



LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

THIRTY-FIRST SESSION

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8.1.3. Restoration of forests and landscapes

Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. Forest and landscape restoration (FLR) is defined as a process of productive recovery that aims to regain ecological functionality and enhance human well-being in deforested and degraded landscapes. FLR is not an end in itself, but a means of regaining, improving and maintaining vital productive, ecological and social functions in the long term leading to more resilient and sustainable landscapes.
2. Ecosystem restoration is vital in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those that apply to climate change, poverty eradication, food security, water and biodiversity conservation; and can contribute considerably to achieving several Global Forest Goals contained in the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030. It is also a pillar of several international environmental conventions, such as the Ramsar Convention on Watersheds and the Rio Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification.
3. A recent study, using direct measurements of forest cover to generate a model of forest restoration potential across the globe, has shown there are 0.9 billion hectares outside of existing forests and agricultural and urban land, suitable for continuous forest restoration¹, however if the entire

¹ Bastin JF, Finegold Y, García C, Mollicone D, Rezende M, Routh D, Zohner Constantin, Crowther T. 2019. The global tree restoration potential. *Science* 05 Jul 2019: Vol. 365, Issue 6448, pp 76-79.

landscape is included, over two billion hectares of land around the world would benefit from some form of restoration intervention².

4. About 20 per cent of the Earth's vegetated surface shows declining trends in productivity. We are losing the fertility of our soils to erosion, depletion and pollution. By 2050, degradation and climate change could reduce crop yields between 9 and 21 percent³.

5. According to data provided by the 2015 Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA), there are 935 million hectares of forests in Latin America and the Caribbean. Some of the world's most ecologically valuable forest ecosystems are found in this region, however, deforestation and degradation continue at an alarming rate. Agriculture, infrastructure development and mining have been identified as the main causes.

6. There are a number of international initiatives that are helping raise awareness of the importance of forest and landscape restoration. The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030. Also, parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted in 2010 the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, with target 15 calling for countries to restore at least 15 per cent of their degraded ecosystems by 2020. At the 21st Session of the Committee on Forestry, held in September 2012, Member States recommended that FAO "identify its role in achieving the Bonn Challenge and strengthen its capacity in rural land-use planning in an interdisciplinary way through both normative work and project support to countries." Member States also recommended that FAO seek support for its field program to enable the Organization to increase its support to member countries for capacity development in intersectoral planning, institutional development and application of integrated approaches, and continue engagement with the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration.

7. In response to these challenges and recommendations, FAO launched the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM) in 2014 at the 22nd Session of the Committee on Forestry, to help countries meet the Bonn Challenge commitments, the Aichi Targets and other internationally agreed forest-related goals and targets, galvanizing the Organization's work in close collaboration with key partners under the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration.

II. The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030

8. The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, declared by the UN General Assembly on 1 March 2019⁴, aims to massively scale-up the restoration of degraded and destroyed ecosystems as a proven measure to fight climate change and improve food security, water supply and biodiversity.

9. Ecosystems are being degraded at an unprecedented rate, affecting the food systems and livelihoods of millions of people. The Decade on Ecosystem Restoration will help countries race against the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss and open new avenues also for forest and landscape restoration.

² The Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) 2011. A World of Opportunity. World Resources Institute, South Dakota State University and IUCN. Authored by Minnemeyer, S., Laestadius, L., Sizer, N., Saint-Laurent, C. and Potapov, P.

³ FAO, 2009. High Level Expert Forum – How to Feed the World in 2050. Office of the Director, Agricultural Development Economics Division. Rome, Italy. 4p.

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1182090/icode/>

10. UN Environment and FAO will lead the implementation of the Decade other partners. The Decade, a global call for action, will draw together political support, scientific research and financial muscle to massively scale up restoration from successful pilot initiatives to areas of millions of hectares. In addition, the Decade will be a catalyst and accelerate existing global restoration goals, for example the Bonn Challenge, the Initiative 20x20, and AFR100 African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative, among others.

III. Forest and landscape restoration globally and regionally

A) The Bonn Challenge

11. It was launched in 2011 by the Government of Germany and IUCN, and later endorsed and extended by the New York Declaration on Forests at the 2014 UN Climate Summit.

12. Underlying the Bonn Challenge is the FLR approach, which aims to restore ecological integrity while improving human wellbeing through multifunctional landscapes.

13. The Bonn Challenge is not a new global commitment but rather a practical means of realizing many existing international commitments, including the CDB Aichi Target 15, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) REDD+ goal, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, under the Land Degradation Neutrality -LDN- goal. It is an implementation vehicle for national priorities such as water and food security and rural development while contributing to the fulfilment of international climate change, biodiversity and land degradation commitments.

B) The Initiative 20x20

14. Initiative 20x20 is a country-led effort seeking to change the dynamics of land degradation in Latin America and the Caribbean by bringing 20 million hectares of land into restoration by 2020. The initiative—launched formally at COP 20 in Lima—supports the Bonn Challenge and the New York Declaration on Forests.

15. So far, 17 Latin American and Caribbean countries and three regional programs have committed to begin restoring more than 50 million hectares (or about 124 million acres, an area roughly the size of France) of degraded land by 2020 through Initiative 20x20.

16. The initiative is supported by more than 40 technical organizations and institutions, and a coalition of impact investors and private funds deploying US\$2.4 billion in private investment.

