



TOPIC NOTE

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www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/forestry_indicators

Online consultation on the development of a Global Core Set (GCS) of forest-related indicators



Forests play a vital role in food security and nutrition, providing food and livelihoods to many of the poorest people on earth as well as environmental services that are crucial for agricultural production (*State of the World's Forests 2016*, chapter 4, provides more detail). For this reason, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) is partnering with the FSN Forum to host an online consultation on the development of a **global core set of forest-related indicators**, for use not only in the forest sector, but also in a broader context.

Indicators are used to measure progress towards policy goals. In recent years, the international community has articulated many goals related to forests, in the broader development context (the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals both refer several times to forests), in the context of the Rio conventions, and in instruments focused on the forest sector, notably the UN Forest Instrument and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests. There is a strong commitment by all parts of the international community to provide the information necessary for monitoring progress towards all these targets in a comprehensive, efficient, timely and meaningful way.

However, there has not, so far, been a close coordination of the different forest-related indicators used by these various processes. This has contributed to unclear messages, and an unnecessarily high reporting burden.

To remedy this problem, a number of agencies with responsibilities for forest-related issues have been working to develop a **global core set of forest-related indicators**, with the aim of simplifying and harmonising concepts and terminology, on a voluntary basis, while respecting the needs of all potential users. The ultimate outcome should be a clearer, more comprehensive picture of trends and a significant reduction in reporting burden. Following a number of informal meetings, an international expert workshop in Ottawa, and an organisation-led initiative (OLI) in Rome, a task force under the Collaborative Partnership on Forests is drawing up a proposal for a **global core set of forest-related indicators**. We are

now organising this online consultation so that the final set can benefit from the views of a wide range of experts and stakeholders. The results of the on-line consultation will be analysed at an Expert Consultation to be held in June 2017, and will be taken into account when the global core set is finalized.

The [Global Core Set of forest-related indicators](#) is intended to contribute to the following purposes:

1. To measure progress towards sustainable forest management (including SDG 15.2.1).
2. To measure progress in implementing the UN Forest Instrument and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests, notably the Global Objectives on Forests, and their associated targets.
3. To measure progress towards SDG targets other than 15.2.1, as well as internationally agreed goals on forests in other instruments notably through meeting the forest-related reporting needs of the Rio conventions.

We would like your comments to have the biggest impact possible. We would therefore appreciate it if you could share them with us by 14 May so that we can present them at the Expert Consultation.

When making your comments, please bear the following in mind:

- The Global Core Set as a whole should be comprehensive, balanced and short (preferably less than 15 indicators).
- The significance of each indicator should be immediately understandable from its title.
- A true indicator should be defined, not just an area of interest.
- There should be reason to believe that reliable data on the indicators will be available in the short term for most countries in the world.
- The focus is on indicators whose development can be influenced by policy makers, not on context or descriptive indicators, which cannot be changed in the short or medium term.

To be useful, the indicators should be defined in “scale-neutral” terms, such as ratios or rates of change. Absolute areas or volumes will of course be needed, but they are not “indicators” unless they are put into a context, and given a meaning. The online consultation is not concerned with data reporting or quality, as that is the responsibility of the various agencies, each with its own mandate. Therefore, please focus on the issue of which indicators should be included in the global core set, and how the indicators should be formulated.

The Global Core Set is a work in progress. A short version of the set, as of April 2017, after input from the CPF Task Force, is set out below.

[Click here to access the global core set of forest-related indicators](#)

Please feel free to comment on any aspect of the global core set of forest-related indicators, however, it will help analysis if you focus on the following questions:

- 1. Is the global core set, as it stands in April 2017, sufficiently comprehensive, balanced and short to achieve its stated objectives?**
- 2. If not, how should it be changed:**
 - **Additional indicators? Please specify.**
 - **Deletion of indicators? Please specify.**
 - **Modification/reformulation of indicators? Please specify.**

3. In particular, please provide suggestions for development of the indicators marked YELLOW – further work needed.

FAO and its partners in the CPF Task Force take this opportunity to thank all those who will contribute to this exercise.

