

July 2012



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة للأمم  
المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of the  
United Nations

Organisation des  
Nations Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones Unidas  
para la  
Alimentación y la  
Agricultura

# COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

## TWENTY-FIRST SESSION

Rome, Italy, 24-28 September 2012

## STRENGTHENING THE FAO FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. Wildland fires are increasing in frequency and severity in many regions of the world, a trend that is expected to continue as the global climate continues to change and temperatures continue to increase. Since launching the Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines in 2006, the fire management programme of FAO has increased significantly. The Committee on Forestry and the Regional Forestry Commissions have made a number of recommendations to FAO and member countries to strengthen their management programmes.

2. The 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Forestry in 2010 invited countries to:

- consider the contribution of forest fires to the emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) and the importance of including forest fire management in their programmes for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD-plus);
- incorporate vegetation fire management in broader sustainable land-use and landscape policies, planning and practices;
- cooperate in wildfire prevention and suppression and to develop mutual-aid agreements.
- involve communities in the prevention of wildfires; and
- contribute to the existing voluntary trust fund focused on helping developing countries implement the principles and strategic actions of the Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines which need to be adapted to local conditions.

3. The Committee also encouraged FAO to further develop activities that promote regional and international cooperation and to promote the exchange of experiences among countries on all aspects of vegetation fires. An overview of activities undertaken since the 20<sup>th</sup> session of COFO is presented in the Annex.

### II. CURRENT PROGRAMME

4. The current FAO programme on fire management is based on 6 pillars :

- Development and application of Integrated Fire Management.
- Enhancing access to fire information at national and global level.

*This document is printed in limited numbers to minimize the environmental impact of FAO's processes and contribute to climate neutrality. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and to avoid asking for additional copies. Most FAO meeting documents are available on the Internet at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)*

- Developing normative activities (publications and assessments).
- Enhancing stakeholder participation: Community-Based Fire Management.
- Addressing emerging issues such as climate change.
- Global advocacy and international coordination.

5. The programme takes into consideration the recommendations of the fora and papers mentioned in the Annex as well as the integrated approach presented in the FAO Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines.

6. The programme is based on existing and expanding FAO interdepartmental coordination in this issue, as well as on collaboration with the (sub) regional offices, in particular:

- The coordination of most fire management projects and normative activities is coordinated by the Forest Assessment, Management and Conservation Division (FOM) in full cooperation with the Forest Economics, Policy and Products Division (FOE).
- The Natural Resources Department maintains the Global Fire Information Management System and hosts the Climate Smart Agriculture - Mitigation of Climate Change in Agriculture (MICCA) project.
- The Technical Cooperation Department, through the emergency unit (TCE) and with support from the technical departments, developed a corporate disaster risk reduction and management strategic framework. It also co-leads the post emergency projects.
- The Legal Office supports most fire management projects with the revision of national legal frameworks related to fire management.
- All field projects are implemented with support from the (sub) regional offices.
- More cooperation will be developed with the Agriculture Department especially in the fields of conservation agriculture, alternatives for agriculture fire use and improved rangeland management.

7. The programme is based on Integrated Fire Management, including a participatory and community based approach. Integration of fire management into broader landscape management, planning and policy is a major challenge.

8. A global assessment of recent mega fires suggests the application of more balanced and comprehensive wildfire protection approaches that better integrate fire-related considerations into natural resource management strategies at the landscape scale.

9. Globally, there is a call for the integration of fire-related risks in land and forest management planning using contemporary risk management methods, and for this to be reflected in national policies and laws.

### **III. THE WAY FORWARD**

10. To better respond to the increasing and changing demands in fire management from member countries and the regional forestry commissions, the FAO Forestry Department intends to strengthen and build a more comprehensive fire management programme through a multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) proposal. It will allow FAO and key partners to more effectively respond to the specific needs identified in each region where improved fire management is considered a priority, building on on-going regional and country-based activities, as mentioned above.

11. Developing and agreeing on further guidance to manage wildfire-related risks could assist the adoption of fire risk management policies within countries that are consistent with other forms of risk management, assist in the integration of wildfire-risk management within land and forest management policies, and further promote the implementation of the existing Fire Management Voluntary

Guidelines. A proposal to develop such guidance tools made by the Forest Fire Management Group (FFMG)<sup>1</sup> was discussed and endorsed at the Asia Pacific Forestry Commission.

12. Another opportunity is to strengthen collaboration with other United Nations agencies which are developing activities related to fire management, including World Health Organization (WHO); World Meteorological Organization (WMO); United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations Economic Commissions for Europe (UNECE). An appropriate coordination mechanism would benefit enhanced and more effective collaboration among UN agencies.

#### **IV. POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE**

13. The Committee may wish to invite countries to:

- integrate fire management into national, rural land and forest management policies;
- contribute to the Multi Donor Trust Fund to strengthen the Fire Management Programme at FAO.

14. The Committee may wish to request FAO to:

- strengthen the FAO fire management programme by actively seeking financial support for the Multi-Donor Trust Fund Proposal;
- propose and eventually lead a coordination mechanism between the different UN agencies and programmes working on topics related to fire management (FAO, WHO, WMO, UNISDR, UNESCO, UNDP, UNEP, OCHA, UNECE, etc.);
- develop, in partnership with other relevant institutions and based on the Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines, a set of international guidance tools for managing wildfire-related risks at the landscape level.

---

<sup>1</sup> a committee of Australian and New Zealand land management agencies with responsibility for forest fire management, plus representatives from research and education organizations and the forest industry.

