



## Call for papers – share your experience

### Effective forest and farm producer organisations

ETFRN News 57 (forthcoming, August 2015)

#### Summary

The forthcoming EFRN News will interest all those engaged in managing or supporting forest and farm producer organisations (FFPOs), by showcasing examples of how they become stronger and more effective, and initiatives, policies and strategies that support them to do so.

Bringing together the diverse experiences of different producer organisations will allow us to identify common challenges and reasons for success. What were the problems faced and how were they overcome? What have FFPOs done themselves, and what other measures helped? We are seeking articles that describe and analyse the most burning priorities that FFPOs face, or those that address crucial issues and policies. FFPOs are encouraged to submit, and editorial support will be provided.

This edition is being produced in response to recommendations from an international conference of forest producer organisations held in China in November 2013. It also forms part of a broader initiative coordinated by the Forest and Farm Facility that aims to put people and their organisations at the heart of the World Forest Congress in South Africa, 7-11 September 2015.

If you are interested in contributing, send a short outline of an idea for an article (250 words), to the editors Nick Pasiiecznik ([npasiiecznik@wanadoo.fr](mailto:npasiiecznik@wanadoo.fr)) and Herman Savenije ([herman.savenije@tropenbos.org](mailto:herman.savenije@tropenbos.org)) **before 15 February 2015**. Around 25 will be selected by 1 March, and full papers (around 2500 words) are to be requested by 15 April. EFRN News 57 will be published in August.

#### **What makes forest and farm producer organisations more effective, what hurdles have they overcome, and what is still holding them back?**

These are the key questions to be answered by this edition of EFRN News. And these will not be tackled by general descriptions of what an FFPO does, but by delving deeper into the problems, solutions, challenges and reasons for successes. Also, answering one question is likely to throw up others. For example, how do FFPOs gain access to land or resources to increase production, prevent overproduction that depresses prices and avoid overexploitation? How do they obtain higher prices, ward off competitors or middlemen, and ensure high product quality? How do they deal with government officials, international customers, market monopolies and corruption? How do they ensure transparency and accountability, and deal with internal leadership and power? How do other actors look upon and interact with FFPOs, what are their visions and perspectives, and do they really represent the interests of smallholders? What would really make a difference to improving the day-to-day effectiveness of FFPOs? Especially important are stories of any unexpected benefits and pitfalls resulting from a decision, action or inaction.

## Context

The economic activities of forest and farming families, indigenous communities and small and medium scale producers are critical for local livelihoods and economies, market development, and for the sustainable future of natural resources on which such activities are based. Local producers, communities, indigenous people and private smallholders, own, use and manage a significant share of the world's agricultural land and forests as part of their economic activities and livelihood strategies. Throughout the world, small scale producers operate through a vast network of small, medium-sized and sometimes large enterprises. They are likely to be the most important suppliers of food and other resources for direct local consumption, processing or resale, including agricultural goods, timber and non-wood forest products, particularly but not exclusively for domestic markets. Evidence shows that they can effectively combat land degradation and deforestation, and conserve, use and manage their landscapes sustainably, *if* they derive socio-economic benefits from them, and the right incentives and conditions are in place.

However, local producers face many obstacles in order to act as good land stewards and to be able to turn their forest and farm activities into attractive and sustainable sources of income and well-being. Their rights to access, control, use, and own these lands are often insecure, unclear and overruled due to overlapping and conflicting tenure regimes (such as between customary/informal, and formal), expansion of large scale agriculture, forest and mining concessions, urbanisation and infrastructure development. Often operating in relative isolation in remote areas with poor infrastructure, they suffer from poor access to information, markets, finance and other essential services, while struggling from frequent neglect from governments and from complex rules that often geared for larger scale enterprises.

