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COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

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Strategic Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work in Forestry

Report of the Expert Panel

Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work in Forestry
Report of the Expert Panel
May 23 2012

**Uma Lele (Chair), Doris Capistrano, David Kaimowitz, Godwin Kowero, Markku Simula
and Ivan Tomaselli**

Background

1. The Expert Panel ('the Panel') met in Rome from 9th to 11th May 2012. It reviewed relevant evaluation documents, and met with the OED Manager Rachel Bedouin, the Evaluation team leader Jürgen Blaser, and team members Marko Katila and Brenna Moore. The Panel also met FAO senior managers and staff, notably:

- Eduardo Rojas-Briales, Assistant Director-General, Forestry Department
- Eva Muller, Director, Forestry Department
- Mette Loyche-Wilkie, Principal Officer, Forestry Department
- David Conte, Programme Coordinator, Forestry Department, and
- Alexander Müller, Assistant Director-General, Natural Resources Management and Environment Department.

The Panel also held several internal discussions and provided detailed written and oral comments to the team. This report summarizes the Panel's key conclusions and recommendations.

Summary Assessment

2. The Panel would like to congratulate the Evaluation Team – consisting of Jürgen Blaser, Marko Katila, Hans Gregersen, James Gasana and Deborah Davenport, as well as Richard Eba'a Atyi as a contributor – for a comprehensive and insightful report on a complex subject, notwithstanding some constraints the team encountered. The evaluation report ('the Report') generally followed the terms of reference set out for the evaluation. The Panel agrees with the analysis and conclusions of the report in broad terms. The Panel believes the report can be strengthened by bringing in some of the material contained in the inception report, which provides a useful overview of the changing broader context in which FAO's forest activities are conducted, including particularly the role of other actors. In the same vein, the Report's executive summary could better reflect the analysis contained in the main body, by providing a more balanced overview of the evaluation results.

3. The rest of the Panel's comments are provided in three parts: Part 1 provides General Observations, Part 2 offers comments on the substance and Part 3 provides comments on the Report's Conclusions and Recommendations.

Part 1: General Comments

Scope and Methodology

4. Forestry's increasingly complex economic, social and environmental dimensions have come to the forefront in recent years. The evaluation generally does a good job of capturing that complexity, the range of FAO's roles, and the competing demands and expectations on its limited resources. The evaluation report was carried out according to the terms of reference. The methodology laid out in the inception report was sound and the Panel has recommended that some of the excellent material contained in the inception report be brought into the evaluation report to help put it into a broader perspective. Within the limited time and resources in which the evaluation was carried out, its preparation followed sound analytical methods. The evaluation team reviewed existing material, conducted interviews, surveyed member countries, and held consultations with a wide variety of stakeholders and partners. The methodology was also consistent in following up on the evaluation findings and recommendations of FAO's Independent External Evaluation.

Limitations

5. The evaluation team was unable, for various reasons, to meet with senior managers in other key sector departments of FAO handling related matters (e.g. food and agriculture, policy), which deprived it of the perspectives of those departments. More specific limitations in terms of the substantive treatment of the inter-sectoral issues are discussed below in Part 2.

6. While the stakeholder surveys that the evaluators used provide useful and relevant information, they had relatively small sample sizes that could be associated with a possible bias as those that chose to respond might not have been representative of the potential universe of respondents. Given that, the report should be explicit about the surveys' limitations and more cautious in how the results are interpreted.

Part 2: Observations on the Substance

7. The coverage of the report is comprehensive in assessing FAO's work and capacity in forestry, with a few gaps identified below.

8. The evaluation team's characterization of the overall forestry context is a bit too negative. This is partly the result of its focus on the challenges without concurrently acknowledging the successes and opportunities (some of which it had identified in the inception report), and partly the result of a few statements that imply that there has been limited progress in reducing forest loss. The Report should provide a more balanced picture and discuss the role that FAO has played in successes that have occurred. Some positive developments in the forest sector worth highlighting include:

- Acknowledgement of the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation and the increased attention and funding this has brought to the forestry sector, including to FAO.
- More analysis and a more informed debate on specific aspects of forestry.

