



Main features, obligations and benefits under the *Convention on the International Commission on Poplars and Other Fast-growing Trees Sustaining People and the Environment*

OVERVIEW

Poplars and other fast-growing trees are versatile because of their rapid growth, coppicing ability, and extensive root systems. They are ideal for biomass production, including timber, bioenergy, and biofuels, and are valuable for environmental remediation and land restoration, such as windbreaks to reduce soil erosion. Some species help stabilize eroding soils, while others aid in remediating polluted soils, especially in riparian zones. They also contribute to carbon sequestration, climate change mitigation, and biodiversity improvement, making them suitable for urban afforestation.

The [Convention on the International Commission on Poplars and Other Fast-growing Trees Sustaining People and the Environment](#) (“IPC” or “the Convention”) was founded in 1947, to support reconstruction of rural and industrial economies after the Second World War.

Originally established outside FAO, it was brought under the FAO as “The Convention placing the International Poplar Commission within the Framework of FAO”, in November 1959 and, in 1967, the International Commission on Poplars and Other Fast-growing Trees sustaining People and the Environment (the Commission) was placed under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution. The mandate of the IPC expanded to cover all fast-growing trees, including those that grow outside of Europe, such as Eucalyptus, Acacia, Black Locust and Pines, among other species, by amendments approved in 2019.

OBJECTIVES

The Commission’s mandate is to study and engage in scientific, technical, social, economic, and environmental aspects of *Populus* and other fast-growing trees. Priorities are forest resources production, protection, conservation and utilization, with a view to sustaining livelihoods, land uses, rural development and the environment. This includes food security issues, climate change and carbon sinks, biodiversity conservation and resilience against biotic and abiotic threats, and combating deforestation (Article III).

MAIN ELEMENTS

The following are the main elements and obligations under the Convention:

- **Functions of the Commission:** In addition to the scientific activities set out above, the Commission promotes the exchange of sustainable management practices, knowledge and technology and arranges joint research programmes. Through the Director-General, the Commission makes recommendations to the FAO Conference and to the National Commissions established under Article IV, in areas within its mandate – Article III;
- **National Commissions:** Each Member Nation should establish a National Commission or a suitable national body to deal with Poplars and other fast-growing trees, as soon as possible, and to the best of its ability, and information on these shall be circulated to other Members of the Commission – Article IV;
- **Communications and Reporting:** Member Nations must communicate the publications of their National Commission or other designated bodies to the Director-General – Article IV;



- **Sub-Commissions and Committees:** The Commission may create sub-commissions, committees, or working parties as needed, depending on the available budget. These bodies are then convened by the Director-General in consultation with their Chairperson – Article IX; so far, the Commission has established the following working parties : (i) Working Party on Genetic Resources, (ii) Working Party on Production Systems for the Bioeconomy, (iii) Working Party on Policy and Livelihood, (iv) Working Party on Environmental and Ecosystem Services and (v) Working Party on Communication and Outreach. These working parties were established in late 2022 to reflect the expanded mandate of the IPC;
- **Right to Representation and Voting:** Each Member Nation has the right to be represented at the Commission's sessions, participating in the Commission's decision-making – Article VI.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR PARTIES

On becoming a Member of the IPC and implementing its provisions effectively, a State stands to gain numerous benefits, including the following:

A. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION

The Commission fosters collaboration among Member Nations, facilitating the exchange of sustainable management practices, knowledge, and technology on Populus and other fast-growing trees. This can include joint research programmes.

B. INFLUENCE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Membership in the Commission provides an opportunity to influence policy development based on experience and evidence, as well as the right to participate in international discussions related to the Convention's functions.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

By promoting Poplars and other fast-growing trees, the IPC contributes to sustainable development, climate change mitigation and adaptation, carbon sequestration, forest restoration, and ecosystem resilience, among other environmental benefits.

D. ECONOMIC AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The IPC supports rural development by integrating Poplars and other fast-growing trees into agroforestry and strengthening the contributions of agroforestry systems to food security, sustainable livelihoods and land use. Fast-growing trees are used in various industries. Their adaptability to poor soils and degraded lands makes them ideal for expanding productive forestry in diverse regions. The forest products industry is increasingly integrated into global trade. Countries with sustainable forestry practices may attract international investments due to the demand for high-quality forest products.

E. CAPACITY BUILDING

Additionally, Member Nations may also benefit from capacity building and training opportunities, in relation to fast-growing trees. These opportunities enhance skills in sustainable forestry practices, agroforestry systems, and tree breeding. States may develop expertise to integrate Poplars and other fast-growing trees into national strategies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the IPC, model instruments for adherence and treaty processes, please contact: treaties@fao.org