

## COVID-19 Forestry Webinar Week, 22-25 June 2020

### Building back better: COVID-19 pandemic recovery contributions from the forest sector

#### Chairperson's Summary report

## I. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic affects forests and forestry in many ways. Businesses are disrupted along almost all value chains. People are losing jobs and income, and some migrate back from urban to rural areas. There is also an increased risk of further deforestation and degradation of natural resources from which people make their living causing long-term negative consequences to producers and society.

As forests act as safety nets for the most vulnerable members of society, providing food, subsistence and income in times of scarcity and thereby increasing resilience to shocks such as the current one, forestry and forest-based sectors have a key role to play in providing solutions to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## II. Objectives and programme of the week

The objectives of the COVID-19 Forestry Webinar Week were to:

- Assess impacts of pandemics on people and forests;
- Identify and discuss possible responses that help mitigate impacts on people and forests and help address the situation in the short term while at the same time contributing to building a more resilient and sustainable future;
- Propose follow-up steps, including policy dialogue and mobilizing of resources and action that better enables the forest sector to help rebuild sustainable and resilient societies.

The Week was opened by representatives from FAO, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the CBD Secretariat and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

The Week featured two high-level dialogues. A Heads of Forestry Dialogue focused on COVID-19 impacts – main issues, response needs and opportunities to build back better. A Partnership for Development Dialogue focused on COVID-19 responses: how to integrate forestry in recovery support measures: providing jobs, income and building the basis for a more resilient and sustainable future.

Seven thematic sessions were structured around three main themes: (i) Mitigating impacts on forest-dependent people and recovery support to enhance their resilience; (ii) Mitigating impacts on forests and restoration as a means to enhance ecosystem and community resilience; and (iii) building back better, including through legal and sustainable value chains.

More information including the detailed programme, speakers and links to documents are available at: [www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofo/covid-19-forestry-webinar-week/programme/en](http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofo/covid-19-forestry-webinar-week/programme/en)

### III. Participation

The COVID-19 Forestry Webinar Week attracted between 200 and 400 participants each day including country representatives, representatives of UN agencies, international governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, academia and individuals with interests in forestry. Participants interacted during the sessions through the Q&A and chat functions of the meeting platform zoom.

Panelists from 6 governmental institutions, 4 UN agencies, 2 intergovernmental organizations, 15 non-governmental organizations and 4 private sector institutions contributed to the dynamic discussions.

### IV. Key findings and messages

This chapter summarizes the key findings and messages of the two high-level sessions (A and C) and the thematic sessions (B).

#### A. Heads of Forestry Dialogue: COVID-19 impacts – main issues, response needs and opportunities to build back better

The Heads of Forestry Dialogue was moderated by Stewart Maginnis, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Panelists were the Heads of Forestry or Director level representatives of Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, South-Africa; National Institute of Forest Science, Korea; the Comisión Nacional Forestal (CONAFOR), Mexico; the Federation of Community Forestry Users of Nepal (FECOFUN), Nepal; and the Federation of Associations and Practitioners of Second Timber Processing (FECAPROBOIS), Cameroon.

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In preparation of the Heads of Forestry dialogue, FAO undertook a short survey amongst the Heads of Forestry bodies globally, conducted in three languages. Heads of Forestry of thirty countries responded to the survey. Some of the main results were presented at the start of the Dialogue, including:

a) the majority of respondents reported that the focus of work on forest sector aspects changed remarkably with COVID-19 and 60% replied that their organization is developing a response plan to COVID-19 related to the forest sector.

b) most frequent response measures already undertaken or agreed as forest sector related country responses were awareness/information campaigns on the risks of COVID-19 and measures to continue operations, e.g. support to community based associations/ farmer associations, grants or subsidized loans for informal enterprises and self-employed and/or tax exemptions for small and medium forest enterprises. Measures frequently considered also include technical and other support to continue essential activities, e.g. work permits for planting, harvesting, support to community based associations/ farmer association as well as enhanced monitoring of encroachment, deforestation and forest degradation.