- Reduced deforestation rates globally (although rates continue to be high in many countries).
- Increased natural regeneration of deforested and degraded areas and other restoration measures in many countries.
- Progress on improving forest tenure security and community forest management and enterprises.
- Increased areas under sustainable management in several developing countries.
- Increased commercial plantations to meet the growing demand for wood and bioenergy.
- The growing private sector involvement in sustainable forest management.
- An advance in FLEGT processes and programs and a growing consensus on basic forest governance principles and practices
- Greater stakeholder participation in forest policy design and forest management.
- Restructuring of public forest administrations taking place in several countries.
- More generally, an increased recognition of forests for their many roles and functions, including the important role of regulating water quality, which in addition to amelioration of climate, supports critical sectors of economies of many countries such as agriculture and food security, wildlife management and tourism, and energy.

9. In the section on Challenges Going Forward, important trends could be mentioned first. For example, the threat of climate change, globalization, poverty reduction and growth in food demand need to be at the top of the agenda, as indeed they should be in the international negotiations and national development policies. In the draft evaluation report they are way down in the current list. These issues have major impacts on forests, but forestry interventions also have significant potential to address them.

General comments

10. The Executive Summary should reflect the key messages in the body of the report in a more balanced way. The Executive Summary needs to recognize FAO's main impacts and contributions while acknowledging the challenges of attribution. Indeed, attribution of success or failures to individual partners is a methodological challenge that all evaluations of partnerships face. This challenge in evaluations of international organizations needs to be acknowledged and its implications addressed throughout the evaluation, e.g., on the issues not just of partnerships but of comparative advantage and leadership among others (as illustrated below).

11. Issues such as FAO's under-utilization of its potential for influence or its "insufficient convening power", noted in the report, need to be treated with care and nuance as, for example, FAO's Committee on Forestry is a highly recognized international forum for its members. This is a strong comparative advantage of FAO. On the whole, convening power of all "traditional international organizations" (i.e. those established in the post-World War II period) is declining as new actors have come onto the scene. Besides, convening power is context specific, and in some areas FAO has more convening power than others. In many areas FAO could enhance its convening power by operating differently, e.g., by being more inclusive with regards to non-government stakeholders in order to bring in other points of view. This is reported to be being achieved successfully through the reform of the Committee on Food Security (CFS), which now

provides an effective voice to diverse non-state stakeholders. This has enabled the CFS to develop voluntary guidelines on land, water and other resources which were approved by the membership on May 11 and they pertain to roles of all key stakeholders. COFO could look to this experience and explore how it can maintain and enhance its traditional comparative advantage of convening power in a new dynamic context and remain relevant and proactive.

12. Some areas not included in the report which could receive more attention include:

- Forests and human health, education and training;
- FAO and the mass media and INFOSYLVA; and
- FAO's role in promoting biophysical research.

13. The evaluation should note the importance of the links between forests and human health, particularly within the proposed focus on food security and poverty reduction, but recognize that FAO has done much work on the topic.

14. Forestry education and training is an area that the FAO once had comparative advantage in but it was abandoned. However, given the critical problems with forestry education and training, particularly on new and emerging issues related to forestry, and the fact that no one is really addressing the related aspects of education and training, FAO might be able to play a key role in championing this issue globally – even if it does not go back to implementing related regular activities in this area.

15. The same thing might be said of FAO's role in biophysical research. Whereas the CGIAR's centers working on food crops conduct research on biophysical aspects, the two forestry centers conduct limited if any biophysical research resulting in a gap which has not been filled by others.

16. While the report touches on issues related to gender, the evaluation team does not say anything about what FAO should do to improve its work in this area. This is a particular shortcoming given that FAO has recently published a report on the role of gender in food and agriculture and has proposed to take leadership role in this area in the future. It would be useful for the evaluation team to include a treatment of the topic including possible links to this new initiative.

FAO's Comparative Advantage

17. The report contains numerous references to FAO's comparative advantage. However, what is meant by 'comparative advantage' needs to be clarified at the outset and used as a reference point in the rest of the report in the assessment of FAO's activities. This needs to be articulated by the team, presented perhaps as a box in the text at the outset. The Panel felt that, among others, FAO's comparative advantage comes from its following characteristics:

- Its intergovernmental nature and access to Governments;
- Neutrality;
- Holistic approach to issues related to food, agriculture and natural resources broadly defined and the cross-sectoral capacity in these areas;
- Convening power;

- Honest broker role among members and other stakeholders;
- Normative functions assigned to it; and
- Long term presence.

