



## Digital Welcome package for regional consultations Global Forest Education Project 2021

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### Overview:

The FAO Secretariat in support of the Forest Education Project has prepared a digital welcome package for the 6 Regional consultations scheduled to take place from January – March 2021. The package features opening remarks from 3 key speakers who provide an overview of the completed and intended work implemented under the project and provide participants with a broad level overview on the status of the project before diving into regionally specific elements featured in the regional draft reports.

The Digital welcome package features video messages from;

1. Dr Andrew Taber, Team Leader for Social Forestry at FAO and the Lead Technical Officer for the Global Forest Education Project
2. Dr Eva Mueller, Director General for Forests, Sustainability and Renewable Resources of Germany's Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL)
3. Dr Mika Rekola, Chair of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Global Forest Education Project

### Dr. Andrew Taber

Dear regional experts, teachers, professors, students, colleagues and friends of forest education.

I would like to thank you for joining us in these regional consultations on forest education being undertaken in six parts of the world. They are being led by our local partners between mid-January and February 2021. We look forward to hearing your perspectives and recommendations on what is needed to strengthen forest education.

I am Andrew Taber - Team Leader for Social Forestry at FAO and the Lead Technical Officer for the Global Forest Education Project. This project is funded by the German Government and led by FAO together with ITTO and IUFRO, and our regional partners.

- Our aim is to build understanding of the status of forest education and put in place a framework for strengthening it globally.
- The project responds to concerns that forest education is too often insufficient and outdated -- yet recognizing that it provides a critical foundation for the sustainable management of forests and trees, so essential for sustainable development.
- As you will know from the background material, we have undertaken a global survey of forest education - the most comprehensive to date.

- The survey findings, the regional consultations and key information from other sources will inform 6 regional reports on the status, needs and prospects for building a thriving forest education system globally.
- We will be drafting a global report synthesizing results from all to and provide a full picture of forest education. It will help us understand how we can work together to revitalize this essential discipline.
- Two other project elements include development of:
  - a prototype online platform on forest education led by IUFRO, and
  - an online course on legal and sustainable supply chains of tropical wood and tropical forest products led by ITTO.
- The project will convene an international conference in 2021 to present the findings of the project, raise the visibility of forest education, examine how it can meet global needs, and inspire action.
- Finally and most important, we will develop a strategic vision and framework for a long-term, multi-partner global effort in forest education, possibly as a joint initiative of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. This initiative will draw upon the findings and recommendations of the project to catalyze long term commitment and investments in strengthened forest education.

#### Your role:

- We want to draw on your experience and expertise to add value to the regional reports and the global assessment.
- We look forward to collectively brainstorming the challenges and solutions for forest education in your regions.
- We have enormous respect for your experience on the ground, in classrooms and in the field – your input will help identify and prioritize the actions needed to transform forest education.
- I thank you all for your willingness to participate, reflecting your commitment to forest education – so essential to ensure the perpetuity of forests and frankly global sustainability to benefit everyone.

#### Dr. Eva Mueller

Dear regional experts, teachers, professors, students, graduates, colleagues and friends of forest education.

Allow me to introduce myself first: I am Eva Mueller, Director General for Forests, Sustainability and Renewable Resources of Germany's Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL). I am pleased to let you know that we provide financial support to the work of FAO, ITTO and IUFRO in forest education.

I thank you all for joining us for these regional consultations. Your participation and active engagement in a subject we believe is of utmost importance is highly appreciated.

I am looking forward to your opinions and recommendations on the status of forest education and on options for the path forward to make forest education fit to meet the challenges of today and of the future.

### **Background and problem statement:**

The topic of forest education has been missing from the global forestry agenda for over 20 years. More recently, however, we are seeing a renewed interest as realization seems to be growing that forest education needs to respond to a rapidly changing world. Let me mention a few of these to illustrate this:

- Global demands on forests are increasing. Climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation and production of renewable resources for the bio-economy are the keywords here.
- Society's perceptions of and expectations from forests are becoming more articulated. And this concerns in particular the services forests provide.
- Technological development and digitalization are changing forest management.
- And employment trends are changing, the workforce in forestry is ageing and curricula are often outdated and too narrowly focused.

