

Italian side event

to the 32nd session of the FAO Conference (29 November – 10 December 2003)

“The Role of Poplars and Willows in Sustainable Rural Development“

Their Social, Environmental and Economic Contribution

(Iran Room, Thursday, 4 December, 11:00-12:30)

Objective:

To recognize the scale and critical social, environmental and economic contribution of poplars in desertification control, rehabilitation degraded and fragile lands, phyto-remediation of contaminated sites, biodiversity conservation, and carbon sequestration whilst also providing an energy efficient, environmentally friendly and renewable source of wood, fibre and biomass necessary for sustainable rural development.

Speakers:

- E.H. Sène, Director, Forest Resources Division on behalf of Mr M.Hosny El-Lakany, Assistant Director-General, Forestry Department, FAO
- P. Ducci, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Coordinamento Polo ONU– Roma, Chief
- F. Radice Fossati, Italian National Poplar Commission, President
- S. Bisoffi, Poplar Research Institute, Italy, Director
- P. Holmgren, Chief, Forest Resources Development Service, FAO

Background:

First international conference on the future of poplar culture

The conference, attended by about 200 senior public, private and other participants from 35 countries, was hosted by the National Poplar Commission of Italy, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Agricultural and Forest Policies in collaboration with FAO, 13-14 November, 2003 at FAO, Rome, Italy.

Poplars and willows, which account for an estimated 46 million hectares of natural and planted forests globally, are among the fastest growing trees in temperate regions. They are easy to cultivate and form an important component of forestry and agricultural systems, often for small-scale farmers, across the globe.

Economic benefits

Poplars and willows are used for a wide range of wood products that create employment, boost exports and contribute to social and economic development and sustainable livelihoods in rural areas. Non-wood products from poplars and willows include fodder and biomass for renewable energy.

Environmental and social benefits

Poplars and willows protect soil and water, combat desertification, rehabilitate degraded lands, contribute to conservation of biodiversity and provide shelter and shade for communities, livestock and crops. One of the largest uses of poplars and willows is in protecting communities and agricultural productivity in countries like China, India, Iran and Turkey. As fast growing species, they also sequester carbon and provide a valuable carbon sink function in combating climate change.

It is increasingly recognized that poplars and willows can play a critical role in phyto-remediation of sites contaminated with heavy metals, including landfill leachates, refuse disposal, raw sewage disposal, mining and industrial plant residues and urban and peri-urban pollutants.

International poplar commission (IPC)

The International Poplar Commission (IPC), founded in 1947, is a Technical Statutory Body of FAO. The functions of the IPC are to study the scientific, technical, social and economic aspects of poplar and willow cultivation; promote the exchange of ideas and material among research workers, producers and users; arrange joint research programmes; and make recommendations to the Conference of FAO and National Poplar Commissions. At present there are 37 member countries of the IPC, each with a National Poplar Commission. The IPC is the only forum that brings together managers, users and researchers in poplars and willows to discuss topics of common interest in a cross-disciplinary way. A web site is available on <http://www.fao.org/forestry/ipc>. The site will soon be available in English, French and Spanish.

22nd Session of the international poplar commission

The 22nd Session and 42nd Executive Committee of the IPC will be held in Santiago, Chile, 28 November – 2 December, 2004. The Theme will be *the “The contribution of poplars and willows to sustainable forestry and rural development”* with particular reference to Latin America. Invitations and background details will be presented at the side event.

Buffet Lunch invitation

Following the side event at 12:30pm, participants will be hosted to a lunch buffet offered by the Italian Poplar Commission in the FAO premises.