

FAO OF THE UN

Sustainable Forest Management Toolbox

CONCEPT NOTE

Draft version

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1. BACKGROUND

There is renewed international recognition of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) as an important component of sustainable development; however SFM implementation remains a challenge. The slow progress towards SFM, particularly in developing countries, is mainly due to limited capacity and lack of enabling conditions to implement SFM.

There is a considerable body of knowledge which can be shared and adapted to specific conditions to facilitate progress towards SFM. This knowledge and experiences is however quite diverse, not always accessible, and oftentimes focused on limited elements of SFM.

There has been an increase in demand by member countries for technical support to facilitate progress towards SFM. Since SFM is a multidimensional concept often driven by multiple objectives or demands, this technical support requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that give due consideration to the interconnected SFM elements, related areas of expertise, and specific contexts¹.

To better respond to the needs and recommendations of countries, FAO is developing a **comprehensive technical package of tools, best practices and examples of their application to facilitate the implementation of SFM** – hereafter referred as the **SFM Toolbox**.

The concept of the SFM Toolbox was presented to the Committee on Forestry in September 2012. The Committee *“requested FAO to further develop the content of the sustainable forest management (SFM) toolbox, including educational materials, voluntary guidelines and communication platforms, to support countries, where requested, in their efforts to implement SFM, while avoiding overlap and duplication and taking into consideration national and regional needs, approaches and processes”*². The FAO Management Response to the Strategic Evaluation of FAO’s work in Forestry (2012) also stressed the need for the SFM Toolbox.

The development of the SFM Toolbox is in alignment with FAO’s mandate and FAO's role as a knowledge organization. FAO, in collaboration with its many partners seeks to turn knowledge into action by creating, compiling and sharing critical information on SFM, and facilitating dialogue between those who possess the knowledge and those who need it.

¹ There is no single recipe for SFM implementation. Each instance of SFM may appear different depending on the forest type, needs etc. and will constantly evolve.

² COFO 2012/REP para 19.

2. OBJECTIVES

The general objective of the Toolbox is to enhance/widen the implementation of SFM and the achievement of its multiple benefits.

More specifically, the Toolbox aims to:

- 1) Increase capacities to effectively implement SFM by facilitating access to practical SFM-related knowledge, tools and experiences.
- 2) Support, guide and inform forest managers and other stakeholders to progress towards the implementation of SFM in a more integrated and cohesive way. This support must be tailored to their specific needs, contexts and areas of interest, while taking into account the general socio-economic and environmental contexts in which their SFM action is developed, offering a more comprehensive approach to achieving SFM.
- 3) Connect the different areas of SFM-related expertise to facilitate integration of SFM in a landscape approach to natural resources management, as well as to facilitate consolidated country support, stakeholder collaboration and networking.
- 4) Identify and highlight knowledge and tool gaps, as well as possible incoherent messages and/or guidance among the existing tools.

3. SFM TOOLBOX: CONCEPT AND COMPONENTS

The Toolbox is a comprehensive technical package of SFM tools, cases and knowledge references that facilitates the implementation of SFM. The toolbox will make use of the resources produced by FAO, CPF members, other partners and member countries.

The SFM Toolbox will consist of a web-based platform that is user-friendly, interactive and responsive to user's interests and needs. It will include (see annex with a list of **Terms and Definitions**):

- **SFM scenarios**³. The Toolbox will have predefined SFM scenarios as toolbox "entry points" based on specific context and objectives, which will be linked to relevant knowledge and tools. Users will be able to identify their specific "scenario" or make a free search among modules and tools.
- **Modules** that cover the different thematic areas relevant to the implementation of SFM (e.g. forest harvesting). Each module will provide (i) an overview of the thematic area; (ii) relevant tools and case studies; and (iii) links to other relevant modules (see Figure 1).

³ It has been difficult to find a suitable term for this. Alternative terms proposed include "SFM focus area / scenario / User case / situation / profile. For the time being the term "Scenarios" is used, hoping to receive suggestions for a more appropriate term.