To empower their economic and political muscle, local producers are increasingly seeing the need and value of organising themselves into producer organisations. Such organisations may find themselves better able to obtain improved access to markets and essential market information, a stronger bargaining position, a voice in policy development, and better entrepreneurial skills. Forest and farm producers that are organised and federated are also easier for governments, service providers, development organisations and companies to communicate with, compared to a multitude of individuals. Producer organisations can also offer services to, and leverage the role of, government and other actors.

It is increasingly understood that forest and farm producer organisations (FFPOs) should and must play a growing role in ensuring locally controlled sustainable land and forest management, and their importance is highlighted in many key reports. In many countries, however, their value has yet to be recognised and developed. Moreover, to play their roles effectively, more FFPOs need to be established and many FFPOs need to strengthen their capacities and become more effective in meeting their objectives.

Effective, well-functioning FFPOs tend to have an integrated view on sustainable land and forest management, alongside broader livelihood needs that go beyond supplying agricultural goods, timber and non-wood forest products. Others common characteristics and conditions include competitiveness and economic viability, a direct links to markets, entrepreneurial freedom, and financial and political independence. Equally important are democratic leadership and internal governance, inclusiveness and representativeness, social diversity in voluntary membership including women and youth, and organisational models grounded in the socio-cultural and economic realities, needs and interests of producers and the communities they live in.

Service providers, governments and international organisations can facilitate and support the formation and strengthening of FFPOs by helping to create or develop the proper enabling environments. These include the need for secure tenure, fair market access and good quality support services for capacity development. Of vital importance is the promotion of interactions at all levels for joint learning, to share experiences, gain ideas, spread innovations and build best practices that can help FFPOs to reflect upon and strengthen their own effective functioning, and to gain confidence in what they are doing in their unique context. And this edition of ETFRN News will help in this sharing of experiences.

## Scope, focus and guiding questions for EFRN News 57

This edition of EFRN News will share experiences from and interest those who are engaged in establishing, managing and supporting forest and farm producer organisations (FFPOs), directly or indirectly. It will bring together concrete examples from FFPOs operating in different contexts and corners of the world, how they have strengthened themselves, and what lessons can be learnt in terms of challenges and successes, and positive initiatives, policies and strategies that support FFPOs to become stronger and more effective.

Experiences will be analysed at different levels – local *organisations*, provincial and national *associations and federations*, and regional/international *organisations and initiatives*. It is acknowledged that FFPOs serve many purposes and fulfil multiple functions, but this edition of EFRN News will focus on a number of areas which have been relatively little studied, and knowing more about these are considered important in developing a better understanding of how FFPOs (can) become more effective.

1. **Local FFPOs for business and value addition, with a focus on organisational structure and function.** Why did people decide to organise for business in the first place? What particular product or service was the core of their organisation and how was this organised along the value chain? How does the FFPO add value? What internal ownership and organisational structures were developed? How were these related to customary authority structures? What partnerships were built? How are profits distributed, and reinvested? What are the social and environmental impacts? What roles do men, women and youth play? What can more recently established organisations learn from those with a longer history? What can forest, farm and pastoral producer organisations learn from each other? Of particular interest are the problems faced, how they were overcome, and how management of internal and external relations have evolved over time.
2. **National FFPO federations for representation and service provision.** Why did groups of FFPOs decide to associate or federate at a larger sub-national national level? What triggered their formation and how was that process led and supported? Do they form around products, or positions? Do forest producers, farm producers and pastoralist producers associate or learn from each other? How are such associations paid for from membership or sales fees, value addition or service provision, or external funding? What particular services or value aggregation do they offer member organisations? What specific objectives do they have and how are these pursued? How do they ensure effective accountability and representation? What challenges have they faced and how were these overcome? How and to what extent have regional associations helped to improve economic, social and environmental sustainability, and the monitoring of policies and implementation?
3. **Regional/international organisations and initiatives for advocacy and policy influence, with a focus on enabling policy and legal frameworks.** What is the history and rationale behind overarching bodies, international support processes, or specific initiatives that support FFPOs in broader international organisations? What are the goals, and what are the means and resources available? What successes have been seen in the policy arena, and what are the constraints to achieving more?

