



Strengthening the Information Base for Sustainable Forest Management

THE ISSUE

The rapid pace of global changes is affecting forestry. Strategies towards forestry are also changing, becoming more people centred, with increasing recognition of the contribution that forestry can make to sustainable livelihoods and the eradication of hunger and poverty. Forests also have a crucial role to play in mitigating climate change, and in conserving biodiversity, soil and water. However, progress towards sustainable forest management is uneven and integrated, cross-sectoral approaches need to be more widely used. As the quantity of and access to information about forests and forestry continue to rapidly expand, the need to share and manage knowledge more effectively is becoming more urgent.

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests to raise awareness on sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

FAO seeks to assist member countries to generate and use information more effectively to inform and shape forest policies and practices. FAO's focus is on:

- strengthening national capacities to monitor, assess and report on the extent, condition, uses and values of forests and tree resources
- effective implementation of forest policies and responsible practices based on good information and transfer of knowledge
- strengthening capabilities of all countries to contribute to international policy formulation and to meet their global reporting obligations under the UN Framework Convention for Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and the UNFF Non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests.

National and global forest assessments to generate timely and reliable information for national policies and international agreements

THE ISSUE

Timely, comprehensive and reliable information is a prerequisite for the development of effective national policies and international agreements related to forests and forestry.

WHAT HAS FAO DONE?

As part of its mandate to “collect, analyze, interpret and disseminate information relating to nutrition, food and agriculture”, FAO has been conducting **assessments of the world's forest** at five to ten year intervals since 1946. The main report of the latest assessment was released in October 2010. See www.fao.org/forestry/fra2010. This is a unique assessment; there are no other comparative assessments of the world's forests and most of the other forest-related organizations (CBO, ITTO, UNFF, UNEP) rely on the data collected by FAO for their reports.

These global forest resources assessments have evolved over time, and now cover 223 countries and areas and all aspects of sustainable forest management. Over 900 specialists from all over the world including an active network of national correspondents and their teams in 178 countries are involved. Key outcomes are:

- 233 country reports following a standard format;
- a main report summarising the findings for 90 broad variables covering seven themes of sustainable forest management;
- policy briefs, maps and educational material.

In addition, **a global remote sensing survey** has been initiated which will provide baseline information at the global and regional level on trends in the rate of deforestation, afforestation and natural expansion of forests over the past 20 years; in addition to a global framework and commonly agreed methodology for long-term monitoring of forest area change by remote sensing; and enhanced capacity in all countries for monitoring, assessing and reporting on forest and land use changes.

There is a strong emphasis on capacity development to make the best use of existing information. Reporting format and guidelines for the global forest resources assessment are prepared in 5 languages, an initial global training workshop is held, followed by 10 regional and subregional workshops to review first draft reports and discuss any issues and by a rigorous review process. The FRA 2010 Remote Sensing Survey has built capacity through 20 subregional training workshops to enable developing countries to make use of remote sensing imagery and undertake national assessments should they so wish.

Based on new imagery from 2006 and comments received from the review process for Forest Resources Assessment 2010, **Indonesia** re-interpreted satellite imagery for 1990, 2000 and 2003 and obtained more consistent estimates of change in forest area over time.

Sudan, which had very poor data on forest area change for FRA 2005 has set up a detailed national reporting system on rates of forest loss and gains

Bangladesh, Honduras, Nicaragua and Zambia significantly improved the quality and quantity of data available for FRA 2010 compared to FRA 2005 thanks to FAO support to the implementation of National Forest Monitoring and Assessment systems in the period between the two assessments.

INPE in **Brazil** has developed a cutting-edge forest monitoring system based on remote sensing and is collaborating with FAO to support other countries set up similar systems.

Angola and Zambia have used the methods and tools developed by the remote sensing survey project to undertake national assessments of changes in forest area over time and countries in Central America are being supported by GtZ to undertake similar assessments in collaboration with FAO.

FAO also supports individual countries to conduct **national forest monitoring** and assessments to generate new and better information – including field sampling. Since 2005, more than 20 countries have benefited from this assistance. See www.fao.org/forestry/nfma for details.

The UN-REDD Programme assists selected developing countries set up national Measurement, Reporting and Verification systems to enable them to take advantage of the REDD+ scheme to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation developed under the UNFCCC.

WHAT NEXT?

Plans are currently underway for the next Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA 2015) - including processing and analysis of satellite imagery from 2010. This assessment will provide critical input to the assessment of progress of the Millennium Development Goals and the Non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (both scheduled for 2015) and a mid-term assessment of progress towards the proposed 2020 Targets of the CBD. FRA 2015 will focus on improving information on rates of deforestation, on trees outside forests and on changes in forest carbon stocks to facilitate more accurate climate change modeling, on forest biological diversity and on the links between forests, poverty and livelihoods.

An on-line reporting system will be developed which will facilitate more frequent updates on key variables (forest area, carbon stocks) and reduce the reporting burden on countries as well as streamline the current review and data compilation process.

Additional support to countries to use remote sensing tools and to implement national forest monitoring and assessment systems will also be provided, enabling them to take advantage of the REDD+ mechanism currently being established.

