



XV WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

Building a Green, Healthy and Resilient Future with Forests

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Work with Us – Youth Call for Action

We, the Youth,¹ constitute a large part of the world’s population and are well placed for the invention and development of new forms of action and activism, generating effective responses to issues of concern. As youth and young professionals (henceforth referred collectively as Youth) interested in working for and contributing expertise to the forest sector, we can advance innovative ideas and provide critical ambition and skills to take up the global challenge of halting deforestation and forest degradation and promoting sustainable forest management. Meaningful reforms in the area of sustainable forest management, and building a green, healthy and resilient future with forests, can only be successful with the full engagement of all stakeholders, particularly the Youth. We warn of the risk of “youth mainstreaming” practices where the role and involvement of Youth is “tokenized”, and Youth representatives are asked to speak but are commonly not given enough access to higher levels of decision-making. Ultimately, this results in a lost opportunity to capitalize on our expertise and our scientific and indigenous knowledge.

We, the Youth, identify limited career development programmes and, in many cases, outdated academic programmes for forest education, which do not sufficiently prepare us to enter the workforce and develop our careers in the forest sector. Adapting to a dynamic and evolving forest sector also implies adapting training and education to evolving requirements, such as mechanized harvesting and increased communication with forest users. Financial support for forest training is needed, as these are becoming increasingly expensive due to the low ratio of pupils and the necessary training material, such as forestry machines and equipment, safety and logistic costs, and new technologies.

We, the Youth, still face limited decent employment and career development opportunities in the forest sector², thus constraining a smooth transition from education to the industry, and the socio-economic integration of young generations. Additionally, entry-level forest work often has lower than average wages, which limits the attractiveness of the sector to Youth. Developing a sustainable workforce requires that forest jobs are safer, better paid, and more attractive for young workers, especially for young women. Limited access to financial opportunities also constrains the ability of Youth to engage in forest-related entrepreneurship, exchange and research, exacerbated by limited access to information, networks, excessive bureaucracy, and a lack of digital and physical infrastructure.

¹ We define the Youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 40, as to include young professionals working for and contributing to the forest sector.

² “There is no commonly agreed definition of the forestry sector. Ideally, the sector should be defined to include all economic activities that mostly depend on the production of goods and services from forests. This would include commercial activities that are dependent on the production of wood fibre (i.e. production of industrial roundwood, woodfuel and charcoal; sawnwood and wood based panels; pulp and paper; and wooden furniture). It would also include activities such as the commercial production and processing of non-wood forest products and the subsistence use of forest products. It could even include economic activities related to production of forest services (although it would be difficult to determine exactly which activities are really dependent on forest services).” **Source:** <https://www.fao.org/3/ad493e/ad493e05.htm>

Vision

With your support and collaboration, we, the Youth, envision a world where we have inclusive and equitable access to high-quality forest education, as well as to decent work and career development opportunities for Youth everywhere.

Mission

We, the Youth, are committed to contributing to building a green, healthy and resilient future with forests. Capitalizing on our networks, exploring partnerships with private and public sector actors from local to global, academia and civil society, we seek to overcome barriers to our meaningful contribution to the forest sector, including achieving the Global Forest Goals, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and progressive and meaningful national and private sector forest-related sustainable objectives.

To achieve our vision and mission, we need concerted efforts from the public sector, the private sector, academia, and non-governmental organizations, operating at the international, national and local scales, within and beyond the forest sector. We, the Youth, invite these actors to:

Work with us to ensure inclusive and equitable access to high-quality forest education and trainings for Youth everywhere

- Improve programmes that prepare the Youth in technical knowledge but also on socio-economic and global political economy perspectives of the forest sector;
- Expand the number of scholarships available, particularly in developing countries, and enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building programmes;
- Improve and standardize technical vocational education and training opportunities for Youth that combine on-the-job training and off-the-job learning;

Work with us to ensure decent work and career development for Youth everywhere

- Engage with Youth to better understand how the forest sector can be a more appealing career option for Youth and create more decent job and career development and advancement opportunities;
- Increase investments and access to finance in small forestry businesses, including Youth entrepreneurship and projects, and support development of value-chains in youth-led forest-related enterprises;
- Strengthen and enhance multisectoral collaboration between governments and the private and academic sectors to provide high-quality mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities to ensure a smooth entry into the workforce for Youth;

Work with us to achieve gender equality and empower all young women in the forest sector

- Foster multisectoral collaboration between governments and the private and academic sectors to promote gender-inclusive practices in recruitment and selection processes;
- Promote women's leadership at all levels of decision-making in the forest sector;
- Foster multisectoral collaboration between governments, the private and academic sectors to promote training of female teams to work in the field as well as training on non-tolerated behaviors and gender biases in the workplace;

Work with us to ensure political participation and representation in the forest sector for all Youth

- Improve the diversification of boards, advisory committees and task forces by actively seeking and inviting qualified Youth to join;
- Depending on the context, to avoid the tokenization of Youth participation, make Youth part of the quorum in decision-making;
- Include Youth in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating outcomes of programmes and projects that may impact Youth;

We, the Youth, acknowledge the collaborative nature of these recommendations and we invite governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the scientific community, the academic sector and the private sector to provide an enabling environment for us to unlock our potential in the forest sector. We, the Youth, also recognize the role the XV World Forestry Congress has played in empowering and responding to the needs of Youth, enabling them to showcase their contributions to the sector and to network and engage in mentorship, and we encourage all stakeholders in the forest sector to carry on with this example.