

Forest management at the XII World Forestry Congress

This issue of *Unasylva* brings together a sampling of the finest contributions about forest management from the XII World Forestry Congress. Organized once every six years under the auspices of FAO, this congress is the most important forestry event held in the world. The twelfth session was held from 21 to 28 September 2003 in Quebec City, Canada, with the theme “Forests: source of life”. More than 4 000 people from 137 countries participated.

Under the three thematic areas – Forests for people, Forests for the planet and People and forests in harmony – a total of 1 036 voluntary papers, 32 invited papers and 456 posters were received from throughout the world. The solid technical programme was structured around ten plenary sessions, 38 theme sessions, poster sessions and 115 side events. Innovations with respect to preceding congresses included ten ecoregional sessions followed by round table discussions, and six open fora.

The theme of forest management was covered under all three thematic areas. Almost all of the contributions in this issue are adapted or extracted from papers prepared for and presented at the congress; these are identified by a small congress logo on their title page. Papers were selected that have not been published in full in the congress proceedings.

“Sustainable forest management” and the “ecosystem approach” were among the many terms used to describe current forest management concepts and practices at the World Forestry Congress. The first article in this issue, by S.M. Davey, J.R.L. Hoare and K.E. Rumba, describes how Australia has incorporated the principles and operational guidelines of the ecosystem approach into its institutional arrangements for sustainable forest management. A short piece on p. 6 describes the similarities and differences between the two concepts.

Increasing attention is being given to the use of criteria and indicators for measuring progress towards sustainable forest management. Three articles describe efforts to put criteria and indicators into practice. E. Grinspoon, M. Delfs and P. Brouha describe their use at the national level, in strategic planning for forestry in the United States. The other two articles provide examples of the use of criteria and indicators at the management unit level: P.C. Dolom describes how they were used to assess the sustainability of a community-based forest management project in the Philippines, and C. Luján Álvarez, J.M. Olivas García and J.E. Magaña Magaña describe the development of a four-tier system of principles, criteria, indicators and verifiers,

tested in a model forest programme in Mexico. Also included are shorter pieces on the use of arthropods and epiphytic ferns as indicators of forest disturbances, and on indicators of soil disturbances.

The next group of articles addresses participatory aspects of forest management. A. Akumsi describes a wildlife management strategy in Cameroon that involves local communities. M. Headley presents a pilot programme in Jamaica in which local forest management committees were organized to involve communities in the utilization and management of forest reserve lands. Q. Lai provides suggestions for learning from experiences in community management of protected areas in southwestern China.

The next article considers forest plantations within an overall forest conservation and management strategy. C. Messier, B. Bigué and L. Bernier propose designating forest areas in Canada for varying objectives, from super-intensive wood production to full protection. Such a strategy might make it possible to increase protected areas while maintaining the country’s high wood production levels.

C. Laurent describes management measures promoted by the government of Wallonia, in Belgium, which are intended to help increase the resilience of forests to environmental changes while boosting the contribution of forests to climate change mitigation.

The last article, the only one of the longer contributions not written for the World Forestry Congress, deals with management primarily for wood production. L.K. Snook and co-authors describe experiences in Mexico’s community forests which are creating a foundation for sustainable harvesting of mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) from natural forests. This article is especially timely given the entry into force in November 2003 of Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) – in which mahogany was listed in 2002.

The XII World Forestry Congress highlighted the many and varied ongoing efforts – and some of the constraints – for improving forest management practices around the world. The Final Statement called for the development and dissemination of methodologies for assessing, reporting and managing the complete array of forest products. It called for action to manage forests and intensify forest landscape restoration and rehabilitation activities to support livelihoods, increase forest cover, enhance biological diversity and functionality, and minimize the impact of invasive alien species. Participants made a commitment to encourage collaborative partnerships involving women, forest owners, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, local communities, industry and public agencies. ♦