The most frequent measures still under consideration at the time of the survey in early June 2020 were short-term public works schemes (employment-intensive works e.g. restoration or planting) as well as enhanced monitoring and law enforcement against illegal exploitation and trade. Support to access markets and stabilize supply and trade (legal, logistical, public purchasing or similar measures) were at that stage not likely to be considered by most respondents.

c) More than half of responding countries were developing their response measures and mechanisms for the forest sector, which few countries had concluded at the time of the survey. This includes the definition and prioritization of response objectives. Most countries use existing forest sector coordination mechanisms to respond jointly with partners to the crisis. About half of the countries have started to assess the impacts of the pandemic on the forest sector, while a majority had still to consider monitoring systems to evaluate impacts of stimulus measures.

d) In most countries the forest sector is somewhat or fully engaged in the national COVID-19 response, is represented in national response coordination bodies and engaged in the development of broader governmental response measures and stimulus plans and their implementation and assessing/collecting data on impacts, vulnerabilities and risk. In about half of the countries the forest sector is also engaged in the One Health platforms, where these exist.

A short presentation of the results of the survey can be accessed at:  
<http://foris.fao.org/cofo/api/file/5ef20bea3ecce7250220818a/f4116be4-c9d6-4d0f-8fe2-5b2b42176fec.pdf>.

### **Key findings of the Heads of Forestry Dialogue**

The pandemic's impact on jobs is caused by different factors such as increased prices of materials and reduced demand for products which are forcing a reduction in employment opportunities. Up to 40% of income from forest products has been lost in some cases. Related jobs impacted are connected with tourism (which incentivizes forest conservation and sustainable use) and with added-value industries, mostly steered by local communities. Many communities are seeing people returning to their localities and although that puts additional pressure on natural resources it also provides an opportunity to utilize the skills of people returning who have knowledge that is relevant to work the land and use the forest strategically.

Many of the issues that existed before the pandemic were exacerbated as a result of it. Examples of such issues are: illegal logging (due to diminished surveillance actions from the government and pressure to access cheap resources, lack of interest to invest in certified industries), persistence of drivers of deforestation (inside and outside forests), lack of a holistic vision of the landscape that embraces forests and agriculture in a cross-sectoral manner. This will remain a challenge if the forest sector is not considered as an essential part of the recovery responses. It is critical that action and partnership-building occurs at different levels starting, most importantly, with forest communities and local government.

### **The way forward**

The panel suggested that solutions need to be innovative and depart from the traditional views of the forest sector in order to respond to the global health crisis. What is needed are new models that connect nature with health, resilience and sustainability. The Republic of Korea for instance is introducing information and communication technologies (ICTs) to reinvent forest

surveys and management, drawing the interest of younger generations to the sector. This is coupled with the design of products and services from forests with high added-value and generated with the use of technologies. A specific application of this vision is being formulated in the interface of forest and public health where investment in forest landscapes are made to benefit peoples' physical and physiological health. The concept of healing forests and forests to improve peoples' immunity can draw investments to protect, restore and manage forests. At the same time, this vision will generate a new field of experts, creating jobs.

Building back better also calls for the involvement of youth and actively generate opportunities and the enabling conditions for their career development. Youth needs to be included in activities across the sector starting with building capacity and knowledge to become valuable contributors to activities of management, monitoring, and enterprises.

Agroforestry represents a bridge between forests and agriculture. This has allowed the expansion of tree products beyond timber and production outside forests onto private land. It is key to provide additional support to community groups and smallholders in order to solidify their capacity to be entrepreneurs and to become integrated into the value chain. Producer organizations are key partners of governments in this regard.

## **B. Thematic sessions**

The key findings along with the key messages presented in this section are structured around the three main themes of the Week: (i) Mitigating impacts on forest-dependent people and recovery support to enhance their resilience; (ii) Mitigating impacts on forests and restoration as a means to enhance ecosystem and community resilience; and (iii) building back better including through legal and sustainable value chains.

More information including the detailed programme, speakers and links to documents and presentations are available at: [www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofo/covid-19-forestry-webinar-week/programme/en](http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofo/covid-19-forestry-webinar-week/programme/en).