Kit Prins, facilitator of the online consultation

Global Core Set of forest-related indicators: input to online consultation

Set out below is the global core set, as proposed by the OLI, with the suggestions of the Task Force, and including the colour coding: **GREEN**: placed in core set by OLI, **YELLOW**: further work needed, **RED**: remove from core set.

#	Current proposal by Task Force	Initial proposal by OLI meeting	Comments from TF meeting
1	Forest area as proportion of total land area	Forest area net change rate (%/per year)	Modified from "Forest area net change rate (%/year) as the net change rate can be computed using forest area as proportion of land area (land area reference year 2015). The proposed indicator name corresponds to the SDG 15.1 wording. No factual change.
2	Forest area within protected areas	Proportion of forest area located within legally established protected areas (%)	Modified. The term "legally established" dropped to avoid confusion and the indicator changed from proportion to total area. The protected areas should follow the definition of IUCN/CBD. If possible, the reporting should be broken down by IUCN categories. The proportion of forest area located within protected areas can be calculated. Efforts be made to maintain consistency with SDG indicator terminology.
3	Above-ground biomass stock in forest	Above-ground biomass stock in forest (tonnes/ha)	Modified. Suggest reporting in tonnes instead of tonnes/ha as the latter can be derived. Overharvesting/degradation/damage will result in reduced biomass/ha. In some cases increased biomass/ha may be negative (increased fuel load for fires)
4	Forest area designated and managed for protection of soil and water	(a) Mountain Green Cover Index Or (b) Forest area designated and managed for protection of soil and water	Changed to green. Option (b) preferred as already reported to FRA. However, it can be difficult to identify forests "designated and managed" for protection as they often are part of areas managed for multiple purposes. Option (a) Mountain Green Cover Index is currently a Tier 2 SDG indicator. Development work in progress. Not ready to be included in the core set but progress needs to be assessed and inclusion to be considered in the future
5	Employment in forestry and logging	Number of forest related jobs per 1000 ha of forest	Modified and changed to green. Change proposed from "Number of forest related jobs per 1000 ha of forest" to employment in forestry and logging. Employment per 1000 ha of forests can then be derived).
6	Existence of policies supporting SFM	Existence of policies supporting SFM, including formal protection of existing forest, or definition of a permanent forest estate in countries where this is necessary, with the institutions and resources necessary to implement these policies	Modified. "...including formal protection of existing forest, or definition of a permanent forest estate in countries where this is necessary, with the institutions and resources necessary to implement these policies" was deleted from the indicator name as those are only examples of such policies. They can be added to the explanatory note. Concept already used in FRA 2015.
7	Existence of scientifically sound national forest assessment process	Existence of a recent, scientifically sound, national forest inventory	Modified. Deleted the word 'recent' and added the word 'process' in the original indicator to reflect the need for continuous information flow. Suggest adding "includes NFI and related information and monitoring systems" in the explanatory note. Concept already used in FRA 2015

