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# COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

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### FORESTS AND FAMILY FARMING

#### I. Forest communities, family forests and trees on farms are part of family farming systems

1. A large proportion of the world's forest dependent people (forest communities and family forest owners) are also family farmers and a significant number of family farmers depend heavily on forests and trees. Indigenous peoples, local forest communities, smallholders, forest owners, small scale forest and farm producers and entrepreneurs live in and around forests in every country, and in many places they represent the most marginalized and excluded rural populations of family farmers. For hundreds of millions of these people forests and trees overlap directly with family farming in multiple ways. Indeed it is the unique combination of forest and farm resources which allow for the complex agro-ecological and natural resource management systems that have been the reservoirs of nutrition, genetic materials, fuel and energy, fodder and building materials, water retention and recharge, pollination and pest control, green manure and biological and cultural diversity all over the world. Forests are particularly important for food security and nutrition supplying fuel for cooking and contributing nutritious supplements to rural diets.

2. Many of these complex systems combining forests and family farms are intrinsically “climate smart”, with in-built adaptive capacity to decrease vulnerability and improve resilience to dramatic changes in climate. In addition, forest communities, family forest owners and family farmers understand the multiple benefits of forests and trees and their integrated connection with farms at the landscape level and are often best positioned to put sustainable forest and farm management into practice. At the farm level a variety of traditional and new agroforestry, livestock rearing and fishery practices demonstrate the potential for increasing productivity substantially from the same parcels of land.

3. The ability to draw from the productive capacity of both forests and farms (as well as from pastures and fishing resources) at a landscape level is a key component in the livelihood and income generation strategies of many family farmers. Combining products from forest and field allows family farmers to avoid the cost of purchasing fuel wood, essential building materials, farming implements etc. In the same way the mixture of forest and farms allows family farmers to collect, process and market a wider variety of products adding everything from timber to an astonishing array of non-wood forest products, medicinal and ornamental plants, forest fruits, mushrooms, honey, edible insects, fish, bush meat, bamboo and rattan furniture and crafts and many others to crops and horticultural farm

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products. Forest products allow many subsistence family farmers to gain cash income and access markets, making them major actors in the small-scale and often informal private sector.

4. Though secure tenure remains a challenge, rural communities have recognized ownership or long-term use rights to 31 percent of the developing world's forests. These rights include indigenous peoples' territories, community forests, common and collective lands and family owned forests. Family forests have played a vital role in the development of a number of Northern countries and continue to be a major part of their economy. In China there are now over 100 million family forest owners as a result of large scale forest tenure reform.

## **II. Challenges for forest communities, family forest owners and family farmers**

5. Forest communities, small forest owners and family farmers face threats of land conversion in the face of large scale industrial projects, whether for timber, bio fuels, estate crops or agricultural land leases. This is exacerbated by lack of clear tenure to territories, forests, communal lands and farms. Furthermore the same family farmers and forest community members may be confronted with confusing and sometimes contradictory policies with regard to rights, land allocation and access to services.

6. Forest communities, family forest owners and farmers growing trees and non-timber forest products often face challenges in accessing markets, gaining fair prices for products and being compensated for the ecosystem services they may be responsible for maintaining. They face similar difficulties in gaining access to appropriate business development and financial support services and credit that take into account their combined livelihood strategies and improve their entrepreneurial capacity. They also suffer from the competition of large scale forest industries and corporate producers.

7. Women are primary actors in family farms and many forest related activities and often face additional barriers. As more and more men and youth migrate to cities in search of jobs, forest communities, family forest owners and farm families are faced with a shortage of labor and are struggling to improve the prospects for the next generation. Support services and incentive programmes to family farmers rarely take into consideration the role of forests in their livelihoods and forestry programmes often ignore or are unable to address the connections between forests and farming both within and adjacent to forests.

## **III. Approaches integrating forests and farms in the International Year of Family Farming**

8. The International Year of Family Farming provides an important opportunity to emphasize the vital role of forest communities, family forest owners and their organizations in forestry and farming, underlining their contribution to integrated approaches to sustainable rural development. It is also an opportunity to develop shared solutions for forest communities, family forest owners and family farm producers. Through FAO's new Strategic Objectives this support is increasingly being coordinated between departments working together to strengthen the linkages and integration between forests and family farming. The Forestry Department can contribute to such support with its existing programmes, training materials and technical assistance in agroforestry, landscape restoration, small and medium scale enterprises, forest tenure and sustainable community forestry management, amongst others.