What does this mean in practice?

It means that forest education needs to be revamped and rebranded to attract the most talented and interested students, and thus maintain a strong cadre of skilled foresters and environmental professionals.

It also means expanding programmes to offer a broader spectrum of forest knowledge, skills and experiences.

New, forest related topics should be included such as biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, agroforestry, the role of forests for human health and well-being, and so on.

But we should also consider important non-forestry topics such as communication and digitalization or leadership skills and team working.

Finally, we should also broaden the geographical scope and consider forests in the global context. For this, we need to link forest education to global debates on all forest related issues, and to foster international networking, online communication and E-education.

### **The solution through the project:**

At BMEL, we fully recognize the urgency to act and have therefore made forest education a priority area for our engagement in international forest policy.

We have been supporting FAO and its partners ITTO and IUFRO in undertaking a global assessment of the status and needs of forest education, establishing a new global forest education platform and launching a multi-year, multi-partner initiative for collaborative and individual actions to strengthen forest education globally.

We have also engaged with the European Forest Institute (EFI) and the International Forest Student Association (IFSA) to get the forestry students more involved, as they are the ones who are directly concerned.

We believe there are a number of key questions you could be addressing in the regional consultations:

1. What are the critical deficiencies in forest education and what are the greatest needs?
2. where are the key entry points that allow us to make the changes that have the largest impact?
3. How can we make forest and forest-related education available, accessible and inclusive for all?
4. What can international collaboration do to add value to and scale up efforts to enhance global forest education? And who should be involved?
5. And finally, what innovative approaches are already out there and what can we learn from them?

The global forest education survey, the regional reports and the regional consultations are expected to provide some answers to these questions. Based on these our partners hope to set up a far bigger initiative to support the evolution of the forest education moving forward.

In closing, let me thank you for your willingness to engage in this discussion and welcome you to the community of the “friends of forest education”. I hope that this consultation will be the start of a more permanent and fruitful dialogue that will help bring forest education into the 21<sup>st</sup> century!

## Dr. Mika Rekola

Dear forest education experts,

We would like to thank you joining us for this regional consultation on forest education. You have now received the regional report as background material.

Your expertise in this field will help us ensure that the report reflects the current reality, And perhaps most importantly, your contribution will be essential as we collectively brainstorm solutions to the challenges facing forest education in your region.

My name is Mika Rekola, I am the chair of the Technical Advisory Committee of the Global Forest Education Project. It is my pleasure to briefly describe to you how this report has been made.

The project group comprised of the regional lead partners and the FAO Secretariat. Together we have planned and implemented a global survey on forest education. Its results represent the main source of information for six regional reports. The survey data was supplemented by information from the scientific literature, key studies and expert opinion.

To make a the global survey was a rigorous process, with many months of consideration of the scope and levels of forest education to be assessed, the topics to be covered, and details of questions.

The survey was expansive, but comprehensive covering four formal levels of education: namely, primary, secondary, technical and vocational education and training, and university and college level. Survey questions touched upon curriculum coverage and gaps, teaching approaches, educational resources digital tools, workplace readiness and employability of graduates, to name a few

The survey study had in fact three independent but related surveys with three specific target groups:

- first, organizations, governmental agencies and the private sector
- second, teachers and school administrators
- third, enrolled students and recent graduates.

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Our regional partners selected key experts for a scientific sample. This targeted approach was complemented by a snowball sampling through social media and outreach campaigns.

The three surveys each including 14 language variants were released in mid-June and stayed open until mid-November of 2020.

COVID -19 pandemic and its high impact on students and educational institutions is well-known. This required an intense effort to ensure an adequate response rate. In the end, we were pleased to have a total of 2 600 responses.

The regional reports, based now on the survey, will inform a global synthesis report which will compare and contrast regional differences, draw out challenges and will focus on key interventions to reinvigorate the topic, boost enrolment and develop forest related programmes.

We cannot thank you enough for your support to this endeavour. It is an undertaking that we feel is essential to better align formal forest education with the need for a more holistic and integrated forestry sector. Finally, I believe that forests and education related to them have a big role in the achievement of the sustainable development goals.