



منظمة الأغذية
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Food
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des
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Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

Item 4.4(d) of the Draft Provisional Agenda

**COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

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**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF
A NETWORK OF *IN SITU* CONSERVATION AREAS:**

THE *IN SITU* CONSERVATION OF FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NETWORK OF IN SITU CONSERVATION AREAS

1. Most forestry agencies and forest managers deal with a large number tree species used for a range of productive, protective, environmental, social, spiritual and aesthetic purposes. Genetic management of such species will differ in form and intensity depending on their biological and genetic characteristics, ecological and silvicultural requirements and degree of domestication and use. Due to the marked heterozygosity, outbreeding nature, long life cycles and large size of most forest tree species, in the majority of cases, these largely wild populations are best conserved through the establishment of a network of *in situ* conservation areas, placed under varying intensities of human management. Such areas should cover central as well as outlying populations of the species targeted for conservation.
2. While protected areas constitute an important component of a network for the conservation of forest genetic resources, they are inadequate, on their own, to assure the genetic conservation of trees and other forest-related species. Managed production forests and forests managed for the protection of soil and water, play a key role in programmes aimed at the *in situ* conservation of genetic resources and intra-specific variation in socio-economically important forest tree species, and they are a necessary complement to the management of these within protected areas.
3. There are no major technical obstacles for harmonizing *in situ* conservation of forest genetic resources with the management of forests for timber, non-wood products and the protection of soil and water. The main problem in achieving conservation goals is, at present, the lack of institutional and political frameworks under which adequate land use and operational management choices, fair to all stakeholders, can be considered and efficiently implemented in the short as well as in the long term. In addition to unplanned changes in land use, the failure to comply with prevailing forest management prescriptions has been to date a common cause of unnecessary and at times grave damage to site, vegetation and genetic resources in all kinds of forests.
4. Following the publication in 1993 of Forestry Paper 107, *Conservation of Genetic Resources in Tropical Forest Management: principles and concepts*, a guide to the *in situ* conservation of forest genetic resources was recently published by FAO in collaboration with national institutions and international partners. The guide was entitled, *Forest Genetic Resources: conservation and management in managed natural forests and protected areas (in situ)*. (FAO, IPGRI, DANIDA Forest Seed Centre (2002)).
5. The above guide, which provides decision-makers and practitioners involved in managing forests and forest ecosystems with alternative, easy-to-follow, step-wise approaches for the incorporation of *in situ* conservation in forest and protected area management, has been discussed at a number of earlier sessions of the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. It constitutes one in a series of three conservation guidebooks planned to be published by the FAO Forestry Department.
6. Some additional facts on the FAO programme on the conservation of forest genetic resources are given in document CGRFA-9/02/14.1 (para. 28-37), and document CGRFA-9/02/14.2.
7. For more information, see FAO Forestry Department Information Note, *Management of forest genetic resources - their conservation, enhancement and sustainable utilization* <http://www.fao.org/forestry/foris/webview/forestry2/index.jsp?geoId=0&langId=1&siteId=1240>; and information lodged at the Forestry Department Homepage: <http://www.fao.org/FORESTRY/FOR/FORM/FOGENRES/homepage/fogene-e.stm>