IV. FAO support for forest and landscape restoration globally and in Latin America

17. FAO is involved in a number of forest and landscape restoration activities in collaboration with several partners. Through the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism, FAO supports the scaling-up, monitoring and reporting for the restoration of forests and other degraded land, particularly at the country level. To date, it has been funded through extra budgetary sources from the governments of Germany, Korea, France and Sweden and from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). By means of a selection process adopted by the Mechanism's advisory group based on a multi-criteria assessment, several countries were selected to receive technical and financial support from the Mechanism charged to currently available funding. Several factors were considered for selecting the most suitable candidates, for example, pledges and commitments under the Bonn Challenge, and compliance with FAO Country Programing Framework guidelines. The first countries selected for the 2015-18 period were Cambodia, Philippines, Guatemala, Lebanon, Peru, Rwanda and Uganda. Burkina Faso, Central

African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Fiji, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Philippines, and Sao Tome and Principe are currently receiving support.

18. For the first five-year period (2015-2020), the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism will focus principally on:

- Facilitating a multi-stakeholder process in selected countries to define needs and opportunities for forest and landscape restoration resulting, as needed, in a national FLR plan that includes: a) areas targeted for restoration; b) the potential roles and responsibilities of all actors; c) capacity development needs, and d) financial resources and technical support required and an indication of how to mobilize such support.
- Developing, compiling and disseminating tools and best practices related to FLR, taking into account existing related efforts (e.g., on land use planning, participation, genetic resources, biodiversity protection from pests and disease, fire management, water and soil conservation, landscape values, etc.).
- Building the planning, implementation, funding, and monitoring and evaluation capacities of regional, national and local forest and landscape restoration initiatives.
- Supporting the establishment of pilot projects and helping broker new large-scale projects and programmes with national, bilateral and multilateral donors and the private sector.
- Contributing to adequate quality control of consolidated forest landscape restoration initiatives, to ensure compliance of accepted guidelines, standards and criteria.

19. At the global level, the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism is also involved in:

- Developing guidelines and standards, in collaboration with other partners, for the establishment of baselines and the monitoring, measurement, reporting and verification of successful restoration efforts.
- Providing a financial intelligence function, identifying and making available to countries and implementing agencies specific information about funding sources for FLR, as well as informing financial and donor institutions about the needs and opportunities for funding FLR.
- Contributing to more effective embedding and reporting on FLR actions in global and regional commitments and processes.
- Contributing to improving monitoring and evaluation systems for restoration activities, as well as their impact on the environment and local communities that have been directly affected.
- Helping to build and support operational partnerships on FLR, striving for increased intersectoral collaboration.

20. The FLR Mechanism is working closely and in full complementarity with other FAO-hosted agreements and programs, such as the United Nations Collaborative Program on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD Program), the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF), the Mountain Partnership Secretariat, the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) Initiative, the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands program, and the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT).

21. The work of the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism is already embedded in FAO's Strategic Framework, in particular the Strategic Objectives to "Increase and improve the provision of

goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner” (SO2) and “Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises” (SO5). Under Strategic Objective 2, work of the FLR Mechanism is linked in particular to Output 2.1.3: “Organizational and institutional capacities strengthened to support innovation and the transition toward more sustainable production systems”. It contributes to the delivery of the Major Area of Work on Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity, as well as to the Regional Water Scarcity Initiative in the Near East and North Africa.

22. In addition, FAO in Latin America has been working to develop funding for projects focusing chiefly on restoration, several of which have received Green Climate Fund support, among them:

- In Paraguay, the “Poverty, Reforestation, Energy and Climate Change” (PROEZA) project, executed by FAO with the Government of Paraguay. The objective of the project is to reduce the adverse effects of climate change in the country while reducing rural poverty, combating deforestation and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. The project will also support the transition to sustainable forest management to reduce the loss of forest surface in the country and improve the quality of life of some 17,000 vulnerable households in 64 municipal districts located in eight departments in eastern Paraguay. Funding will be provided through a GCF grant of USD 25 million and another 65.2 million through Government of Paraguay co-funding.
- In El Salvador, the objective of the “Upscaling climate resilience measures in the dry corridor agroecosystems of El Salvador” (RECLIMA) project is to improve the resilience of family farmers vulnerable to climate change applying an integrated landscape approach in 114 municipalities in El Salvador’s Dry Corridor, at a total cost of USD 127.7 million. GCF will earmark approximately USD 35.8 million for the project and the Government of El Salvador USD 91.8 million. RECLIMA will promote a profound change in the food systems of the country’s Dry Corridor to help eradicate hunger and poverty and address the challenges of climate change. The project also aims to reduce and/or capture more than 4 million metric tons of carbon over a five-year period.

V. Points for consideration by the Commission

23. The Committee may wish to invite countries to:

- Actively engage in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) and request FAO to provide appropriate technical support, including through the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism, to enhance enabling conditions and support on-site restoration of degraded ecosystems.
- Consider the restoration of degraded forests and landscapes as an integral part of any sustainable development strategy/plan/agenda and promote a shared multi-sector vision and actions to help define, enhance and monitor restoration actions and agendas and national and territorial development programs that involve the full engagement of public and private sector stakeholders, the academic community and legitimately represented civil society.
- Consolidate, at a national and territorial level, formal spaces to engage public and private sector institutions, the academic community and legitimately represented civil society, to define, enhance and monitor restoration actions and agendas taking advantage of the experiences and existing information systems in different sectors to report on progress and outcomes to all levels.
- Consider developing a roadmap for long-term action in ecosystem restoration that can be implemented within the framework of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030).

24. The Committee may wish to recommend to FAO to:

- Continue developing and promoting good practices to support FLR actions aimed at increasing food security, mitigating poverty, supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, and continue developing and validating FLR monitoring and evaluation methods.
- Promote, in collaboration with national governments, linkages and complementarity among forestry, farming and conservation development incentives to strengthen and facilitate adequate restoration governance based on a landscape approach.