8	Existence of a national mechanism to secure multi-stakeholder participation in the development and implementation of forest-related policies	Existence of a national multi-stakeholder policy platform, with active participation of civil society, indigenous peoples and the private sector	Modified the original wording to avoid ambiguity. Concept already used in FRA 2015
9	Forest area under a long-term forest management plan	Proportion of forest area under a long-term forest management plan	Modified from " <i>proportion of forest area</i> " to " <i>Forest area</i> " in order to align with SDG 15.2.1. Concept already used in FRA 2015
10	Forest area under an independently verified forest management certification scheme	Forest area under an independently verified forest management certification scheme (ha)	Changed to green. Explanatory note should refer to different types of certification schemes. The TF discussed the problem of double accounting but did not find a solution to that because countries seem not to have that information. Deleted "ha". Concept already used in FRA 2015 . Concern in IAEG that certification is not an official policy instrument. Not all sustainably managed forest are certified – indicator could lead to misunderstanding
11	Official development assistance for SFM	Percentage change in official development assistance for sustainable forest management	Modified. "Percentage change in..." was removed from the original wording of the indicator The use of absolute value allows calculation of share of SFM funding of total ODA. Included in GOFs.
12	Volume of wood removals	Volume of wood harvested per 1000 forest workers (m3/1000 workers)	Modified. Suggest replacing "wood harvested per 1000 forest workers" with "wood removals" and consider as new indicator, using JFSQ data . Some issues identified with the original proposal was the interpretation and significance, and how to handle informal workers.
13	Existence of a traceability system for wood products	a. Proportion of traded/consumed forest products derived from illegal logging or trade (%) or b. Existence of a robust system to track sustainable produced forest products	Modified and changed to green. The TF meeting suggested a rewording of option (b) to " <i>Existence of a verified tracing system to track sustainably produced forest products</i> ". After the meeting a further consultation with FAO subject specialists suggested " <i>Existence of a traceability system for wood products</i> ". FAO has modified the name accordingly. The meeting suggested to drop option (a) as reliable data on illegal logging and trade are difficult to obtain
14	Forest health and vitality: % of forest area disturbed		Further work needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairly good data exist on fire and possibly large areas hit by storms. Suggest dropping of vitality as it is difficult to measure. "Area disturbed" needs a clear definition (e.g., reduced production >20%, unwanted or unnatural fire, damage from invasive insects), especially to distinguish it from 'degradation'. So this indicator would monitor natural disturbances and other kind of degradation as well as harvesting would be reported using another indicator. It is difficult to combine data on different types of disturbance
15	Percentage change in area of degraded forest		Further work needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link to GOFs lost during their revision. Measurement of forest and land restoration was seen as a better option and it was noted that the intention seems to be include forest degradation as part of 15.3.1 (Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area) which has three sub-indicators which are land cover and land cover change, land productivity, and carbon stocks above and below ground. It was also noted that forest degradation is ambiguous as no globally agreed definition for it exists, thereby also difficult to measure. Should be differentiated from the indicator on disturbance.

16	a. Percentage change in the number of forest dependent people or b. Livelihoods of forest dependent people	Further work needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both indicators are vague as the terms ‘forest-dependent people’ and “livelihoods” lack globally accepted definitions. • It is not clear whether a positive change in the value of the indicator reflects positive development. • The TF proposes using "Number of people living in extreme poverty whose livelihoods are dependent on forest and trees" instead. • The indicator requires further work and alignment with the Global Forest Goals.
17	Financial resources from all sources (except ODA) for the implementation of sustainable forest management (\$/ha of forest)	Further work needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in the GOFs • Need to define “all sources” • Although it is important to track all financing sources it would be easier to limit the indicator to public expenditure on SFM (as was done in the past FRAs). • Potential danger of double accounting (private sector, academia, etc).
18	Share of wood based energy in total primary energy consumption, of which in modern clean systems (%)	Further work needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Task Force questioned this indicator’s role in the GCS of indicator and proposes using removal statistics (woodfuel vs total removals) instead. • Its significance is not fully clear (traditional wood energy vs. clean wood-based renewable energy)
19	Value of payments for ecosystem services (PES) related to forests (value of payments, as ratio to total forest area or area of forest covered by such PES)	Further work needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not ready for the GCS of indicators. Data on payments (from where?) • Concepts not yet defined • Measurement problems, especially for small PES schemes
20	Recovery rates for paper and solid wood products (volume recovered for re-use as % of volume consumed)	Indicator considered outside scope of SFM, as not subject to SFM policy instruments
21	Carbon stocks and carbon stock changes in forest land: net forest GHG sink/source of forests, forest carbon stock, carbon storage in harvested wood products (Tons C)	TF meeting suggest to drop this indicator. Changes in ABG biomass stock already captured by another indicator. Using UNFCCC data could cause confusion as it often disagrees with the figures reported to FRA (forest definition, etc.). Too many elements in indicator.