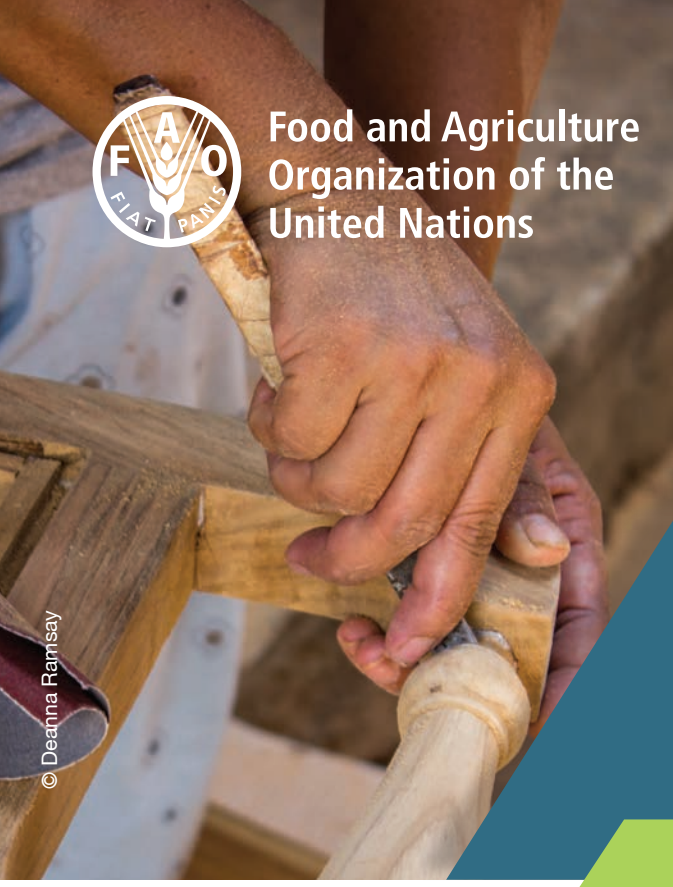

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Building a forest-based bioeconomy to halt climate change and achieve multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

A STATEMENT FROM THE ACSFI

October 2021

The **Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries (ACSFI)** is a statutory body that guides the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on issues concerning the sustainable production, utilization and consumption of forest products. It also serves as a forum for dialogue between FAO and the private sector, identifying strategic actions across forest sector value-chains in order to promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The ACSFI acknowledges that forest-based industries make an essential contribution to net zero emission targets, to which many businesses have committed in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change to hold the global rise in average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit this even further to 1.5 degrees. The Fourth Assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlighted the central role played by forests and forest product industries in meeting this ambition. Furthermore, forest industries contribute to reducing material footprint and increasing material efficiency by promoting the reduce, reuse, recycle and residual management approach of forest products, including paper and paper packaging. As countries seek sustainable pathways to economic recovery in the post-COVID-19 era, the importance of forest-based industries for sustainable economic development in support of a transition towards a sustainable circular bioeconomy is further amplified. The Fourth Assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) supported the important role forest industries will play in meeting this ambition.

The ACSFI emphasizes that sustainable forest-based industries contribute to the achievement of the SDGs for a better, more sustainable, and inclusive future, targeting in particular:

- **SDG 7 "Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all."** Where appropriate, wood residuals can be utilized as a source of renewable energy production, which can help reduce dependence on fossil fuel-based energy.
- **SDG 8 "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all"**. Forest-based industries, both in developing and developed countries, comprise both large companies and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises that provide decent jobs and subsistence to forest-dependent communities. In addition, woodworking enterprises often operate in accordance with the principles of sustainable consumption and production.
- **SDG 9 "Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation"**. Wood is a widely and abundantly available construction material with a lower environmental impact than available alternatives. Technological innovations have enabled its usage in large-scale projects, particularly in the built environment, fostering a greener infrastructure.
- **SDG 12 "Ensure sustainable production and consumption patterns"**. Renewability, resource efficiency and the responsible sourcing of forest products lie at the heart of the concept of a sustainable circular bioeconomy. Higher resource efficiency, increasing cascade manufacturing approaches and responsible harvesting of wood and non-wood forest products help meet myriad human needs related to building and housing, hygiene and health, packaging, clothing, food, etc. These products are often essential for people's everyday lives and easy to recycle. For example, 59% of the demand for paper is met from recycled paper, which in turn spurs sustainable production and consumption, while limiting the material footprint.
- **SDG 13 "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts"**. As acknowledged in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, sustainably managed forests and trees play a crucial role in reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Not only do forests act as major carbon sinks; sustainably harvested wood products also contain higher embodied carbon and thus help mitigate the environmental impacts of construction and infrastructure development projects. Endeavouring to substitute fossil fuel-based products with sustainably sourced forest products can play a critically important role in halting climate change. This substitution can be particularly useful in developing sustainable cities and built environments.
- **SDG 15 "Life on Earth"**. In addition to the climate benefits, products from renewable and sustainable forest-based materials can be manufactured in such a way as to also safeguard biodiversity, soil, water and other forest related environmental values, providing deforestation-free products and actively contributing to ecosystem restoration through legal and sustainable forest-based value chains.

