



▶ NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMMES



▶ RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

▶ GUIDING PRINCIPLES



▶ SUPPORT TO NFPS

Asia-Pacific *forestry focus*

ADDRESSING THE FORESTRY NEEDS OF ASIA-PACIFIC COUNTRIES AND
SOWING SEEDS FOR SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

National forest programmes

The concept of “national forest programmes” (nfps), among the most important outputs of the post-Rio forest policy dialogue, constitute the first commonly agreed concept in pursuit of sustainable forest management.

The term “national forest programmes” designates the wide range of approaches to the process of planning, programming and implementing forest activities in a country to be applied at national and subnational levels, based on a common set of principles (see below). National forest programmes embrace a cycle of policy-making, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review. The process is further characterized by an open and

transparent planning, consultation, negotiation, communication and learning. They provide an overall framework for country-specific approaches to sustainable forest management by guiding and streamlining existing activities and programmes. On that basis, countries are encouraged to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate national forest programmes in accordance with their national sovereignty and specific local conditions.

In the Asia-Pacific region, 22 countries are implementing nfps; some are at the planning phase, while others are in the process of revising and updating them.



Recent achievements:

- production of national forest programmes - *update 34 for Asia and the Pacific* in 2000, a review of the status of the national forest programmes in the region;
- strengthening the participation of civil societies and multi-stakeholder participation, and developing national forest statements (Indonesia), establishing a forum for forest policy analysis and implementation (Pakistan), completion of two district-level nfp exercises and development of draft nfps strategic planning document (China) and drafting forest strategies (South Pacific Countries);
- development of national strategic plan for implementing community-based forest management in the Philippines;
- development of a forest policy for Vanuatu and a review of the country’s forest legislation;
- completion of a forest policy for Timor-Leste and initiation of country’s forest legislation;
- familiarizing countries in the concept of national forest programmes (Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand).



Guiding principles

Guiding principles give direction to national forest programmes and are designed to improve the flow of multi-stakeholder benefits from forest management.

National forest programmes (nfps) are an integral part of the Proposals for Action developed by the processes of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF). The IPF urged recipient countries to establish country-driven national forest programmes that include priority needs and that serve as an overall framework for forest-related policies and actions. The IFF encouraged countries, in accordance with their national sovereignty, specific country conditions and national legislation, to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate nfps, which include a wide range of approaches for sustainable forest management.

At present, nfps are guided by basic principles endorsed by IPF and reaffirmed by the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). These principles can be broadly grouped into three clusters:

1. National sovereignty and country leadership

2. Consistency within, and integration beyond, the forestry sector

- integration with the sustainable development strategies of the country
- consistency with the constitutional and legal frameworks of each country
- recognition and respect for traditional and customary rights of indigenous groups, local communities, forest dwellers and forest owners
- secure land tenure arrangements

3. Partnership and participation

- establishing effective partnerships
- coordination among all interested parties
- appropriate participatory mechanisms
- effective coordination and conflict-resolution mechanisms
- regional and international cooperation for exchange of information, technology and know-how

National Forest Programme Facility



Launched in late 2002, the National Forest Programme Facility is an innovative partnership among developing countries, international donors and FAO to support implementation of national forest programmes. Under a partnership with selected countries, the Facility offers technical support for increasing civil society participation in forest management, multi-stakeholder dialogues, and strengthening capacities in formulation and implementation of policies. The Facility also provides services to strengthen effective implementation of nfps by sharing experiences and knowledge world-wide through electronic information platforms and supporting specialist networks.

FAO's support to national forest programmes in Asia and the Pacific

FAO provides technical assistance and advisory service to member countries that have started developing nfps. The support to nfps includes:

- creating awareness of the nfps, and how they can lead to development of appropriate forestry policies, plans and strategies;
- conducting workshops, seminars, and other fora to enhance their implementation;
- strengthening institutional capacities of forestry authorities and units;
- improving civil society participation in policy decision making and implementation;
- training activities in forestry policy analysis, formulation and implementation; and
- conducting studies and surveys on relevant policy and institutional issues.



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