

EC-FAO PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

INFORMATION NOTE



Information and Analysis for Sustainable Forest Management Linking National and International Efforts in South Asia and Southeast Asia

Project ASI/B7-6201/IB/98/0531

*An initiative of the
Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC),
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and
European Commission (EC)*

INFORMATION – THE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

Achieving sustainable management of forests and tree resources is the expressed goal of most forest policies in Asian countries. Reliable information is required to assist decision-makers in designing appropriate responses to emerging problems in the forestry sector. Collecting and analysing data and subsequently disseminating that information are, however, challenging tasks for national information systems with weak capacities in forestry statistics. Hence the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) has emphasised the need for improving forestry statistics and the quality of information to prepare the sector for the changes foreseen by the Asia-Pacific Forestry Sector Outlook Study.

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE

APFC, FAO and the European Commission have formed a partnership with the overall objective of promoting sustainable management of trees and forests founded on policies that integrate and balance economic, environmental and social aspects. The three-year programme (2000-2002) is being implemented in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. It focuses on three inter-related themes, namely (i) problem-oriented data gathering and updating of information, (ii) pilot studies specifically directed at methodological approaches related to topics not traditionally dealt with while collecting forestry statistics and (iii) policy reviews.

OUTPUTS

The first major activity of the Programme was a Forestry Information Processes and Planning Workshop, held at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and Pacific in Bangkok, 10 - 12 July 2000. The workshop examined national processes and strategies for collecting and disseminating forestry data and information; and selected numerous activities to be supported by the Programme. The workshop was also the first step towards developing a network for improving communications and coordination by enabling focal points of the 13 participating countries to exchange experiences with forestry statistics.

PILOT STUDIES

Studies have been initiated in various countries to develop more effective methodologies for collecting data on forest conditions. Trees outside forests have emerged as crucial elements in the rural landscapes but little is known about them. A workshop held in early 2001 in India brought together more than 20 experts to discuss the effectiveness of several assessment approaches. A review of the current status of non-wood forest products has been completed in the 13 countries and a regional overview will be published at the end of 2001. In close collaboration with the Regional Wood Energy Development Programme, similar activities have been initiated to improve and update information on wood energy, which will also improve coordination between energy and forest departments. The Programme will give particular attention to forest products statistics in 2002, through country studies and a regional workshop.

TRAINING

An integral component of the Partnership Programme is capacity building. New assessment methods can only achieve the desired effect if people are trained adequately. Each pilot study is followed by a training workshop with additional support to those countries that intend to make use of the new skills learned. For example, training workshops are being organized in Malaysia on methods for assessing forest conditions in mid 2002. The Programme will support a training workshop on assessing trees outside forests in coordination with the Forest Survey of India in late 2001. Training in early 2002 in Bangkok will strengthen forest products statistics capabilities, enhance information flows and enable countries to fulfil their commitments under the various international agreements and processes. Another approach to training is study tours. For example, the Programme will support a study tour of Laotian forestry officials to Peninsular Malaysia to gain insights into the information systems of the Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia.

POLICY REVIEWS

Appropriate policies are the cornerstone of sustainable management of forests and tree resources. The EC-FAO Partnership Programme supports subregional studies on topical issues. The first is examining the role of incentives in plantation establishment and management. It is being conducted in close collaboration with international partners including the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the USDA/Forest Service. Further studies will be identified and discussed at a policy workshop to be held at the end of 2001 in Malaysia.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Information on the EC-FAO Partnership Programme and results of completed studies can be found on the following webpages:

http://www.fao.org/forestry/foris/index.jsp?lang_id=1&geo_id=42&start_id=2711 or

http://www.fao.or.th/Technical_Groups/Forestry/EC-FAO_programme/ec-fao_programme.htm

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