18. Any discussion of FAO's comparative advantage and its changing nature should take into account these and other characteristics. Furthermore, in discussing where FAO's comparative advantage lies, two types of comparative advantage could be distinguished:

- *Functional* – e.g. FAO as a generator, collector and custodian of data on global food trends, agriculture, forestry and fisheries.
- *Thematic* – FAO as a technical agency recognized as an actual (or potential) leader/center of excellence on particular aspects related to forests (biophysical, environmental, socio-economic).

19. The Report mentions in various places that functionally FAO has a comparative advantage in producing statistics, making assessments, and providing a convening function, and that thematically it has a comparative advantage in working on aspects that link forestry with agriculture, and on aspects of forestry related to food security, water, and poverty alleviation. While the latter appears frequently in the text, the evaluation team never really elaborates (i) why that would be FAO's comparative advantage, (ii) to what extent the potential is being utilized, and (iii) what the practical implications of that might be. These questions are somewhat elaborated on in the inception report (e.g. Box 1).

20. Factors that undermine FAO's comparative advantage include:

- Limited financing: FAO's overall regular budget contributions by member countries have declined in real terms despite some increase in nominal terms in recent years. The composition of funding sources has changed, and the increasing reliance on extra-budgetary funding, typically unpredictable and restricted to particular topics/activities over relatively short term time frames, increases transaction costs and makes it difficult to implement a coherent, long-term strategic programmatic focus.
- Changing external environment with many new actors competing for the same resources, recognition and visibility.
- Tension between normative and operational work and diverse expectations of its membership, with some member states giving more importance to FAO's normative work (producing global public goods) and others giving more importance to country-level technical assistance.
- Seemingly limited flexibility and slow deliberate speed of its actions due to the inter-governmental nature of decision making and implementation which need addressing – both at the strategic level in the context of a dynamic external environment, and with respect to FAO's changing comparative advantage in that dynamic process.

21. Each of these areas could be turned into a discussion of challenges and opportunities. For example, with respect to the changing external environment, the report defines FAO's place in the *current* constellation of global institutions. This could be articulated in a forward looking context to reflect the evaluation team's best judgment on how FAO could position itself in the future with respect to forestry, given the rapidly changing international context. The evaluation

report could better take into account the material developed in the inception report – e.g. the sections on global forest policy, key international organizations and initiatives, and Figure 1. These sections illustrate both the increasingly complex global forestry agenda, and the fragmentation of efforts without the necessary integrative view of forest functions within the sector or outside forests. This should provide the basis for presenting the Team’s perspectives and way forward.

22. The evaluation report should comment more explicitly on the state and trajectory of FAO’s technical capacity in the basic scientific fields; identifying those fields in which FAO has lost its capacity, and those that will be critical going forward and will require continuing/ new investment (e.g. forest education). These fields may not always be attractive for other partners, but an organization such as FAO needs to remain present in them from a long term perspective.

23. How does a deliberative inter-governmental body maintain flexibility and enough resources to address these issues which require rapid but informed responses in an increasingly competitive world, where other actors are also constantly reassessing their comparative advantage in relation to the changing external context and where there is overlap and gaps? This issue of developing a dynamic comparative advantage also relates to FAO’s strategic objectives both organizational and in the forest sector.

Structure and Organization of Forestry in FAO

24. The reader will be greatly helped if the relationship between FAO’s forestry work and other partners’ was elaborated at the outset of the Report, together with the structure and operational linkages between those units in FAO working on forest-related issues. A description of the organizational structure identifying where synergies exists within and across the departments (now and potentially) will help later to base evaluation recommendations on the more inclusive integrated approach that the authors recommend, i.e., one which encompasses the work of other departments with potential links to forests. This description and assessment is currently missing. The material already contained in the inception report could be useful in this regard.