FRA 2015 will require an estimate US\$ 25 million over a five year period, while an additional US\$ 20 million are needed to meet the existing and expected requests for support to the implementation of national forest monitoring and assessment.

State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources

THE ISSUE

Genetic diversity provides the fundamental basis for the evolution of forest tree species and for their adaptation to change. Conserving forest genetic resources is therefore vital, as they are a unique and irreplaceable resource for the future. However, there is no global picture on the status and trends of forest genetic resources. Without better information, the capacity of countries and the international community to integrate forest genetic resource management into overall cross-cutting policies is limited.

The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) of FAO acknowledged the urgency to conserve and sustainably utilise forest genetic resources and requested that a State of the World's Genetic Resources be prepared and presented to the Commission in 2013.

WHAT HAS FAO DONE?

Over the past 10 years, FAO and international partners have supported workshops in seven sub-regions aiming to elaborate a flexible framework for national action which is valid at the regional level, and which is as consistent among regions as possible. The regional, sub-regional and eco-regional action plans on forest genetic resources which were developed in the workshops continue to serve as dynamic tools underpinning action by countries concerned. As an outcome of this process, 71 national reports have been produced and a number of country studies could also be used as reliable information sources. The FAO's global database, REFORGEN, is the result of this country-driven information gathering on forest genetic resources status, trends, priorities and threats. The regional synthesis reports prepared with the results and recommendations of the workshops also provide useful policy information.

WHAT NEXT?

The report on the State of the World's Genetic Resources will be prepared through a country-driven approach based on country reports and thematic studies, which will be modelled on, and linked to the Global Forest Resources Assessment. The Country Report process will focus on the review of existing data and the identification of gaps. Detailed guidelines for these have been prepared, which will serve as a strategic tool to guide national efforts to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources, as well as provide the basis for the global report. Countries will be encouraged to hold national workshops and/or other means for consultations with indigenous and local communities and stakeholders. FAO will support developing countries prepare their reports through :

- Technical advice and capacity development
- Support to national consultations

The draft chapters of the first State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources will be synthesized from the main inputs by qualified experts, and a review mechanism will be put in place once the draft is prepared. Opportunities for review at the country level will be through the National Focal Points. Regional consultations will be conducted as appropriate and subject to the availability of financial resources. 3 million dollars are required to support this process.

National Forest Programmes

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The term “national forest programme” (NFP) describes a wide range of approaches towards forest policy formulation, planning and implementation at the subnational and national levels. As one of the most important outcomes of international forest policy dialogue, the NFP is the first commonly agreed framework for sustainable forest management which is applicable to all countries and to all types of forests.

WHAT HAS FAO DONE?

FAO forestry supports national forest programmes in more than 70 countries through a number of mechanisms:

Capacity Building: Training materials are available on different aspects of national forest programmes, including on participation, conflict management, financing SFM, forest policy development, integrating climate change into NFPs. Several new support modules are currently developed, including on forest governance improvement and forest governance monitoring. <http://www.fao.org/forestry/nfp/43639/en/>

NFP Facility: The Facility provides targeted support to NFP processes, currently supporting 70 countries with seed money.

FAO supported the integration of climate change in national forest policies and programmes in a number of countries, including Tanzania, Cambodia, Paraguay, and South Africa. Governments were supported to bring different national climate change and forest policy stakeholders together and to decide on ways how to integrate climate change issues into policies or multi-year work programmes. This resulted in more coherence between climate change and forest policies and strategies in these countries.

WHAT NEXT?

Support to countries on integrating forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG) and reduction of deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) initiatives under coherent forest governance frameworks is currently developed. An additional 5 m\$ would be required to help countries integrating such initiatives into a more consistent forest governance framework over the next 3 years.

FAO is developing and testing ways to support countries in improving forest governance through more effective monitoring of governance performance at local and district levels. The number of countries requesting support is considerably higher than current capacities can fulfill. 4 million \$ would allow FAO to assist 6 more countries.

FAO receives a large number of requests for upscaling support and capacity development in strengthening multi-stakeholder processes to develop up-to-date and more effective forest policies and strategies. Many of these cannot currently be fulfilled due to funding and capacity limits. 6 more countries could be supported by FAO with 3 million USD.

PARTNERSHIPS

FAO works closely through several global networks. Key partners include:

- Members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF chaired by FAO)
- Global network of FRA national correspondents (178 countries)
- US Geological Survey, NASA, Google, Group on Earth Observations
- National forest monitoring and assessment focal points
- National focal points for the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources
- International Research Centres: Bioversity International, ICRAF
- Regional Forest Genetic Resources programs and networks: APFORGEN, EUFORGEN, LAFORGEN and SAFORGEN
- Partners in National Forest Programme Facility (10 donors, 70 partner countries)
- National focal points for forest sector outlook studies
- National focal points for implementation of best practices guidelines
- Regional forestry commissions

List of Resources

www.fao.org/forestry/fra2010

www.fao.org/forestry/nfma

www.fao.org/forestry/fgr

www.fao.org/forestry/nfp