

FAO and forest invasive species

FAO-led side event, COFO – Friday 18 March 2005

Pests (including insects, mites, molluscs, nematodes, diseases and weeds) are important to forest health. Indigenous pests may be chronic or occur in outbreaks, whereas introduced pests usually occur during an initial outbreak followed by continuous chronic damage. Newly introduced alien pest species can be devastating to forestry, particularly plantation forestry. Weeds, especially alien species, can be particularly damaging during plantation establishment, but can also have important impacts on biodiversity, especially in the tropics.

Forest-related pathways for the introduction of alien species include movement of germplasm, solid wood packaging materials, trade in unprocessed timber and contaminants of forest produce. New introductions can be expected with the growing internationalization of trade, increasing movement of people, overstretched quarantine services, etc. International standards for phytosanitary measures to prevent the spread and introduction of pests of plants and plant products are established under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

Prevention methods against invasive species are being developed based on pest risk analysis. Other sectors, such as fisheries, have also had to deal with issues of invasiveness and have developed risk assessment methods and management strategies which can be adapted for forestry.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND NETWORKING

FAO Web site on forest invasive species

To complement its existing Web site on forest health (www.fao.org/forestry/site/18748/en), FAO is developing a Web site on invasive species for the exchange and dissemination of documented information on invasive species that impact sustainable forest management worldwide. The site will address all types of invasive forest pests, including woody species. It will include thematic issues; impacts from a forest management perspective; prevention, monitoring and control; and policy and regulatory frameworks to manage risks. It will link to, and build upon, other Web sites on forest health and biosecurity in forestry.

Forest Invasive Species Network for Africa

At a task force meeting organized by the Forest Research Institute of Malawi (FRIM), the Forestry Department of Malawi and FAO in December 2004, the dormant Tree Pest Management Network for Central, Eastern and Southern Africa was reborn as the Forest Invasive Species Network for Africa (FISNA). The task force meeting was held in Zomba, Malawi and attended by participants from seven countries – Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia – as well as the African Forest Research Network (AFORNET), CAB International (CABI) and FAO.

The mandate of the network is to coordinate the collation and dissemination of information relating to forest invasive species in sub-Saharan Africa for sustainable forest management and conservation of biodiversity.

FRIM provides the Secretariat with support from the Interim Executive Committee, comprising all members of the Task Force. It is anticipated that within one year the Interim Executive Committee will be superseded by selected Country Coordinators representing each of the four regions, i.e. Western, Southern, Eastern and Central Africa.

The network has constructed a Web site dedicated to forest health issues in Africa, which is hosted by FAO: www.fao.org/forestry/site/26951/en

Participation in the network is open to all countries in sub-Saharan Africa that wish to participate. There is no distinction by language or forest type.

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Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network

The 19th session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) in Mongolia recommended that FAO support activities to increase awareness and understanding of the issues and threats associated with invasive species; develop appropriate measures for dealing with the threats; and identify additional information and research needs. In response, APFC convened an Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Conference, held in Yunnan, China, in August 2003. A core recommendation from the conference was the establishment of an Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network. Coordination support for the network will be provided by the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The network had its first meeting prior to the 20th session of APFC in April 2004, in Nadi, Fiji.

The network shares information on forest invasive species and facilitates access to expertise and resources such as research and education and training opportunities.

A Workshop on Development of an Asia-Pacific Regional Strategy for *Eucalyptus* Rust, organized in collaboration with the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), APFC and FAO, was held in Bangkok, Thailand in October 2004 as the first activity of the network. The network also arranged a regional workshop on addressing the coconut beetle threat in the region in February 2005. Participants shared information on risk assessment, monitoring and biological control measures.

A database compiling information on key pests threatening forests in Asia and the Pacific is being developed in collaboration with the Chinese Academy of Sciences and national focal points in more than 20 countries of the region.

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WOODY SPECIES

While several international and national programmes target the issue of alien invasive woody species, especially in forest and fragile ecosystems, there are scant data on the phenomenon of introduced forest trees turned naturalized or invasive. The issue is all the more important since the global movement of forest reproductive material is likely to increase in the future.

FAO publications on invasive forest trees

With the financial support of the FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme, the FAO Forestry Department has launched a series of studies to assess the extent and intensity of invasiveness by forest trees. These studies, published as Forest Health and Biosecurity Working Papers, are available online at: www.fao.org/forestry/site/16447/en

Programme on *Prosopis* spp.

The leguminous tree *Prosopis* spp. has been introduced in many countries of the world, especially in dry and semi-arid zones, because of its capacity to survive in harsh environments and its potential in the restoration of degraded lands. While the environmental, social and economic benefits brought by the tree are widely acknowledged, there is a growing awareness of its disadvantages, especially under poor management or in sensitive and fragile areas. FAO has launched a cross-cutting, holistic approach to the issue, aimed at documenting both the benefits and the drawbacks of the tree.

Woody invasive species database

A global review of the status of invasiveness of forest tree species outside their native habitat, based on the available literature, has been carried out by CABI on behalf of FAO and will be made available on the FAO Forestry Web site. It summarizes data on introduced, naturalized or invasive forest species by country. Of 1 121 tree species, 443 introduced woody species were reported invasive.