develop the content of the sustainable forest management (SFM) toolbox, including educational materials, voluntary guidelines and communication platforms, to support countries, where requested, in their efforts to implement SFM, while avoiding overlap and duplication and taking into consideration national and regional needs, approaches and processes"[3]. The FAO Management Response to the Strategic Evaluation of FAO's Work in Forestry (2012) also stressed the need for the SFM Toolbox.

10. The SFM Toolbox has the following objectives:

- Increase capacities to effectively implement SFM by providing practical SFM-related knowledge, tools and experiences at local and landscape levels.
- Support forest managers and other stakeholders in progressing towards SFM in a more integrated and cohesive way, with solutions tailored to their specific needs, contexts and major areas of interest, while taking into account the general socio-economic and environmental contexts in which their SFM action is developed, offering a more comprehensive approach to achieving SFM.
- Connect the different areas of FAO expertise related to SFM to facilitate integration of SFM in a landscape approach to natural resources management.
- Identify and address knowledge and tool gaps, as well as possible incoherencies and conflicts.

11. The SFM Toolbox will consist of a web-based platform that is user-friendly, interactive and responsive to user's interests and needs. It will include:

- *Knowledge modules* on specific areas of interest of the beneficiaries, comprising (i) an overview of basic knowledge; (ii) links to related tools; and (iii) links to SFM cases/examples.
- *A database of SFM tools*. Existing tools will be collated, arranged in an easy-to-access, living database. When necessary, the tools can be further developed so as to continuously build and update a cohesive package to support SFM.

[3] COFO 2012/REP para 19.

- *A database of SFM cases*, using SFM exemplary cases in member countries.
- *Guidance* for national, sub-national and local SFM planning to advance its implementation.

12. The scope of the Toolbox is global (for all types of forests); however it will be an evolving set that will also include regional and national SFM resources.

13. The Toolbox will make use of knowledge references, tools and cases produced by FAO, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, other partners and Member countries.

Process and current status

14. A concept note has been prepared identifying possible cases for the Toolbox, the expected outputs and impact, the main features of the Toolbox and a work plan.

A task force, including FAO staff in Headquarters and in Decentralized Offices, has been created to support the development of the Toolbox.

The Toolbox so far comprises:

- SFM tools, cases and other references that are being collated in a database. This work is expected to be continuing and evolving, as new resources and experiences become available.
- A web-platform for the Toolbox, which is currently under development using a few demonstration *user cases* and *knowledge modules*. Several more of these cases will be developed to populate the Toolbox.

The Toolbox is expected to be introduced at the 22nd Session of COFO (June 2014) and to go live in September 2014.

15. Usability tests will be conducted to measure the efficiency, applicability, accuracy and relevance of the Toolbox. Potential users will be randomly selected from Member countries as well as partner organizations who volunteers to participate.

Points for consideration

16. The Commission is invited to discuss the concept and provide guidance on the further development of the SFM Toolbox. Specifically, the Commission may wish to recommend thematic priorities to be included in the Toolbox, provide suggestions for *knowledge modules* as well as specific tools to be included such as guidelines, codes of practice, technical sourcebooks, manuals, capacity development, and educational/dissemination materials.

17. The Commission may wish to provide guidance on the implementation of the Toolbox.

18. The Commission may wish to discuss how the SFM Toolbox can enhance the efforts of Commission members in the implementation of sustainable forest management.