### **i. Mitigating impacts on forest-dependent people and recovery support to enhance their resilience**

#### **Forest Communities**

Research is starting to show clear links between deforestation, forest degradation, climate change and emergence of infectious diseases. There is a need to maintain healthy and diverse forests and agricultural ecosystems to prevent emergence of new diseases.

Forest communities especially located near disturbed forests are particularly at risk of being exposed to these diseases. At the same time, they are least able to cope with and control the spread of disease. They face a diversity of simultaneous challenges including basic livelihood insecurity, precarious land and resource rights that are critical for their survival, food and nutritional insecurity, loss of income due to lockdown, lack of access to health care, lack of access to government social protection measures, and lack of access to information especially through digital modes. Women, youth, elderly, the indigenous people, pastoralists and others are even more vulnerable.

COVID-19 seriously exposed the need for government-run Social Protection systems that include: i) Social assistance such as cash transfers, food distribution, voucher assistance for non-

food essentials and VAT reduction; ii) Social Security in the form of rapid disbursement of funds, support for those losing jobs especially informal; and iii) Social Health Insurance such as free medical testing, access to quarantine facilities and free treatment.

Social protection and other schemes noted above need to be extended to forest communities and other vulnerable people. These programmes should consider complementary programming that includes subsidies across forest value chains, and provision of universal health coverage and other health packages including subsidies for the forest workers who become sick or unemployed.

Meanwhile, there is evidence from many countries globally that natural resource conflicts increased during the lockdown, between governments and private sector on the one hand and communities on the other. Countries with weaker forest governance are seeing increases in forest fires, illegal logging, illegal land grabbing of community lands, and conflicts over land and forest use.

Resilient forests and communities will depend on maintaining the appropriate balance between the environment, the climate and the people. The COVID-19 experience shows that resilient communities (e.g. with secure land and forest rights, ability to govern forests, and having incomes from forest products) were able to invest in health care, livelihoods and employment generation activities during the pandemic in the absence of government support. They were also able to prevent the spread of disease by using customary practices to enforce self-isolation and protective measures. Communities lacking secure rights and access to forests faced (and continue to face) serious livelihood-related distress and were less able to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### **Small-holder family farmers**

Small-holder family farmers and their rural communities are on the frontlines of the impacts from COVID-19 and ongoing stressors such as climate change. Impacts are differentiated according gender and levels of wealth, and Indigenous Peoples and smallholder family farmers suffer most from decreased incomes, reduced access to markets and services, increased debts, food insecurity, displacement, loss of properties, violence – especially against women - and even loss of lives.

Despite of all the challenges, these primary producers are actively responding with innovative and practical solutions through their forest and farm producer organizations (FFPOs/FOs). Recognition and action are needed that promote multi-functional interlinkages between agriculture and forestry in providing food security, employment, ecosystem services and opportunities that increase diversity of products.

Supporting and investing in FFPOs and their federations and associations at different levels to build their collective resilience may be the quickest way to reach the largest number of people in ways that will respond immediately to the pandemic while at the same time building long term resilience to other shocks including those presented by climate change.

Strong partnerships between government, FFPOs, private sector and other actors are needed in order to share solutions between FFPOs, with and from other actors.

Impacts and solutions need to be differentiated to ensure that women have equal opportunities and to account for different visions and context of Indigenous Peoples, youth and new business and land management models.

### **The One Health Approach**

Nearly three-fourths of recognized emerging infectious diseases (EID) events – of which the COVID-19 pandemic is one – are zoonotic, meaning they originate from animals. For those EIDs currently associated with forests, the proximate causal factors in their emergence include a combination of deforestation and other land use changes, increased human contact with pathogens harboured by forest dwelling animals, by humans lacking previous exposure, and pathogen adaptation. By reshaping forest boundaries, altering habitat and reducing biodiversity, growing global pressure on land and its products is increasing the risk of EIDs with important impacts on human health worldwide, and in particular, on those most reliant on forest and wildlife resources and less covered by social protection mechanisms.