FAO’s Leadership Role

25. The Report contains a number of statements on FAO’s roles. It would be very helpful if at the outset it (i) identifies all the current roles/activities of FAO, which are already contained in an Annex; (ii) outlines how they compare with activities of other actors (based on the information contained in the inception report) in broad terms; and (iii) provides an assessment of areas for FAO’s unique leadership role from a forward looking point of view along the lines suggested in these comments. (See the comments below related to partnerships).

FAO’s Strategic Objectives

26. The current Strategic Objectives treat forests and forestry as a sectoral intervention area (SO E) within the framework of sustainable management of forests and trees. The Report rightly stresses the need for FAO’s forest activities to build such linkages internally. It needs to

articulate clearly why FAO needs forestry expertise to meet its overarching organizational objectives of food security and poverty reduction, its normative functions, and to serve the multiple functions of forestry. The evaluators should provide their own views as to what kind of inter-sectoral linkages are important for the forest sector to perform more effectively.

27. In the same spirit the Report needs to articulate clearly why the Departments of FAO concerned with food security need each other to pursue a truly cross –sectoral role of forests in climate change, food security, water, energy, poverty reduction, and rural development in contributing to many of FAO’s strategic objectives. This approach should also be reflected adequately in FAO’s Strategic Framework under relevant Strategic Objectives.

Strategy, Activities and Priorities

28. The 2010 Forest Strategy developed by FAO is broad and somewhat vague and yet is forestry centric. It does not see forestry in a cross sectoral and futuristic context dealing with the kinds of issues laid out in the global challenge sections of the evaluation report.

29. There appears to be no clear link between FAO’s many activities and its strategy because of “the missing middle”, namely, ways of translating strategy into priorities. The evaluation report should provide some guidance in this regards by making better use of the material from the inception report to make these points.

Partnerships

30. The evaluation should categorize FAO’s forest-related partnerships in terms of whether FAO is a leader/coordinator or a partner, whether the partnership is based within FAO or outside FAO, what precise roles FAO performs in the various partnerships and what it gains from them, etc. This will help management in making future partnership decisions more systematically. It will also be helpful to indicate whether and how FAO’s roles in these partnerships are expected to change/evolve in the foreseeable future.

31. The Report should focus its comments on FAO’s role in forest-related partnerships (e.g. assessing what FAO contributes and gets out of the partnerships), while avoiding the appearance of assessment of the partnerships themselves, particularly when they have their own independent governance bodies outside of FAO, e.g. NFPF, ACP FLEGT.

32. There needs to be greater consistency in the statements on partnerships in various sections in terms of tone and substance. Cross-referencing various paragraphs that are connected will help to make the content of the various parts of the report consistent, avoiding duplication.

Enhancing Synergies and FAO’s Impacts

33. FAO’s work and impacts need to be seen in the context of other global actors in forestry/forests as outlined in the inception report. The evaluation needs to provide an assessment of FAO’s synergistic relationships with other sectors and other partners, e.g. page 14, paragraph 54.

34. In this regard, bringing in material from the inception report would help strengthen the evaluation report in providing a better description of the overarching context, changing nature of forests and complementary/overlapping roles of actors. As stated above, any assessment of FAO's impacts should take greater account of FAO's particular role within the fragmented international regime related to forests (which is well laid out in the inception report). For example, the CPF has strengths – e.g. bringing all major international organizations working on forestry together on a regular basis to exchange information. However, CPF also has inherent weaknesses – CPF members' activities overlap and they compete with each other for visibility, influence and resources, and as a neutral platform FAO is not expected to provide "leadership" to the CPF. This nuanced appreciation of the partnership role in reality has implications for the Report's recommendations, as discussed below.

35. The evaluation needs to identify more clearly the problems of attribution in assessing impacts. The report cites some evidence suggesting where FAO is contributing, but this is not always easy to prove. An additional issue pertains to the evidence based on outputs produced and activities carried out. While records on dissemination suggest that several key normative products like FRA have likely had significant impacts, there is less evidence on the adoption of some voluntary guidelines. The evaluation report correctly points out the need for systematic follow-up activities but proposes few action recommendations. One area of recommendation could be on how FAO is linking its forestry-related normative work with its operational impacts at the country level, and another is an assessment of the implementation by countries of normative work such as voluntary guidelines.

