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STATE OF THE

WORLD'S FORESTS

2009



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Foreword

State of the World's Forests, published biennially, provides a global view of major developments affecting forests. The theme for the 2009 edition is "Society, forests and forestry: adapting for the future".

The 2007 issue reviewed "Progress towards sustainable forest management" with an emphasis on the "supply side", in particular forest resources. *State of the World's Forests 2009* places more emphasis on the "demand side": What will be the impact on forests of future increases in global population, economic development and globalization? Is the explosion in global trade having positive or negative effects on the world's forests? Will the forest sector continue to have a major role in providing livelihoods for rural communities?

This eighth edition looks forward. Part 1 summarizes the outlook for forests and forestry in each region of the world. FAO periodically carries out regional forest sector outlook studies in collaboration with countries and organizations in each region. The results of studies for all regions are summarized and presented here for the first time in a single publication. A main pattern that emerges is a strong correlation between economic development and the state of forests. Countries that are undergoing rapid economic growth tend to struggle with immense pressures on their forests. In contrast, regions that have already achieved a high level of economic development are usually able to stabilize or increase their forest area. However, the factors affecting forests are numerous and complex, making it difficult to draw simple conclusions or to make reliable projections.

Part 2 considers how forestry will have to adapt for the future. It begins with a global outlook for wood products demand to 2030, noting changing patterns in production, consumption and trade. Next, a chapter on environmental services of forests probes the various market and non-market mechanisms evolving to help forests and trees fulfil their environmental service functions of land, water

and biodiversity protection, carbon storage and others. A look at progress in institutional adaptation notes that many forestry institutions are having difficulty in adapting to rapid changes in communications, globalization and society's expectations. Those institutions that are willing and able to adapt are more likely to be successful in the future. Finally, Part 2 examines developments in science and technology, which will continue to have an enormous impact on the future of forests and forestry. Imagine a world in which trees are a major source of fuel for cars, replacing oil. Only a few years ago, this seemed like fantasy, but today the possibility must be seriously considered.

As this edition was going to press in late 2008, the global economy had spun into sharp decline, sparked by the contraction of the housing sector and the subprime mortgage crisis in the United States of America. Almost all countries have been affected by this downturn. While these events occurred too late to be incorporated in the main text of *State of the World's Forests 2009*, a postscript has been added addressing the observed and likely impacts of the economic crisis on forests and forestry. It notes that while there is considerable uncertainty about how the situation will unfold in the coming years, the crisis could also provide an opportunity to chart a new path for the development of the forest sector.

State of the World's Forests 2009 has two main goals. As with past editions, it is intended to serve as a source of information to support policy and research related to forests. In addition, I hope that it helps to stimulate creative thinking and debate about the future of the world's forests.



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