Increasing evidence on emerging infectious diseases points to changes in land use, including deforestation and forest fragmentation, along with urbanization and agricultural intensification, as major factors contributing to the surge in infectious diseases, such as malaria, Ebola and many others. These land use change factors (incl. deforestation and forest fragmentation) need to become part of public health efforts.

One Health, defined as the collaborative effort of multiple disciplines to attain optimal health for people, animals and the environment, is well-positioned to examine holistically interconnections between human and forest and ecosystem health. The ecosystem health dimension of the One Health approach needs to be strengthened to effectively address some of the underlying drivers of disease emergence, such as deforestation and forest fragmentation.

There are various ways in which Ministries of Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resource Management can support traditional One Health stakeholders (Ministries of Agriculture, Veterinary Services and Health) to achieve improved health outcomes. These include i) establishing sustainable, climate smart, eco-friendly agricultural development; ii) managing wildlife farming and wildlife trade; and iii) improving food safety along the value chains, especially informal trade and marketing of wildlife.

#### **ii. Mitigating impacts on forests and restoration as a means to enhance ecosystem and community resilience**

Economic recovery efforts present an unprecedented window of opportunity to shape clean, green, healthy, safe and just societies for all people, especially the most vulnerable. Nature-based solutions offer cross-cutting answers that can positively affect every sector of our economy. An important measure that can support the continued fight against climate change and post COVID-19 recovery is integrated land-use, including forests, into our climate ambition. Countries are working at their enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), to cite an example Chile has just submitted an enhanced NDC which includes sustainable management of forests, restoration and reforestation targets, as well as peatlands.

The COVID-19 pandemic shows once again the importance of science-based policymaking. Science is essential not only to flatten the curve of the pandemic, but also to flatten the curve of deforestation and land degradation.

Promoting the rights of forest communities - especially those without land ownership - to sustainably use forests, including those impacted by deforestation, can reduce their vulnerability.

The effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the forestry sector have resulted in disruptions to business, from declining export and related revenue, suspension or cancellation of contracts by importers and increased costs of production. Additional impacts derive in some countries from scaling back of forest plantation developments, resulting from the restrictions on movement and labour activity, and stalled forest protection.

It is critical to invest in forest communities, small holders and small enterprises to form organizations or strengthen existing local institutions, which are broad-based, inclusive, well-organized and well-connected as the first and most fundamental requirement for building their resilience to cope with present and emerging challenges.

Some of the ways to invest in forest communities, reduce their exposure to risk and increase their resilience is through:

- diversification of forest products, lessening reliance on timber;
- increasing diversification from production to processing and transportation, as well as diversifying buyers and branding the products and services from forests communities;
- building the capacity of forest communities to sustainably produce value-added timber products, certified as deforestation-free, and whose legality is verified, for example through timber legality assurance systems of Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) under the EU's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan.

Ensuring the legality and sustainability of forest value chains is an essential component of any recovery strategy. Trust between governments and communities is critical, and alternative means of income generation need to be provided to communities whose vulnerability has been increased by the crisis.

Forest and landscape restoration demonstrably improve the economic resilience of smallholder farmers and producers, who are collectively the world's largest economic sector.

The use of data and science is needed for innovative solutions to COVID-19, climate change and sustainable forest management. These create an opportunity to demonstrate that efforts to address climate change and improve legality in the forest and land-use sector are effective tools that need to be central to economic recovery and can be used to support the integration of forests in recovery packages and green development going forward. Strong systems to monitor forests have been developed and piloted, through VPAs with national timber legality assurance systems, and through REDD+ initiatives.

Utilizing all available levers to enable green recovery, through integrating climate and forest agendas in financial stimulus packages, will help in rebuilding a better post-pandemic

world. To maintain and enhance climate commitments, the continued fight against climate change should be considered as part of the design of countries' policy responses in a way that they are transformative and that lead to a paradigm shift away from unsustainable development patterns. This should include efforts to halt deforestation, strengthening legality, mobilizing carbon investments as well as redirecting conventional investments into deforestation-free production and consumption systems.