The ACSFI commits to working together with relevant stakeholders to:

- **Incentivize and encourage the responsible production and consumption of sustainable forest-based products** and disincentivize the use of non-renewable, fossil-based and greenhouse gas (GHG)-intensive products.
- **Strengthen and further recognize the important role played by forests, active forestry and forest products in the transition towards a functioning, sustainable circular bioeconomy.** This role includes product substitution and the carbon storage of forest ecosystems and wood products. As such, while promoting actions to mitigate climate change locally, steps should be taken to disincentivize trade in forest products that may cause illegal deforestation or forest degradation.
- **Design and implement procurement procedures and relevant reporting frameworks that promote sustainable goods and services.** This could include, for example, sustainability scoring systems in bidding or purchase evaluation processes and the implementation of due diligence, transparency and accountability measures and systems.
- **Facilitate the development and implementation of efficient wood-product value chains that optimize opportunities for the cascading use of wood to extend the life-cycle of wood products and develop innovative products.** Possibilities for upscaling good practices can be sought in areas such as innovative wood biorefineries and recycling systems.
- **Ensure the sustainable and circular flow of renewable materials** in the economy throughout the value-chain: from sustainable resource management and efficient transformation to responsibly handling products at the end of their life cycles.
- **Develop post-consumer waste streams** for all forest products and seek to create circular production and consumption systems that minimize landfilling. The paper sector is an exemplar that could inspire other forest industry segments to develop multiple post-consumer waste streams. Improvements in repairability, durability, upgradability, and recyclability must be emphasized across all sectors.
- **Foster research to improve the understanding of product and market level substitution effects.** Substitution effects can encompass a range of SDGs including climate and other environmental categories; products can include traditional as well as emerging products.
- **Strengthen international cooperation among scientific, industrial, and financial institutions** to spur faster innovation and the diversification of forest-product value chains, while also promoting consumption levels that can be sustainably met at a global level.
- **Upgrade educational curricula** at all levels, including professional training and expert peer networks, to ensure that forest-based bioeconomy orientation is inculcated among professionals in such diverse areas as engineering, architecture and design, city planning, and other professionals and practitioners, facilitating transformation to a sustainable future while creating green jobs.

The ACSFI recommends *FAO, in collaboration with international organizations, to:*

- **Facilitate comparative studies and global data collection efforts for monitoring the bioeconomy** to assess progress and identify and address knowledge and implementation gaps to foster the transformation to a sustainable, circular bioeconomy.
- **Facilitate knowledge exchange** to support countries and the private sector in the transformation to a forest-based bioeconomy by sharing technical knowledge, model practices, and innovations.
- **Promote international partnerships** between academia, industry, financial and public administration institutions, to transition to a forest-based bioeconomy through sustainable and responsible production and consumption patterns, particularly related to forest products with significant substitution potential.

The ACSFI and its members call upon FAO, its member countries, the private sector and other stakeholders to jointly strengthen their commitment to **building back better in a post-COVID-19 world, through fostering the ongoing development of a forest-based bioeconomy**, wherein sustainable production, utilization, and consumption amount to a key strategy in halting climate change, achieving multiple SDGs, ensuring inclusive growth and safeguarding the livelihoods of billions of people dependent on forests and forest-based industries.

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE FOREST-BASED INDUSTRIES (ACSFI)

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