### **Strengthening Forest and Farm Producer Organizations**

9. Joining together in traditional, informal and formal organizations helps forest and farm producers share knowledge and experience; engage in policy advocacy; secure tenure and access rights to forest, land and natural resources; improve sustainable forest and farm management; expand markets; build enterprises; and increase income and well-being. Federations and associations of forest and farm producer organizations (FFPOs) can help share the costs of vital social protection measures like group life and health insurance, and build systems to promote savings and distribute credit and investment. Existing farmer organizations can widen their scope to include forestry and link more

closely to forest producer organizations. Considering that smallholders produce 70 percent of the world's food, together, forest communities, family forest owners and family farmers may be the largest number of rural private producers. Organized as FFPOS they can become the primary engines of sustainable rural development.

10. There are many ways that government, civil society organizations, service providers and the producers themselves can contribute to strengthening forest and farm producer organizations. Organization at different levels from small producer groups to national and international federations helps improve forest and farm management, increase incomes and well-being and have a voice in policy making. Understanding and adhering to best practices of governance and transparency in formation and management of groups can help them function in inclusive, efficient and democratic ways. Here there may be much that forest producers can learn from family farmers and their organizations. Providing training and support for forest and farm producers is vital in business planning and management, aggregating and transporting products, negotiating increases in market prices for goods, developing value-added enterprises and ensuring fair relationships in value chains.

### **Improving Access to Finances, Information and Services**

11. Assisting producers from forest communities, family forests and farms to gain access to financial and other business development services can help them to attain economic, social and environmental sustainability. Helping forest and farm producer organizations access information about global and national programmes can help them in the formulation of clear, prioritized messages for policymakers, proposing workable solutions to challenges, to underline their relevance to achieving national and global goals. Providing opportunities for exchange and learning from peers and from researchers on both traditional and new technologies is essential to help improve the productivity and increase the sustainability and diversity of forest and family farming.

### **Creating an Enabling Environment**

12. Governments can help create an enabling environment, benefitting both forest and farm producers. Foremost amongst these is the need to pursue legal and policy reforms to ensure that indigenous peoples, forest communities and family farmers have secure and long-term access to and tenure of forests, land and trees taking into account the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests. A supportive legal framework is needed for the establishment and development of FFPOs at different levels, improving their participation in policy processes, removing legislative and regulatory barriers, and providing clear legal recognition of their importance and role. Governments can help create and facilitate appropriate incentives, credit and insurance packages, and developing other policies to ensure access to credit and to business development service providers.

13. Enabling cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder platforms for policy making and implementation can help to link forestry and agriculture and other relevant departments to create stronger coherence around land use decision making, provide incentives to small holders working in forests and family farms, and support providers of services at a landscape level. Ensuring representation and active participation of both forest and farm producers and community organizations among other stakeholders in these platforms can help avoid duplication of efforts and reduce the possibility of conflicting decisions, providing closer communication around different national and international programmes.

14. At the regional and global levels, strengthening knowledge sharing between forest and farm producers within and between countries and increasing their direct representation at important decision making can make the link between forest and family farming more visible to major global forest policies and programmes like the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD) and Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) and to major initiatives around food security, nutrition and livelihoods.

#### **IV. The Forest and Farm Facility: an innovative partnership to strengthen the forest and farm links**

15. In addition to the regular programmes of the Forestry Department mentioned earlier, the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF), a partnership between FAO, International Institute for Environment and Development and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, focuses on the link between forests and farms and the vital role of forest and farm producer organizations. The FFF provides direct support to producer organizations at the local, national, regional and global level – to build their capacity to access services, improve enterprises and increase their voice in advocacy. FFF also supports government agencies in participating countries, establishes or strengthens existing cross-sectoral platforms and organizes exchanges, training programmes and communications efforts and conferences. A more detailed update of the FFF is provided in document COFO/2014/6.7.

#### **V. Points for Consideration**

16. The Committee may wish to invite member countries to:
- 1) emphasize the connection between forests and family farms in events and celebrations related to the International Year of Family Farming.
  - 2) create an enabling environment for forest communities (including indigenous peoples), family forest owners and forest and farm producer organizations, focusing on clear tenure (based on the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests), fair access to markets and good service provision including incentive programmes and financing mechanisms for agroforestry, reforestation and sustainable community forest management.
  - 3) establish cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder platforms that link forestry and agriculture and other natural resource-related sectors to enable more effective coordination and communication at a landscape level that benefits rural forest and farming communities.
17. The Committee may wish to recommend FAO to:
- 1) continue support the creation and strengthening of forest-and-farm producer organizations through the Forest and Farm Facility in partnership with other programmes helping forest communities, family forest owners and family farmers increase their technical, business, advocacy and organizational capacities.
  - 2) promote understanding and increase awareness of the links between forests and family farming and support forest communities, family forest owners, family farmers and their organizations in engaging with relevant international events and decision making processes.
  - 3) support countries in establishing and strengthening cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder platforms which promote coordination between agriculture, forestry and other natural resource sectors.