### **iii. Building back better - legal and sustainable value chains**

#### **Forest products**

Forest products have been critical in the COVID-19 response providing personal protective equipment, and other supplies and services, including hygiene and sanitary products, biomass for heating, ethanol for sanitizer, respirator paper and packaging for parcels. In order to continue the uninterrupted supply of these products, the forest sector has been appropriately recognized in many parts of the world as an essential service.

FAO's Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries (ACSFI) asserts that a sustainable forest sector lies at the heart of COVID-19 recovery plans that seek to build back better. Indeed, there is now a unique chance to substitute high fossil fuel-based products with those from renewable resources.

The pulp and paper market has remained relatively steady throughout this period. Solid timber and value-added markets including exports of plywood and sawn timber has been significantly affected although those impacts will become more obvious in the upcoming trade figures.

In some countries (e.g. Gabon) the forest sector has been declared an essential service so it could continue operating but from an operational perspective it has had significant negative impacts (e.g. transport, logistics, protective/prevention material, forest administration availability). Markets have also been heavily impacted.

Continued support is required for sustainable forest management plans particularly as sustainable forest management is more and more demanding and costs are rising without being reflected in the price of wood.

To build back better in a post-COVID world, the forest sector can contribute to prosperous green economies through the sustainable use and production of forest products that ensure the livelihoods of millions. Indeed, there is now a unique chance to substitute high fossil fuel-based products with those from a renewable resource. In developing countries particularly, assistance may be required to ensure that producers can continue to produce timber in a sustainable way and meet the requirements of sustainable forest management.

#### **Survey results: COVID19-related impacts on wood value chains and contributions to #buildbackbetter**

The Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World Initiative (SW4SW), a joint initiative of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests – the CPF –, in its role of building knowledge and exercising advocacy to support sustainable wood value chains, conducted a survey to assess the impacts of the pandemic on forest businesses and livelihoods. A total of 237 responses were

received, of which 152 were complete responses (64%). The majority of respondents were from the private sector (24%), government (23%) and academia (20%). The full survey results are available at: <http://foris.fao.org/cofo/api/file/5ef49fb43ecce72502208331/af51af89-cb2a-4218-a84d-6f3fb6752bfa.pdf>.

68% of respondents are extremely or very concerned about COVID-19 impacts on wood value chains. Since January 2020, the biggest challenges faced on wood value chain across all segments are disruptions in workforce, operations and finance. More specifically, businesses have been significantly impacted including the permanent layoffs of workers in silvicultural activities, logging and trading which may have a longer-term impact on the production and quality of forests, sustainable forest management (SFM), and associated wood products enterprises. Related to this, half of the respondents think that COVID-19 will reduce the financial resources for SFM.

Most frequently adopted short-term measures and strategies by businesses to face the immediate impacts from the pandemic are remote working, information and communication on adaptive measures for employees, customers and suppliers and monitoring compliance with health and safety guidelines from national competent authorities. However, overall, only around 10% of respondents report having taken such measures yet.

Regarding medium-long term strategies to promote recovery of activities of businesses, the most frequently considered option is the adoption of digital technologies (26%), followed by resource efficiency (12%) and improved health facilities/health care in operational sites (10%).

More than 35% of respondents indicated promotion of SFM for wood production as the most relevant measure, considering the role of wood products in the circular economy and climate change mitigation. All respondents believe that a combination of measures should be considered in building back better.

Exploring the role of forestry in poverty alleviation and generation of employment is a clear message from the #SW4SW stakeholders to #buildbackbetter. The integration of smallholders, communities and small and medium scale forest enterprises (SMFEs) in sustainable supply chains, including by horizontal and vertical integration is considered the most effective approach. Increased ecosystem services and generation of employment through investments in forest restoration/tree planting, comes close as second most effective approach. As third most effective approach respondents selected provision of support, including technical assistance, to sustainable forest management for production and integration forest-agriculture, as means to reduce deforestation.

### **Key messages for forest businesses and livelihoods**

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity to help actors to get organized and promote more inclusive, integrated, diversified and shock resilient value chains. An effective approach in moving forward is the horizontal and vertical integration of smallholders, communities and SMFEs in sustainable supply chains.

