

**COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY (COFO) 2005  
SIDE MEETING ON INVASIVE SPECIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON  
FOREST HEALTH**

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**ASIA-PACIFIC FOREST INVASIVE SPECIES NETWORK**

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**[Slide 1]**

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to provide you with a brief overview of the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network. I should perhaps preface my remarks by noting that I am not an invasive species specialist, but I was however, fortunate enough to attend both the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission – where the concept of a regional invasive species network had its genesis – and the 20<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission, where the network was inaugurated.

For many people here, however, this will be their first experience and interaction with the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network, and I would like to spend a little time reviewing the history of the Network before describing where it fits and the work it is presently implementing.

**[Slide 2]**

I should probably start by noting that the Network operates under the umbrella of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC). APFC is, of course, a statutory body of FAO, which provides secretariat support for the Commission. But the Commission's actual membership is comprised of 28 countries within the Asia-Pacific region, and it is the member countries that shape the work of the Commission.

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In August 2002, the 19th session of the Commission convened in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. At that meeting, the Commission organized a special in-session seminar on forest invasive species, which helped raise awareness of the issues and threats, and established a foundation for increased regional cooperation. That seminar called for greater information sharing and awareness building to increase understanding and

cooperation in dealing with these invasive species threats. It was at this meeting that the seeds of the Forest Invasive Species Network were sown.

**[Slide 4]**

In response to the call for information sharing and cooperation, the Government of China, through the State Forestry Administration and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, offered to host a regional conference in China to raise awareness of invasive species issues, and to explore options for collaborative regional activities.

This *Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Conference* convened in Kunming, China, in August 2003, to further consider the major issues and constraints in combating invasive species. The key recommendation of the conference was that an Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network should be established to promote the exchange of information on existing or potential forest pests, and on approaches for combating such pests. Participants agreed the proposed network should give priority to developing an action plan for dealing with invasive species in the region.

The basic premise of the Network is that it will focus on technical and organizational issues, which address the prevention, detection, eradication, and control of forest invasive species in Asia and Pacific. The Network will accomplish this through sharing appropriate information; helping to bring awareness of the economic, social, and environmental impacts of invasive species; assisting member countries of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission in building capacity to respond to invasive species on a regional scale; and engaging in other relevant activities.

**[Slide 5]**

The work to develop an action plan for the network was largely carried out at a workshop, *Developing an Action Plan for Addressing Forest Invasive Species in Asia and Pacific*, held in Nadi, Fiji – immediately prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> session of APFC, in April of last year.

**[Slide 6]**

A workshop consensus emerged on the five highest priority areas for future work, viz.:

- Organizational structures to support the network
- Stock-taking of national activities
- Awareness raising
- Capacity building
- Database and information sharing.

I don't have time in this presentation to outline the types of activities envisaged under each of these priority areas, but I have prepared a two-page handout that describes what the workshop expects the Network to implement.

**[Slide 7]**

Current work

Was has commenced in most of these priority areas:

- a network of national focal points has been established, with focal points nominated from 22 countries;
- the Chinese Academy of Sciences has undertaken to establish a Network Database;
- colleagues in India have volunteered to lead initial efforts to coordinate a stocktake of national activities;
- a network workshop on *Development of an Asia-Pacific regional strategy for Eucalyptus rust* was held in Bangkok, Thailand in October 2004, in collaboration with the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR); and
- a *Regional workshop on coconut beetle* was held just a couple of weeks ago, in February 2005, in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam with support from the USDA Forest Service.

The importance of the invasive species issue to countries of the region has been evidenced by the willingness of a number of countries in the region to make contributions to its establishment and day-to-day operations, including Australia, China, New Zealand and the United States. Several other countries have also expressed strong interest in contributing.

I'm also informed that Ms. Wei Zhang, a secondee from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, arrived in Bangkok on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, to undertake the role of Network Coordinator. We consequently have expectations that the Network will really begin to work at a pace commensurate with the expectations and importance that the countries of the Asia-Pacific region place on invasive species.

**[Slide 8]**

Thank you.