

Concept Note

International Conference on Forest Education

22 – 24 June 2021

INTRODUCTION

The International Conference on Forest Education (ICFE) will convene stakeholders from around the world to examine the status of forest education and identify and promote action to meet global needs. The Conference builds on a year-long effort by the Global Forest Education Project^[1] to collect, synthesise and verify the status of forest education; develop pilot online tools in support of forest knowledge, information sharing and networking; and catalyse a resurgence of interest in and support for forest education. The ICFE is being organized by six members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

BACKGROUND

Forest education is the primary means to build the knowledge, skills and shared values that underpin sustainable forest management and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and other forest-related goals at local, national, and global scales. Forest education can and must be part of the solution to many pressing environmental and societal needs, among which are reducing the rate of deforestation and forest degradation; protecting and restoring ecosystems; enhancing livelihoods; safeguarding human health, nutrition and well-being; conserving biodiversity; and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Forest education, training and knowledge must adapt and rise to meet the many challenges facing the forest sector in different parts of the world. These include:

- changes in societal expectations of the goods and services to be provided by forests and trees;
- changing trends in forest and forest-related employment;
- declining interest of young people in pursuing forest-related careers;
- an ageing forest workforce;
- insufficient inclusion of populations that depend on forests especially women, Indigenous Peoples, and vulnerable rural communities;
- an erosion of traditional and indigenous forest-related knowledge; and
- the continual need to integrate the latest science and traditional knowledge into forest education and training systems.

Over the past several years, various international fora and studies have noted promising developments in forest education. However, they have also raised concerns that in many places forest education is too

¹ For more information about the project, please see: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/forest-education/en/>

narrowly focused and under-resourced, and that forest graduates are insufficiently prepared to meet the demands of the contemporary workplace. These concerns were confirmed by a global survey and regional consultations held, respectively in 2020 and 2021, by the Global Forest Education Project. Three key pillars were identified as essential to provide a comprehensive package for forest education, training and knowledge sharing to serve as a foundation for sustainable forest management in the modern world. These are: (i) formal forest education, (ii) non-formal forest education and training (including extension programmes and farmer field schools), and (iii) integration of traditional and indigenous forest-related knowledge systems. It is crucial that all three pillars are strong and resilient, and that they are inclusive across society globally.

There is an urgent global need to reignite interest in forest education and forest careers, to rebrand and revamp forest education, to take advantage of modern digital communication tools and information technologies, to promote traditional and indigenous forest-related knowledge systems, and to prepare students to tap into new jobs in the growing green economy. Without a revitalization of forest education, it will be difficult to maximize the contributions of forests and trees to the Sustainable Development Goals and to overcome the growing disconnect between people, nature, and forests.

ORGANIZERS AND PARTNERS

The planning and implementation of this conference is a cooperative effort of six members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, namely the:

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)
- International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO)
- Center for International Forestry Research- World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF)
- Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

The conference is generously supported by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture of the Government of Germany (BMEL).

SCOPE

The Conference will review the three pillars of forest education and knowledge: formal forest education; non-formal and informal education; and traditional and indigenous knowledge systems.

GOAL

The goal of the Conference is to generate momentum for individual and multi-actor efforts, including those of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, to strengthen forest education, training, and knowledge sharing systems. It will further support the UNESCO-led Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 agenda, and the achievement of various SDGs and global forest-related goals.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the ICFE are to:

1. Focus attention on the need to maintain and enhance forest education and knowledge systems;
2. Enhance awareness of the status of forest education at global and regional levels;
3. Raise visibility and support for a Call to Action on Forest Education and individual and collective efforts to strengthen forest education and knowledge, including by the CPF;
4. Collect views for the further development of global platforms that facilitate information sharing and networking on forest education and knowledge; and
5. Facilitate the development of communities of interest (geographic, thematic, and educational level) in forest education and knowledge.

FORMAT

The ICFE will be conducted virtually on an online platform.

PARTICIPANTS

Conference participants will include forest education stakeholders from around the world among which will be policymakers, forest and environmental educators, forestry students, NGOs, community-based and Indigenous Peoples' organizations, the private sector, and regional and global organizations. The number of participants will be limited to 1000 due to the capacity of the online platform. All interested stakeholders are invited to express their interest to attend. To do so, **they must submit a pre-registration form**. The conference organizers will send the meeting link as well as the guidelines on engagement to confirmed participants.

LANGUAGES

Simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Spanish will be provided for the plenary sessions and certain breakout groups.

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE, CONTENT AND TIMETABLE

The ICFE will include plenary sessions and breakout groups that will allow interactive exchanges among the participants. The timing of the sessions will allow for maximum participation of participants in different time zones.

CALL TO ACTION ON FOREST EDUCATION

The ICFE will release a Call to Action on Forest Education as an outcome of the conference. It will serve as a reference point and guide for those wishing to intensify or expand their efforts in forest education, including the CPF. The Call to Action will be prepared and shared with conference participants and other

stakeholders for comment in advance of the conference but will not be a product of a negotiation process. Participants at the ICFE and subsequently, organizations, will be invited to endorse the Call to Action.

CONTACT

Please contact forest-education@fao.org for any questions.

The pre-registration form and more details about the ICFE are available on the conference website: www.fao.org/forestry/forest-education/96827/en/.