Businesses across different segments of the wood value chain are in the frontline for solutions. Despite facing challenges from significant impacts experienced, private sector respondents and Forest and Farm Producers Organizations (FFPOs) have implemented changes to respond to the crisis. Businesses are strongly considering the adoption of medium-long term

strategies to promote recovery of activities, such as quality and social standards and improved health standards along the wood value chains, opportunities for employment generation and increased educational programmes for workers. Such measures will enhance community resilience to future pandemics and to economic, social and environmental disruptions.

The use of sustainable wood products has a crucial role to play in building back better, especially considering efforts to promote a circular economy and enhance climate change mitigation in the post-COVID-19 environment. The promotion of sustainable forest management for sustainable wood products can enable the forest sector to access international support and financing for COVID response for targeted action.

### **C. Partnership for Development Dialogue: COVID-19 responses: how to integrate forestry in recovery support measures: providing jobs, income and building the basis for a more resilient and sustainable future**

The Partnership for Development Dialogue was a panel of experts from World Agroforestry (ICRAF), the European Commission, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Tropical Forest Alliance of the World Economic Forum moderated by FAO. The panel discussed how forest-related measures and initiatives can be integrated effectively in efforts to support COVID-19 recovery that, at the same time, support strategic adjustments towards a more resilient and sustainable future, in line with Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement.

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### **Impacts on forests and forest impacts on COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic is just one of several crises taking place simultaneously. It adds to the ongoing crises of biodiversity and habitat loss, climate change, social conflicts and inequity. Forestry is influenced and influences all these crises.

The pandemic can be framed as a choice between economic prosperity and human health. This is a conflicting choice showcased by the economic loss accepted by countries instituting lock-down measures to safeguard public health. Now is the time where we need to move from the survival to the revival phase considering ecosystem functions. This means that ecosystem functions need to be preserved or improved while the economy recovers from the crisis.

Human health and the health of the planet are strongly interlinked, this realization has a huge impact on the political thinking planning for the revival phase. The growing awareness of the need for sustainability is one of the most promising opportunities deriving from the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is revealing the unsustainability of the development path of the past decades.

Reverse migration from urban to rural areas has significantly increased the pressure on forests and other ecosystems. Trade and supply chains were disrupted, and ecotourism

opportunities were lost - both severely affecting forest communities and the most vulnerable people.

Another consequence of the health and economic crises were weakened environmental regulations. Often environmental regulations are still seen as an add-on, with economic health being seen as disconnected from environmental health.

Climate change is a destabilizing factor underlying all recent developments and responses to the pandemic. The conviction that ecosystem integrity plays the key role in keeping society healthy and on a path of prosperity needs to be strongly advocated. The weakening of ecosystem services has been shown to lead to zoonotic diseases and natural disasters. The priority of building back better should be rebalancing nature with society needs.

### **Responses to address immediate needs, problems and challenges**

Investment to enhance both biodiversity and economic welfare is key in responding to the pandemic. Another priority is natural capital investment for ecosystem resilience and restoration. Some ideas from UNDP for the way forward are: aligning green recovery with the climate pledges (NDCs); scale-up the UN-REDD programme to help countries to create COVID-19 recovery projects; scale-up digital technologies for climate financing and climate action (e.g. Alipay Ant Forest model, CedarCoin in Lebanon, debt for nature or debt for health swaps).

The convening power of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) members and other partners needs to be mobilized for a quick and technical response. The evidence, research and expertise regarding forestry's role in recovery lies with CPF members. The CPF can connect forest actors with those engaged in development work building on the coping mechanisms of communities. Forests can be a safety net, but they can also be degraded and exploited, if not managed well. The increased impacts of urban to rural migration due to the pandemic should not lead to a decrease in areas of high carbon storage and high conservation values.

The EU responded very fast to the pandemic with a global COVID-19 response package of 36 billion Euro to deal with the health and economic crises. In addition, a pledging campaign mobilized money for vaccine development and testing. Many of the EU measures were meant to provide countries with fiscal space to allow them to react rapidly with the liquidity needed. The response package is aiming at a green, just, sustainable and digital recovery. Building back better is applied in all sectors as well as in the EU Green Deal to foster a green transition and future.