We also interested in receiving outlines for articles on cross-cutting issues such as the role of youth and women, improving access rights to resources, or other topics that contributors consider important.

## Submissions, timelines and contacts

If you are interested in contributing, send a short outline of an idea for an article (250 words), to the editors Nick Pasiecznik ([npasiecznik@wanadoo.fr](mailto:npasiecznik@wanadoo.fr)) and Herman Savenije ([herman.savenije@tropenbos.org](mailto:herman.savenije@tropenbos.org)) **before 15 February 2015**. Around 25 will be selected by 1 March, and full papers (around 2500 words) are to be requested by 15 April. EFRN News 57 will be published in August.

Producer organisations are strongly encouraged to be involved and to submit ideas. Selected authors will be given a framework for a full article, and a dedicated editor will be available to assist throughout.

## Background

### What are forest and farm producer organisations?

Organisations of producers of forest and farm products can take a large variety of shapes and sizes, and differ widely in history, purpose, geographic scope, institutional form, membership size and composition, and financing. This ETFRN News is to use a broad definition of FFPOs, including the following.

- Traditional territorial governance institutions of indigenous peoples and other customary communities.
- Informal, village level, forest, farm and pastoral management labour-sharing groups.
- Formally constituted village-level cooperatives for improved agricultural, pastoral and forest management capacity or for selling into local markets.
- Organisations with secure revenues through mandatory membership arrangements.
- Provincial or national associations or federations of FFPOs that sell into domestic markets, provide agricultural and forest management support services, and/or perform lobbying functions.

ETFRN News 57 on Effective forest and Farm producer organisations is being produced in response to the conclusions and recommendations from the ‘Strength in numbers’ International Conference on Forest Producer Organizations that took place in Guilin, China on 25-28 November 2013,<sup>1</sup> the ‘Making change happen’ working paper,<sup>2</sup> and the ‘Roadmap for strengthening forest and farm producer organizations’ policy brief.<sup>3</sup> It is intended that this publication will feed into to, and form a part of, a series of joint activities involving FAO, IIED, IUCN, the Forest and Farm Facility, Tropenbos International and others, that will give added voice and visibility and impact for forest and farm producers organisations at the World Forestry Congress in Durban, South Africa, 7-11 September 2015.

*The European Tropical Forest Research Network (ETFRN) aims to ensure that European research contributes to conservation and sustainable use of forest and tree resources in tropical and subtropical countries. ETFRN promotes dialogue between researchers, policy makers and forest users, the increased coherence of European tropical forest research, and increased collaboration with researchers in developing countries through partnerships and other forms of capacity building. [www.etfrn.org](http://www.etfrn.org)*

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- ETFRN News 50: Forests and climate change: adaptation and mitigation (November 2009)
- ETFRN News 49: Financing sustainable forest management (September 2008)

<sup>1</sup> [www.fao.org/partnerships/forest-farm-facility/87787/en/](http://www.fao.org/partnerships/forest-farm-facility/87787/en/). Co-organised by FAO, the State Forest Administration of China, the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation, the Forest and Farm Facility, Germany’s Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, and with support from AgriCord, the Confederation of European Forest Owners, GTZ, IIED, IUCN, RECOFTC and Tropenbos International.

<sup>2</sup> [www.fao.org/3/a-h0038e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-h0038e.pdf). De Marsh P, Boscolo M, Savenije H, Grouwels S, Zapata J, Campbell J, Macqueen D, 2014. Making Change Happen. What can governments do to strengthen forest producer organizations? FAO, the Forest and Farm Facility, Tropenbos International and the International Family Forestry Alliance.

<sup>3</sup> [www.fao.org/3/a-i3886e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3886e.pdf). Prepared by the Forest and Farm Facility.