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TOPIC NOTE

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➤ www.fao.org/fsnforum/forum/discussions/forestry

Online consultation on the first draft of the FAO voluntary guidelines on national forest monitoring

Reliable information on forests is fundamental for improving the management of forest resources. Often, however, this information applies beyond forest boundaries: it can, for example, be used as an indicator of biodiversity, hydrology, and soil conservation. High quality and accessible forest information is also needed to fulfil the reporting requirements of many international agreements, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

To obtain timely and reliable forest information at different scales, there must be clear guidance on how to collect, compile, and analyse it. In this context, the Twenty-First Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO 21), held in September 2012, recommended that FAO continue to support the efforts of member countries to strengthen their National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS).

The preparation of the voluntary guidelines on national forest monitoring began in September 2012. The guidelines will present a set of good practice principles supported by a set of decision-making tools for the planning and implementation of a multipurpose, scientifically sound NFMS.

Phase I of the drafting process has already been completed (and endorsed by COFO 22 in July 2014); this phase included the development of a definition of national forest monitoring, and a description of the guidelines' scope and principles (Sections I and II). Phase II, currently under way, will be a compilation of good practices and technical recommendations on national forest monitoring (Section III).

The first draft of Section III has now been prepared, and as part of the consultative process prior to its finalization and external peer review, the FAO Forestry Department is seeking your input to further improve the draft. This will be carried out through an online consultation managed by the [Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition](#). The guidelines will be released for the consideration of COFO at its 23rd Session in July 2016.

Comments and input are welcome on all chapters of Section III, but in particular on the following aspects:

- **Does the draft adequately cover all elements needed to establish and sustain an NFMS?**
- **What other technical, logistical or policy issues should the document cover?**
- **Given that the voluntary guidelines are being designed for use by NFMS managers, what aspects of Section III could be improved to meet this objective?**

- **Is there any redundant content that could be removed to make the document more concise?**

We also kindly invite respondents to provide relevant case studies on country experiences, including any instances of “errors to be avoided”.

Thank you very much for engaging with FAO Forestry on this consultation. We look forward to a rich and fruitful discussion!

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