The World Economic Forum has a series of reports on the new nature economy and the pathways for businesses to be part of the transition to a nature-positive economy. Ecosystem resilience is key to deal with environmental shocks. Six ideas should be the basis for our way forward: (1) measure the right things, don't base all analysis on GDP; (2) better spatial planning; (3) getting the incentives right, there are far too many subsidies for the destruction of nature still in place; (4) renewable energy is an integrated part of every green recovery plan but forests are not, this needs to change; (5) investment in human capital, farming and forestry need to be attractive for the youth; (6) leverage private finance to forestry solutions.

## **V. Recommendations and outlook**

### **A. Heads of Forestry Dialogue: COVID-19 impacts for the forest sector**

It is going to be key to address the global health crisis by revitalizing models of relation with nature. A more comprehensive approach across the value chain, focusing on the most vulnerable groups is required. Closer collaboration with the health sector is needed to ensure a safe manner of returning to work in the forest industry that does not jeopardize rural communities.

Transition to a territorial focus (rather than sectoral) and comprehensive planning that actively restores forests and includes multisectoral approaches which can be sustained in the long term would be necessary. Direct connections between these actions and the contributions to global commons like climate change and biodiversity should be established.

### **B. Thematic sessions**

The recommendations presented in this section are structure around the three main themes of the Week: (i) Mitigating impacts on forest-dependent people and recovery support to enhance their resilience; (ii) Mitigating impacts on forests and restoration as a means to enhance ecosystem and community resilience; and (iii) building back better legal and sustainable value chains.

#### **i. Mitigating impacts on forest-dependent people and recovery support to enhance their resilience**

##### **Forest communities**

Given the link between climate change and emerging diseases, it is imperative to strictly control legal and illegal deforestation and forest degradation, and improve forest governance through people centered policies (that will also stabilize local livelihoods). Block or strictly regulate transportation and trade of live animals from recently (less than 2 years) deforested areas.

Promote coherent/complementary programmes with both forestry and social protection objectives. Rehabilitate deforested and degraded areas, monitor emergence and spread of pathogens, and strengthen social protection.

##### **Small-holder family farmers**

Develop and improve policies and investments that link forests to a transformation of rural economies, agriculture and food systems, building opportunities to support FFPOs in innovative and diversified landscape scale management systems, new marketing mechanisms for baskets of products, value addition opportunities for enterprises for women and returning youth, access to inputs and information, link traditional knowledge with research, improve local infrastructure.

Mobilize direct investment and finance to support FFPOs – from local savings and loans, government incentive programmes, special credit and innovative private sector investments, include FFPOs as equal partners in governance structures and funding cycles from design to evaluation, bring initiatives to the local level and to local institutions, de-risk and scale-up

smallholder investment in climate-resilient practices and innovation, and build capacity for leadership, organizational and financial management, business plan development, gender equality and empowerment of women, engagement in policy decision and tools for accessing and managing funds.

### **One Health approach**

Invest in capacity development to strengthen forest ecosystem health considerations in the One Health approach, notably: (i) by building the capacities of forestry, wildlife, and natural resource management government sectors to allow proper engagement in One Health programming and implementation, with emphasis on preventing the next pandemic; and (ii) by developing and strengthening the capacities of traditional One Health stakeholders (e.g. public and animal health) on links between forestry, habitat degradation, climate change, ecosystem and biodiversity loss and disease emergence.

Invest in a One Health country program assessment to understand what coordination mechanisms are in place and how One Health is being implemented in order to: (i) highlight gaps in One Health programming; (ii) ensure that natural resource management and wildlife sectors are adequately represented in One Health programming/mechanisms; (iii) facilitate expansion of national One Health programmes to be inclusive of drivers of disease emergence and measures to prevent future disease emergence; and (iv) facilitate proper engagement and coordination with Ministries of Forestry, Wildlife, Natural Resource Management.

