



HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy

Securing world food security in light of the impact of climate change may be one of the biggest challenges faced in this century.

An estimated 850 million people in the world today suffer from hunger. Of these, about 820 million live in developing countries, the very countries expected to be most affected by climate change. Governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector and other actors must work together to address these challenges and to devise appropriate strategies and responses.

The recent Thirty-fourth Session of the FAO Conference, held during November 2007, called for a series of expert meetings and stakeholder consultations on climate change and bioenergy, to be followed by a High-Level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy.

The preparatory meetings were held from January to April 2008 and the High-Level Conference took place from 3 to 5 June 2008. The High-Level Conference was informed by work undertaken and findings that emerged from the expert meetings and stakeholder consultations, as well as new analysis undertaken by FAO, as part of its regular activities.

The High-Level Conference was even more timely in light of soaring food prices and the additional challenges that this situation poses to achieving global food security.

One hundred and eighty-one countries participated – 43 were represented by their Head of State or Government and 100 by high-level Ministers. Sixty Non-governmental and Civil Society Organizations were present as well. Overall, 5 159 people attended – 1 298 of them were journalists covering the event.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:

www.fao.org/foodclimate/home1.html

(Please also see Dr Wulf Killmann's editorial.)

FAO'S WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

Collaboration with and learning from indigenous peoples, who make their living from their natural environment and thus generally possess a profound knowledge of its significance and potential benefits, are of great importance to FAO. Indigenous peoples are essential in the context of FAO's mandate, not only because they are among the most vulnerable in terms of food and livelihood security and remain highly dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods, but also because they and their civilizations manage, provide, contribute to, and are currently the primary custodians of the main part of the world's agricultural diversity and its related ecosystems, biological and knowledge diversity.

More than 50 FAO staff members from different technical departments come together regularly in the interdepartmental working group on indigenous issues in order to discuss and exchange experiences in their work with indigenous peoples. The working group is currently developing a publication on FAO's work with indigenous peoples, a policy for indigenous peoples and guidelines to strengthen its work on indigenous issues. Furthermore, the working group is collaborating closely with the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and the Inter-Agency Support Group to the UNPFII.

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FORESTRY DEPARTMENT

New FAO strategy for forestry

In March 2007, the Committee on Forestry (COFO) requested that a new FAO strategy for forestry be developed in consultation with FAO Members and other partners. The consultative process has begun. The goal is to propose a new strategy to COFO at its next meeting in March 2009. The Regional Forestry Commissions will discuss the elements for the new strategy in their 2008 sessions.

In the first stage of the consultation, comments are requested on a "Discussion paper on elements of a possible strategy". Based on feedback received during the first part of 2008, a draft strategy will be developed and circulated for comments during a second phase of the consultation in mid-2008.

To access the discussion paper and for more information on the consultation process please visit: www.fao.org/forestry/site/strategy/en/

FAO IN THE FIELD

Forests for poverty reduction: mobilizing small and medium forest enterprises in Central Africa (project GCP/RAF/408/EC)

The Congo Basin in Central Africa is the second-largest forest area in the world. Its forests are home to millions of unique animals and plants. More than 100 million people depend on the forest resources for their food, medicines, income and cultural uses. An especially important income-generating activity is the trade of NWFPs, i.e. fruits, leaves, bushmeat and tubers.

Research shows that small and medium forest enterprises (SMFEs) that deal in NWFPs are the main source of income for millions of forest dwellers worldwide:

- 80–90 percent of forest enterprises in developing countries are SMFEs;
- >50 percent of forest sector employment is generated by SMFEs;
- 20 million people are formally employed by SMFEs (140 million informally); and
- >US\$130 billion/year of gross value added is produced by SMFEs worldwide.

Despite the crucial role of NWFPs in forest people's livelihoods, the trade of these products faces many obstacles. SMFEs are mostly informal, family or community enterprises. Businesses are not organized, lack sufficient market information and technological expertise and face ownership problems.

To strengthen the contribution of SMFEs to people's well-being and poverty reduction in



Central Africa, the following measures are needed: i) strengthening capacity to organize business; ii) developing the value chains of major NWFPs; iii) adaptation of legal and institutional measures that facilitate small forest enterprises; and iv) sustainable production, harvesting and domestication techniques.

A three-year project (2007–2009) – *Forests for poverty reduction: mobilizing small and medium forest enterprises in Central Africa* (GCP/RAF/408/EC) – is being funded by the European Commission to address these issues. FAO has taken the lead role and is working in partnership with the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF).

The project is being carried out in Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and is pursuing close collaboration with the governments of these countries within the framework of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC).

The project's focus is on the following areas.

- *Capacity building*: strengthen the organization, management, production, transformation, commercialization and marketing skills of small and medium forest enterprises.
- *Knowledge and information*: generate data on resource stock and study production, consumption and markets. Develop market information systems.
- *Processing*: develop and disseminate technologies for transformation and packaging.
- *Production*: promote sustainable harvesting techniques and domestication through the integration of high-value cultivars in production systems.
- *Access to capital*: improve access to credit by collaboration with and capacity building of microfinance institutions.
- *Legal, institutional and business environment*: multistakeholder processes play a key role in legal and institutional development, improving public-private sector relationships, strengthening civil society and increasing access to information.

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INFORMATION ABOUT FAO'S WORK, 1945–2008

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The FAO library catalogue is directly accessible from the David Lubin Memorial Library's Web page.

www.fao.org/library/index.htm



DOMESTICATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF BAOBAB AND TAMARIND (DADOBAT)

The Domestication and Development of Baobab and Tamarind (DADOBAT) project aims at developing sustainable production systems of baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) and tamarind (*Tamarindus indica* Lam.) in three West African countries based on characterization, conservation and use of local genetic resources. This is expected to have a positive impact on food security and income generation in the countries included in the project. Issues of new crop/niche development are addressed through a holistic research approach and multidisciplinary research activities.

Both baobab and tamarind are plant species with high potential for arid and semi-arid areas in the developing world.

Baobab is a multipurpose, widely used African tree. It occurs scattered in savannahs, often near dwellings, and has numerous medicinal properties and (non-)food uses.

- Young leaves, rich in minerals/vitamins, are cooked like spinach and sauces.
- Fruit pulp is high in vitamin C, and is dissolved in water or milk and drunk, used as a sauce or fermenting agent, etc.
- Seed kernels are eaten fresh, dry or ground and are used in cooking, as a thickening/flavouring agent, or roasted. Seeds are also a source of cooking oil.
- Bark fibre is used for rope, basket nets, fishing lines and weaving.

Tamarind is grown for subsistence and some commercial production in Asia and Latin America; however, it often occurs wild in the tropics. In Africa, unimproved trees are often commercially exploited, but are considered an underutilized crop.

- Tamarind fruit pulp is the richest known natural source of tartaric acid and is used for flavouring chutneys, sauces and juices. Sweet varieties can also be consumed as table fruit. Its leaves are a source of food and medicine.
- Tamarind wood is used for timber, tool handles, charcoal and fuelwood.
- Seed kernel powder, the major industrial product, is an important material used in sizing textiles and paper.

They can provide food, medicine, wood and a number of secondary processed products for income generation that can help to meet the basic needs of an increasing number of people in a context of decreasing land availability.

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