36. Even where the Report has provided evidence, the evidence trail is not always clear. Several steps might be taken to address this perceived disconnect. The first would be to separate Findings from Opinions, e.g. in Section 5.3. The second would be to make cross references to evidence in paragraphs which are far away in impact sections to previous sections.

Decentralization

37. The evaluation's assessment on decentralization and its relationship to country programming needs to be more clearly articulated. This is a timely issue in the context of the reform of decentralization currently underway. With respect to the balance between headquarters, regional and sub-regional stationing of staff, the evaluation team has a clear preference that any decentralization should be to the regions and sub-regions, not at the level of the countries. It is worth mentioning that preference from the viewpoint of the need for critical mass. The Panel concurs with this conclusion.

38. A related question pertains to the Country Programming Framework and priorities and its implications for regional and sub-regional offices where issues of critical minimum mass at various levels need to be clearly articulated. The report needs to outline whether and how FAO's forestry program in a country can realistically be strategic in view of the lack of strategic partnerships at the country level, and scanty representation of forestry expertise in country offices.

Dissemination

39. The report makes several critical comments on the excessive reliance on web-based tools for dissemination of normative products. It would appear from the results that the major beneficiaries of such an approach are from the North, whereas many of the key issues FAO addresses are of more relevance to the South, hence the right audience is not been reached adequately. It would be well worth looking at the IEE's recommendation on communications, including the use of the web, to examine if FAO is simply implementing recommendations made in the IEE and if they are appropriate or sufficient with the hindsight of experience. It might also be useful to benchmark the utilization of FAO's forestry webpage access compared to other similar organizations – to be done either by the evaluation team, if relatively easy, or by FAO itself.

Past Evaluations

40. The Report could:
- List key recommendations of past major forestry and forestry relevant evaluations in the last five years which are relevant to the evaluation;
 - Indicate whether they were implemented or addressed, possibly in an annex; and
 - To the extent possible, note the consistency or otherwise of the Report's recommendations with those past recommendations – has something been recommended five or 10 years ago but has not been implemented?

Part 3: Conclusions and Recommendations

41. All Recommendations should be based on and tightly linked to the relevant set of conclusions. Conclusions in turn should be tightly related to the evidence.
42. Recommendations should be few in number (no more than five) and should be strategic.
43. Panel members have discussed with the team how many of the sub-recommendations could either be dropped or, for the most important ones, brought in the body of the text where evidence for doing things differently is provided.
44. Recommendations should be addressed to specific organizational units/managers. e.g. "senior FAO management should..." so as to establish clear accountability for action and follow up.
45. The first conclusion and recommendation could be reformulated as:
- "FAO's Senior Management should adopt a well-articulated holistic approach to forest and trees outside forests to meet FAO's overarching organizational objectives which plays up to FAO's comparative advantage in a multi-sectoral approach, positions itself in the relevant global regimes, e.g. food security, forests, water and soils and energy in the context of climate change and biodiversity loss".

- “To this end, Senior Management should explore the importance of forestry and its operational implications in-house at the regional and country level through a cross sectoral approach” and
- “Reassess and redefine FAO’s partnerships externally in the context of this integrated strategy” with a view to FAO becoming a true Global Center of Excellence with perceived leadership, strategy and priorities.

46. The report’s current first recommendation overestimates the potential role of the CPF, or FAO’s ability to influence it. Therefore, in the Panel’s view, reference to the CPF should be deleted.

47. Recommendations 2 and 3: the Panel agrees with recommendations 2 and 3 which are consistent with the revised recommendation 1. However, the Report needs to provide greater justification for recommendation 2 in the body of the text, with a strong intellectual case being made for a cross sectoral approach.

48. The Panel recommends removing many of the sub-recommendations.

49. The panel does not agree with 2.7 as it is formulated presently.

50. In view of the evaluation manager’s explanation on the need to have a number of clear action recommendations on which the management response could be pursued after the exercise, there may be a need to use our reformulation of recommendation 1 as a model for the other two.

A word of Appreciation from the Panel

51. The Panel appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation of FAO’s role and work in forestry, and enjoyed the interaction with concerned FAO staff and the evaluation team.