---

**ANNEX**

**OVERVIEW OF THE FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

**SINCE THE 20TH SESSION OF COFO**

---

**Global assessment of recent mega-fires**

1. The FAO Forestry Department commissioned a global assessment of recent mega-fires, which was presented at the V International Wildland Fire Conference (IWFC) in Sun City, South Africa, May 2011.
2. The assessment showed that recent mega-fires were unrelenting against control efforts until firefighters either benefited from a favourable change in weather or a break in natural fuel for the fire (e.g. lack of biomass). Even in countries with modern tools and techniques to combat severe wildfires, firefighters were generally forced onto the defensive, taking action where they could.
3. The report indicated that the cumulative effects of global warming, the vulnerable condition of fire-prone landscapes, and population shifts into and out of wildland settings are changing the calculus of wildfire protection in many countries. In virtually all of the tropical and temperate cases analyzed, land management and/or land-use actions or omissions (intentional or not) carried significant wildfire-related risks that were not anticipated at the scope and scales that resulted. As wildfire risks intensify, the report suggests the application of more balanced and comprehensive wildfire protection approaches that better integrate fire-related considerations into natural resource management strategies at the landscape scale. In this respect, mega-fires have important implications for land managers and policy-makers. The findings of the assessment provide a basis for more effective alignment of land management policies, plans, and practices across fire-prone landscapes.

**The Fifth International Wildland Fire Conference (IWFC), May 2011, Sun City, South Africa**

4. As member of the International Liaison Committee, FAO was involved in the organization of this conference, which took place under the auspices of FAO and UNISDR. The conference made recommendations for increased action on, *inter alia*:
  - Fire management on radioactive contaminated land and on land containing unexploded landmines or chemical deposits.
  - Securing peat bog and wetland ecosystems.
  - Reducing the use of fire on agriculture land.
  - Public participation.
  - Applying international principles.
  - Systematic application of advanced technologies for wildland fire science and management.
  - Strengthening international cooperation in fire management.
  - Integration of fire management in the frame of natural resources/land management at landscape level.
  - Further involvement of the six FAO Regional Forestry Commissions in the implementation of the principles of the Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines and of the Hyogo Framework.

5. Being part of the conference organizers, FAO ensured that the programme was relevant for the fire management needs of developing countries by proposing sessions on Community Based Fire Management, Fire and Poverty Alleviation and Traditional Fire Management and Knowledge. FAO also supported 15 presentations, mostly from developing countries.

### **Development of a Corporate Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy**

6. FAO's Strategic Objective I, "to improve preparedness for and effective response to food and agriculture threats and emergencies" has triggered the development of a new draft corporate strategy for disaster risk reduction in FAO. The strategy proposes an intersectoral approach to disaster risk reduction, including fire management, to better respond to the needs of its member countries. This intersectoral approach is also visible in the new draft FAO Strategic Objectives in which one (SO5) deals with strengthening resilience of vulnerable communities and fragile ecosystems related to disasters. Fire management will be both part of this objective and objective 2 dealing with sustainable production.

7. This strategy is built on the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, which is designed to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters.

### **Community based fire management**

8. FAO has led the way in developing and implementing a Community Based Approach in Fire Management (CBFiM). This approach is present in almost all FAO fire management projects. A publication on the state of art of CBFiM was released in January 2012.

9. During this biennium (2012-2013) a tool for practitioner in CBFiM region will be developed.

10. Together with the South African, the US FireWise Programme and the Canadian FireSmart programme, FAO is joining efforts to further develop CBFiM and promote it on the agenda for the next International Wildland Fire Conference (IWFC) in South Korea (2015). As recommended in South Africa, a meeting on CBFiM will be organized before the next IWFC to maintain the attention, define next steps based on the needs and promote the inclusion in the next IWFC programme.

### **Contribution of vegetation fires to the emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs)**

11. Coordination is taking place with the Forest Resources Assessment and the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation team in order to include data on areas burned in the next FRA, both for forest and woodlands but also for other land uses, and to include fire management in the work of the national programmes for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD-plus).

### **Regional FAO fire management activities**

12. During the Second Mediterranean Forest Week in Avignon, April 2011, a draft position paper on fire prevention was presented by the Forest Fires Working Group of Silva Mediterranea and approved at the event. This paper has high relevance for part of the European and Near East Regions and highlighted priorities to:

- prioritize a participatory approach;
- consider fire prevention in the context of climate change;
- consider fire prevention in the broader landscape.

13. During the same Forest Week, it was decided that the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission in Ispra, Italy, would undertake action to include several countries from the Near East

region in the European Forest Fire Information System. FAO, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC) and the Silva Mediterranea Secretariat organized a meeting in October 2011 in Morocco to start this process. It will be followed by a training on fire investigation for North African and Near East countries organized by the Italian Corpo Forestale dello Stato and supported by the same organizations.

14. Due to limitations of funding, the Regional Fire Management Network for Latin America and the Caribbean could not meet, as was foreseen on the margins of the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission, Asuncion, Paraguay, 5-9 March 2012.

15. The FAO-UNECE team of specialists on fire management is preparing a meeting in 2013 on transboundary fire management.

### **FAO Fire Management projects**

16. Since the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Forestry, FAO community and integrated fire management projects in Nicaragua and Lebanon have been completed; others in Morocco, Syria, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Chad, Swaziland and Tanzania have started and/or are still ongoing.

17. Under the National Forest Programme Facility fire management activities are taking place in Benin, Togo and Peru.

18. In FAO/GEF regional watershed management projects in the Fouta Djallon region (West Africa) and in the Kageera (East Africa), fire management has been prioritized as one of the fields to receive more attention. This is again a manifestation of the growing awareness of the need and the importance to include fire management in broader landscape management.

19. New fire management project proposals are under development for Chad and Indonesia.