

**18<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO)**  
**Agenda item 6: Forest Protection**  
**Forest Health - Plenary presentation notes**  
**G. Allard**

**Introduction to forest health**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I am pleased to introduce the forest health component of this Agenda Item. This was fully discussed yesterday during the well-attended Forum and Dialogue on Forest Health.

Despite increased awareness and efforts to protect forests, forest health problems increasingly threaten forests worldwide.

- Invasive species
- Insect pests
- Diseases

**Threats to forests**

FRA 2005 reports that the extent of forest adversely affected by insects and diseases was 68 million hectares per year, noting that many countries did not report or under-reported.

During the last few days, we have heard about two examples of extreme situations. In Canada, the mountain pine beetle is killing millions of native lodgepole pines, and the Russian Federation has reported dieback of nearly a million hectares of boreal coniferous forests.

Insect pests, diseases and invasive plants cause substantial environmental and socio-economic losses, but existing estimates are difficult to confirm.

**Impact**

What kind of impact can these biotic threats to forests pose? Outbreaks of forest pests combined with the threat of invasive species can reduce tree survival, yield and quality of forest products.

They can threaten wildlife habitat, species biodiversity, and cultural values of forests.

Health problems may also disrupt natural fire cycles and deplete water.

They may affect international trade in forest products owing to the risk of spreading pathogens, insects and invasive plants into new forest ecosystems.

And most importantly, they may have negative impacts on livelihoods

**Ways to improve existing mechanisms**

So we must now consider what is being done to contain these problems and what existing mechanisms can be improved so that we can move towards a more holistic approach to management.

The most important preventative mechanism is the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) which aims to secure common and effective actions to prevent spread and introductions of pests of plants and plant products.

A number of phytosanitary standards are particularly relevant to forestry. For example, an important standard is aimed at regulating wood packaging material in international trade. Others relate to risk analysis, pest reporting and status, surveillance and export certifications. Copies of the standards are available outside this room.

We invite advice from COFO on how to best to strengthen country capacity to conform to IPPC standards, to increase general awareness within the forest sector about the IPPC standards, and to improve

communication between the IPPC contact points officially appointed by governments, and the national forest administration.

At the field and country level, the FAO Field Programme offers assistance to countries to establish pest prevention and long-term forest protection strategies. Emergency assistance is provided when requested and needed, generally in response to infestations of indigenous insect pests whose cyclical outbreaks have been reduced due to climatic fluctuations.

We welcome advice from COFO on ways to extend this field support and strengthen capacity to monitor and control pests

### **Enhancing cooperation**

There is increased awareness of the importance of invasive species, which was well discussed during the forum yesterday. Free flow of information is essential to manage and prevent new threats to forest ecosystems. FAO and partner countries are supporting networks for managing invasive species in the Asia-Pacific region and in Africa. Information is also shared through regional forestry commission working groups and, for example, through the IUFRO unit on alien invasive species and international trade.

However, despite this greater awareness, pests still continue to become established in new ecosystems as a result of increased ease of transport between regions and changing climate.

Efforts therefore need to be made to coordinate actions to prevent new invasions. This could best be achieved by linking existing networks and working groups and extending them to other regions.

We hope that COFO and the regional forestry commissions will consider endorsing and supporting these networks.

In summary we must note that protection of the worlds forests can only be achieved through collaboration and partnerships.

Improved coordination and linkages between numerous international and regional instruments (both binding and non-binding) and programmes dealing with invasive species are required.

### **Existing partners**

COFO is invited to suggest additional key partnerships and to provide advice on how to promote linkages.

We are pleased to list existing partners noting that there is plenty of scope for additional names

- Asia-Pacific Invasive Species Network (APFISN)
- Bioversity International
- CABI
- Canadian Forest Service and Canadian Food Inspection Agency
- Forestry and Agricultural Research Institute (FABI), South Africa
- Federal Biological Research Centre for Agriculture and Forestry, Germany
- Forest Invasive Species Network for Africa (FISNA)
- International Forestry Research Quarantine Group (IFRQG)
- International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO)
- Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP)
- Forest Research, UK Forestry Commission
- United States Forest Service
- World Conservation Union (IUCN) Invasive Species Specialist Group

### **Forest Protection**

Thank you very much for your kind attention. I would now like to hand you over to Denny Truesdale who will introduce the topic fire management noting that there is a clear linkage between forest health and fire management in protection of the world's forests.