Invest in interconnected, cross-sectoral, up-to-date data collection, databases and coordination mechanisms to feed information and early warning systems that support prevention and preparedness into the One Health approach. The forestry and wildlife sectors need to consult with the animal and human health sectors to identify priority data to be collected and shared to support zoonotic disease prevention, antimicrobial resistance, and food safety. Maintenance of the early warning and information systems should be kept beyond critical times.

### **ii. Mitigating impacts on forests and restoration as a means to enhance ecosystem and community resilience**

Consider climate and continued forest legality as part of the design of countries' policy responses to COVID-19, maintaining and enhancing NDCs climate commitments, in a way that they are transformative, and lead to a paradigm shift away from unsustainable development patterns. This should include efforts to halt deforestation, strengthen legality, mobilize carbon investments as well as redirect conventional investments into deforestation free production and consumption systems.

Recommendations to overcome the challenges faced by the forest sector in the post-COVID-19 period include:

- Enforce legality assurance systems, keeping harvesting within prescribed levels
- Maintain protected areas and avoid forest conversions
- Keep communities in the forest benefit sharing and policy making loop
- Forge ahead with operationalisation of the Legality Assurance System (LAS)

### **iii. Building back better legal and sustainable value chains**

#### **The global forest sector**

Build Back Better informed - support the recovery from COVID-19 with response plans and ensure that the full costs of sustainable forest management including certification are covered. Scientific data including a comprehensive understanding of the supply and demand of forest products around the world is essential to develop effective recovery plans.

Build Back Better Together - pursue a collaborative approach of all stakeholders concerned, including governments, civil society, academia, development partners and the private sector to facilitate collaboration and coordination of shared initiatives, and definitions of success that identify gaps and address deliverables. In developing countries particularly, the demands of sustainable forest management are considerable and the cost of this is not necessarily reflected in the price attained. Development agencies can assist producers to continue implementing sustainable forest management in line with the SDGs while also remaining competitive to allow the socio-economic benefits of the forest sector to be realised.

#### **COVID-19 pandemic and forest businesses and livelihoods**

SW4SW Initiative should produce additional data to better position the forest sector and sustainable wood value chains in the recovery phase and in the post-COVID19 environment e.g. through the production of fact sheets, infographics and policy briefs on the topic.

### **C. Partnership for Development Dialogue: COVID-19 responses**

Change our way of interacting with nature to avoid future pandemics. The pandemic has the potential to shift political acting towards a more integrated approach between nature, economy and health. This can also influence development work in the long term. An integrated response looking at energy supply, agriculture production, biodiversity and healthy ecosystem is required together with integrated budgets.

Education and investment into human capital focusing on equity, especially gender equity, is essential for building a zero-carbon future. People living at the margins of societies need be put in the center of recovery plans.

The tools, initiatives and frameworks already available gained new importance through COVID-19. As we enter the UN Decade on Action, we need to work harder than ever on achieving the SDGs, the Global Forest Goals, the Bonn Challenge and promote more traceable and transparent value and supply chains.

The private sector shows more interest than ever in investing in sustainable, nature-based and nature-positive solutions. This should be a priority for the forest sector. On the one hand the forest sector is often left out in climate discussion, on the other hand agriculture and food products systems, which contributed significantly to deforestation, are now ready to discuss forest-positive solutions with the forest sector.

## **VI. Conclusion**

During the COVID-19 Forestry Webinar Week participants elaborated on how to best mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and how the forest sector could contribute to post-COVID recovery. Interventions focused on how to support people, protect forests from deforestation and degradation and ensure their legal and sustainable use, thus helping to build greener economies. The central role of forests for people's health was recognized as zoonotic disease outbreaks are often related with deforestation and forest degradation. The fact that ecosystem integrity plays the key role in keeping society healthy and on a path of prosperity needs to be strongly advocated. The priority of building back better should be rebalancing nature with societal needs based on evidence and through joint action. A sustainable forest sector should be a core element of national COVID-19 recovery plans, planting the seeds for a circular economy and a green future.

The outcomes of the Week will be discussed at the 25<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on Forestry, which will be held 5-9 October 2020.