Expert Panel Profiles

Dr Uma Lele, now Independent Scholar, worked as Economist, Research and Operational Manager and Policy Advisor in the World Bank's Development Economics Department, the Africa and East Asia and the Pacific Regions during 1971 and 1990. From 1991 to 1995, she was a Graduate Research Professor and Director of International Studies at the University of Florida. During this period she co-chaired an international taskforce on Global Research on the Environmental and Agricultural Nexus (GREAN), established and directed the Global Development Initiative of the Carter Center and the Carnegie Corporation, served on the CGIAR's founding board of the Center for International Policy Research, and later on the CGIAR's Technical Advisory Committee. On return to the World Bank in 1995 as Senior Advisor in the Operations Evaluation Department (now called the Independent Evaluation Group), she led complex evaluations of the World Bank's Forest Strategy, Global Partnership Programs, and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). She also co-chaired an International Taskforce of the China Council on Environment and Development (CCICED). After leaving the World Bank in 2005, she has served as a panel member of the Independent External Evaluation of the FAO and numerous other Advisory Panels of Experts.

Dr Doris Capistrano is Advisor of the ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change and a Visiting Professor in Forest and Conservation Policy at Wageningen University. She has served on several forest-related bodies, including as Chair of the External Advisory Group on the World Bank's Forest Strategy, member of the Board of Directors of the Washington DC-based Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), and member of the Steering Committee of the FAO National Forest Programme Facility. She was a member of the Technical Panel of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and Co-Chair of the MA Working Group on Sub-Global Assessments. Doris Capistrano was a Senior Fellow of the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) and was Director of the Forests and Governance Programme at the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). She also served as Ford Foundation Deputy Representative for India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka; Ford Foundation Program Officer for Rural Poverty, Resources and Environment in Bangladesh; and member of the Economics faculty of the University of the Philippines at Los Banos, Philippines. Doris Capistrano has a PhD in Food and Resource Economics from the University of Florida, USA.

Dr David Kaimowitz is Director of Natural Resources and Sustainable Development at the Ford Foundation. He was previously Director General of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). He holds a PhD in agricultural economics and has written extensively on policies that affect forests, agrarian reform, and agricultural extension.

Dr Godwin Kowero is presently the Executive Secretary of the African Forest Forum. Prior to this he worked with CIFOR as Regional Coordinator for the CIFOR Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa. He serves on various boards and committees. He is also a former professor of forest economics and policy, at Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania), Moi University (Kenya) and Eduardo Mondlane University (Mozambique). He has researched and written extensively in the areas of forest economics and management and forest policy. He holds a Ph.D. in forest economics.

Dr Markku Simula is an international specialist on the economics of forestry and forest industries, policy analysis, sectoral and corporate planning and environmental management in the forestry sector. Dr Simula has more than 30 years of experience of international consulting and research work for international organizations, multilateral development banks, government agencies and the private sector. He has headed several large forestry projects in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, and held posts in international forestry organisations and professional affiliations. Dr Simula served as the Chief Executive Officer of Indufor Oy in 1980-2003 and has since then worked as an independent consultant. Dr Simula worked for ECA/FAO Forest Industries Advisory Group in Addis Ababa as Forest Industries Marketing Expert in 1974-76. Since then he has carried out several consulting assignments for FAO including on forest degradation, forest definitions, certification and other policy work. His current position is Adjunct Professor of Forest Economics at the University of Helsinki, Finland.

Dr Ivan Tomaselli holds a BSc and MSc in Forestry from the Federal University of Paraná - UFPR (Brazil), and a PhD from Melbourne University - Australia. Currently he is the President of STCP Engenharia de Projetos Ltda, a consulting, engineering and management firm; Vice President of Technology and Development of the Brazilian Association of the Mechanically Processed Timber – ABIMCI; responsible for the CB31 (Timber Products Committee) of the Brazilian Standards Association - ABNT. As a consultant he works with aspects related to the forest industry, market, strategic developments and policies His work has supported companies, governments and international organizations including FAO, ITTO, UNFF, World Bank, BID, ITC and others. Tomaselli has over 200 papers published in Brazil and other countries. He was a Professor of the Forestry Faculty of the Federal University of Parana from 1977 to 2010, and was involved with the BSc, MSc and PhD programs. At the University he also coordinated the Post Graduation Course in Forestry and the BSc Course in Industrial Wood Industry Engineering.