

# Near East Regional Workshop on Global Forest Resources Assessment - FRA 2005

Beirut, Lebanon, 21-22 May 2004

## **REPORT**

### **Preamble**

The Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA 2005) is conducting a series of regional workshops as part of the preparatory work for the country reporting process. These regional workshops respond to requests made by many member countries during the global training session held at FAO Headquarters in Rome in November 2003.

The Near East Regional Workshop was the first in the series and was held in conjunction with the Near East Forestry Commission. It was hosted by the Lebanese Government and jointly organized by the FAO Forestry Department in Rome and the Regional Office for the Near East in Cairo, together with the local NGO, The Association for Forestry Development and Conservation (AFDC).

Invitations to the workshop were extended to all the nominated National Correspondents (NCs) for countries that belong to the Near East Region. In total 24 participants from 16 countries, one regional organization and one private sector company attended the meeting (see List of participants in Annex 1).

### **Objectives and content**

The main objectives of the workshop were to:

- present and discuss the fifteen National Reporting Tables which the countries are being requested to compile for FRA 2005 (especially for those NCs who did not attend the November 2003 Training Session in Rome);
- present the new tools that have been developed for facilitating the work of the National Correspondents, such as the documents “*Guidelines for country reporting*” and the “*Country Reporting template*”;
- review the work done so far by the Near East countries in compiling the national reporting tables for FRA 2005, to share country experiences on the reporting process and to describe how FAO may provide support to linked activities such as National Forest Assessments;

- establish the time schedule and define deadlines for the country reporting to FRA 2005; and
- provide technical assistance and further guidance in order to ensure consistent high-quality reporting that meets the specifications established for FRA 2005.

The first day of the workshop was dedicated to a presentation of the FRA Process, the National Reporting Tables and the common methodological framework established for FRA 2005. Each presentation was followed by a time assigned for questions, answers and discussion.

The second day of the workshop started with the presentation of country experiences in reporting to FRA 2005. The following countries presented their experiences of completing the National Reporting Tables:

- Cyprus
- Uzbekistan
- Sudan
- Turkey

The country presentations were followed by a discussion where common problems in the country reporting were identified, as well as proposals on how to address these problems. Common problems included the lack of data or weak and incomplete data, difficulties in adapting national definitions to the FRA definitions, etc.

Another item covered on the second day was National Forest Assessments (NFA). A presentation was made of the support provided by FAO to National Forest Assessment and the basic methodology suggested by FAO. This was followed by a presentation by Lebanon on the country's NFA experience which is one output of the soon to be concluded TCP/LEB/2903 project, and by a presentation by the Islamic Republic of Iran on its work in preparing a NFA. There was great general interest in undertaking NFAs and the participating countries found that the experiences from Lebanon were important for designing good NFAs for the low forest cover countries (LFCCs) in the region. Iran has already begun the design of a NFA and it was suggested that it contact FAO to obtain support for its initiative. General country statements were also made by Egypt and Iraq.

The second day was concluded by presenting the means of technical support provided to the NCs by the FRA Secretariat in Rome in order to help them solve technical questions and to elaborate the country reports. The timetable for the work to be undertaken by the countries was also presented and discussed.

### **Issues raised, recommendations and requests**

During the workshop, several issues were raised and recommendations made on how to handle specific reporting problems. In particular, the meeting requested FAO support with the following:

- translation of the basic FRA 2005 documents into Arabic;
- compilation of a CD-ROM with all the presentations and documentations to be sent to the NCs;
- consolidation of communication between the NCs and the FRA Secretariat in Rome;
- future FRAs should take more into consideration some particular characteristics of the LFCCs, such as:
  - land with multiple land use,
  - importance of trees outside forest.
- many countries lack data on their forest resources and thus support to National Forest Assessments is needed;
- some of the countries in the region are in need of particular support due to recent and on-going political unrest.