



SMALL AND MEDIUM FOREST ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT FOR POVERTY REDUCTION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN GLOBALIZING MARKETS

TURRIALBA, COSTA RICA
23–25 MAY 2006

Around 1 billion people living in poverty depend on forest products for all or part of their livelihood. Many of them reside in tropical areas with high biodiversity and often severe restrictions on commercial agriculture.

Increasingly, development and government agencies are recognizing the important role that small and medium forest enterprises (SMFEs) play in reconciling the goals of poverty reduction and sustainable development, especially in the context of decentralization and more and more globalized markets.

This international conference brought together nearly 200 experts, practitioners and business and community leaders from around the world to discuss institutional and policy options for promoting more viable and sustainable SMFEs. It took stock of experiences in developing SMFEs in globalizing markets for timber and non-timber forest products.

Major conclusions of the conference

- *Governments can play a critical role in strengthening SMFEs to reduce poverty.* Governments can start by granting and enforcing legal access to forest resources. Curbing illegal logging and unsustainable harvesting of NTFPs will reduce unfair competition. Simplifying bureaucratic procedures for SMFE registration can reduce costs and enhance value-adding opportunities. Financial incentives for start-up SMFEs are an additional positive step. Local or green purchasing policies also have a role to play.
- *SMFEs themselves can improve their competitiveness in national and international markets for forest-based products.* Upgrading technical, business and financial capacities and creating specialized institutions for business management can reduce production and administration costs, facilitate new business partnerships and provide a basis for negotiating more favourable terms of trade. The organization of

SMFEs into second-level associations may facilitate the upgrading process.

- *Business development services (BDS) for SMFEs require greater coverage and quality.* Special emphasis needs to be given to train and educate a critical mass of rural BDS providers. Market-based mechanisms for service delivery are essential to ensure the impact and sustainability of these services.
- *Financial services are critical for the start-up and continued development of SMFEs.* Specific credit lines and related services and mechanisms need to be developed according to the needs and nature of SMFEs.
- *NGOs and development agencies can strengthen the existing capacities of SMFEs.* Facilitating access to market and technical information is a priority. SMFE communication networks can be funded to improve information flows, stimulate company-community partnerships and facilitate access to trade fairs and a better articulation between technical, business development and financial services. Facilitating multistakeholder negotiations for better policies and conflict management can help to address context-specific challenges. Support is often also needed to access niche markets such as forest certification or fair trade as well as to improve marketing and negotiation skills.



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(Please see pp. 52–53 for more information on this conference.)



FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AROMATIC AND MEDICINAL PLANTS IN FRENCH OVERSEAS REGIONS

TAHITI, FRENCH POLYNESIA
11–13 JULY 2006

The purpose of this conference was to promote the knowledge and enhanced value of plants from French Polynesia and all French overseas departments and territories. Previous conferences were held in Réunion (2000), Guadeloupe (2001) and Guyana (2004).

In French Polynesia, scientists and industrialists are currently interested in the applications of certain plants, such as *tamanu* or *nono*. This partnership work between institutions and producers on tamanu oil could lead to a certificate of origin label for a product that is also found outside French Polynesia.

The conference, which was organized by GEPSUN (Engineering Process, Natural Substances technological platform) and held at the University of French Polynesia, enabled participating scientists to present the results of their latest research, which sometimes leads to concrete commercial applications.

The five themes of this year's conference were:

- essential oils, concretes and absolutes, a general overview of the most recent works on patrimonial aromatic plants from French overseas regions;
- new vegetable substances from newly discovered plants and new molecules;
- medicinal plants and traditional medicine;
- regulation and consumer safety, dealing with the legal status of plants according to different regulations; and
- valorization and economic perspectives, dealing with sustainability and reliability of production channels and environmental and societal responsibilities.

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INTERNATIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP ON BAMBOO INDUSTRIAL PROCESSING TECHNOLOGIES AND MACHINES

ZHEJIANG, CHINA
6–20 SEPTEMBER 2006

Bamboo industrial processing and utilization have become the universal trend of bamboo development in the world. In China, especially in the south, the bamboo industry is one of the most important rural industries, playing an important role in the modernization and economic development of the rural area. In 2004, the bamboo industry production value of China reached US\$5.63 billion.

This workshop introduced the industrial processing of bamboo products and the machinery used. Products include toothpicks, skewers, curtains, mats, furniture, various panels (flooring, cement moulding boards, decorative board, fibreboard, etc.), handicrafts, charcoal and shoots.

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USAID/FRAME NATURAL PRODUCTS IN RURAL ENTERPRISES WORKSHOP

WASHINGTON, DC,
UNITED STATES
3–5 OCTOBER 2006

Natural products are estimated to account for between 35 and 60 percent of household incomes in local forest communities and are the main source of livelihood for 90 percent of the world's poorest people. They have the potential to spur rural economic growth, reduce poverty and strengthen local governance as well as conserve biodiversity; this potential is however far from being realized.

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VITALITY OF CORK OAKS AND HOLM OAKS SETTLEMENTS: CURRENT SITUATION

EVORA, PORTUGAL
25–27 OCTOBER 2006

This meeting was organized by the Directorate-General of the Forest Resources of Portugal in collaboration with the International Association for Mediterranean Forests, the Agronomic higher institute of Lisbon and the WWF MedPo.

The objective of the meeting was to give a progress report on the causes of the deterioration of these settlements in Mediterranean countries, in order to establish the actions and research orientations to be undertaken for including, understanding and solving the problems of deterioration better.

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FIRST INTERNATIONAL NON-WOOD FOREST PRODUCTS SYMPOSIUM

TRABZON, TURKEY
1–4 NOVEMBER 2006

The symposium provided an opportunity to discuss recent developments in NWFP forest harvesting, trade and marketing practices, and the potential importance of NWFPs for socio-economic development. In particular, it discussed issues on sustainable forest operations and improved utilization of NWFPs, as well as the reduction of environmental impacts and wastes in forests and processing facilities.

In the symposium the following issues were also covered: financial, organizational and administrative support measures by governments, the private sector, NGOs to promote the sustainable utilization of NWFPs and their importance for development, employment and income generation, particularly for local populations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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INTERNATIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP ON BAMBOO-BASED PRODUCTION AND ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT

MAHARASHTRA, INDIA
20–29 NOVEMBER 2006

The International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) and the Centre for Indian Bamboo Resource and Technology jointly organized this workshop with the aim of imparting knowledge and skill sets to people involved in the production and processing of the bamboo sector; and to enable them to experience "productivity" as an imperative to sustain and develop bamboo enterprises.

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