- **A database of tools.** A tool is a resource that supports, guides and/or informs users about the implementation of SFM. Tools may be guides, guidelines, codes of practice, technical sourcebooks, manuals, software, capacity development and educational/dissemination material. Existing tools will be collated and arranged in an easy-to-access database. When necessary, additional tools can be further developed so as to continuously build and update a cohesive package to support SFM implementation.
- **A database of case studies/real examples,** building on exemplary/outstanding cases of SFM in different contexts, further examples will be added. A case will present detailed information that illustrates how to address and/or approach SFM in a particular or various context(s).
- **A discussion forum.** Users will be able to open discussions with other users about SFM in general, a thematic SFM area, a specific tool or a case.

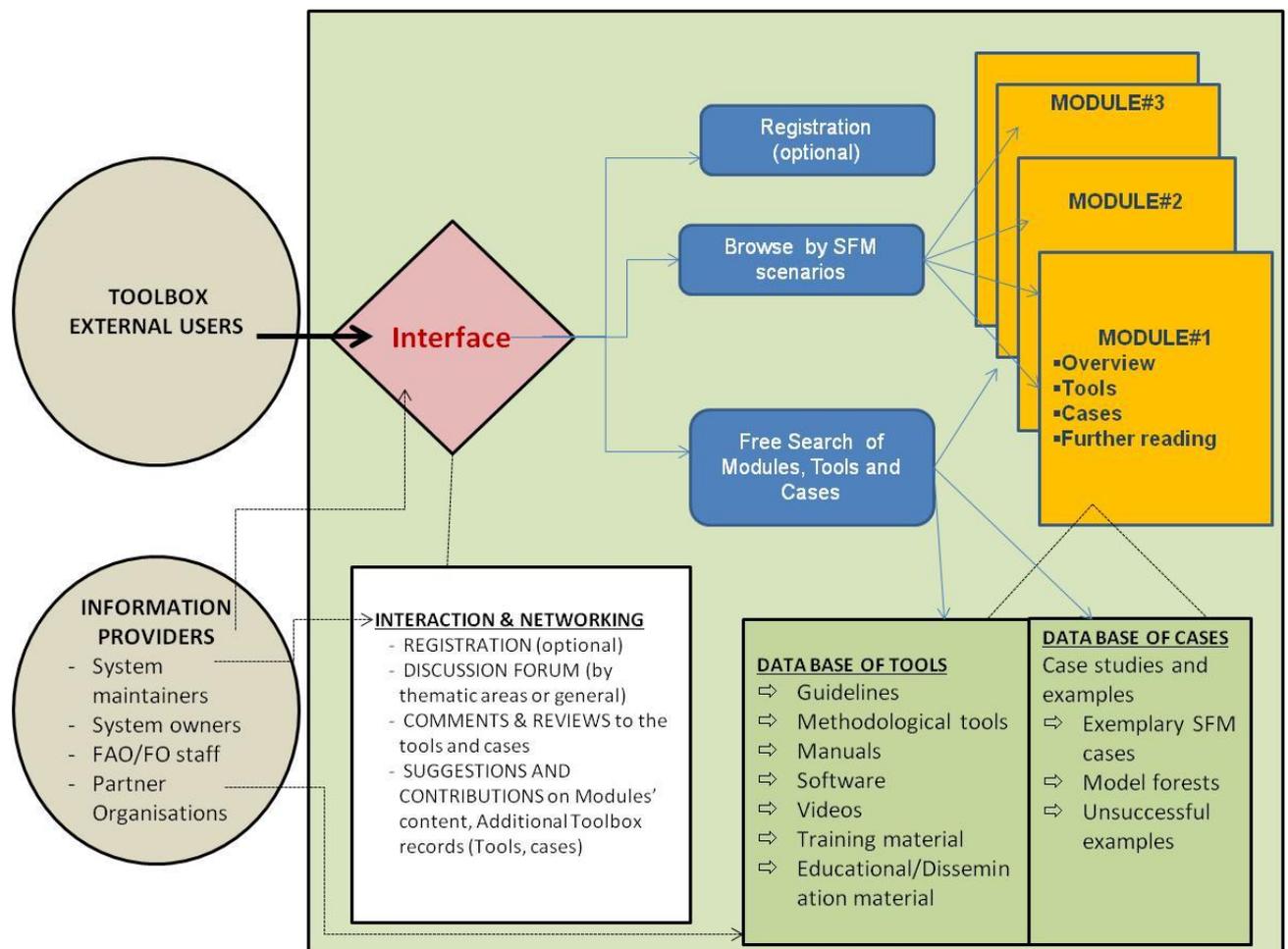


Figure 1: Visual representation of the Toolbox

4. TARGET AUDIENCE AND SCALE OF APPLICATION

While SFM covers policies and measures from creating enabling environments to practice [on the ground], the SFM Toolbox will initially **focus** on [practical] implementation at the FMU level, in the framework of landscapes and/or administrative units (e.g. municipal, district).

The **target audience** for the Toolbox are primarily forest managers, who are actively involved in managing forests, as well as land use planners interested in the role of forests in sustainable development, and those who support them including civil-society and nongovernmental organizations and private sector entities and associations.

The **scope** of the Toolbox is global; however it will also include relevant regional and national SFM resources.

The Toolbox will have multiple **applications**, including support for field implementation of SFM, institutional strengthening and capacity development.

5. PROCESS (1ST PHASE)

The following activities are foreseen in the first phase of the preparation of the Toolbox [Sept 2012 – Sept 2014]:

0. TASK FORCE

A task force has been created, including FAO staff in Headquarters and in Decentralized Offices that will guide the development of the Toolbox.

1. CONCEPT NOTE

Preparation of the concept note, including definition of the agreed terms.

2 SFM SCENARIOS AND ASSOCIATED MODULES

Preparation of 4-5 "SFM scenarios" and related modules. E.g.:

- # 1: Management of natural forests for production in the tropics.
- # 2: Implementation of SFM in the framework of REDD+
- # 3: Undertaking Forest restoration for [multiple use] in [drylands].
- # 4 (tentative): Management of natural forests for soil and water protection in mountain areas.
- #5:

Additional SFM scenarios will be progressively developed, some of which through collaboration with projects and with partners.

3. DATABASE OF TOOLS

Compilation and classification of SFM tools in a database.

4. DATABASE OF CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES

The compilation of cases in a database (building from exemplary cases, model forests, etc.) will be initiated after the tools database

5. WEB PLATFORM

Development of the first version of the web platform.

6. APPLICATION

Usability tests will be conducted to measure the efficiency, applicability, accuracy and relevance of the toolbox. Potential users will be randomly selected from member countries as well as partner organizations.

7. PRESENTATION(S)

- a. Presentation of toolbox demo, displaying SFM scenario #1, to Regional Forestry Commissions (2013-2014).
- b. Presentation to and involvement of internal and external partners
- c. The Toolbox is expected to be introduced at the 22nd Session of the Committee on Forests (COFO, June 2014) and to go live in September 2014.

6. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

As a dynamic and interactive initiative, the Toolbox will evolve with the inclusion of new SFM scenarios, tools and cases/examples by FAO-Forestry experts, FAO-Forestry projects and Partners.

The current focus of the Toolbox is SFM [practical] implementation at the FMU level, in the framework of landscapes and/or administrative units (e.g. municipal, district). However, it is foreseen that in the future, this initiative will also support and provide guidance for national, sub-national and local SFM planning to advance its implementation.

Understanding that an enabling environment is key for SFM implementation, the Toolbox will also include knowledge and tools that support users in enhancing the enabling conditions for SFM.

7. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS JOINT INITIATIVE

The SFM Toolbox is a comprehensive, inclusive initiative, and as such, it is expected that it will be developed with active participation and contributions from all FAO-forestry colleagues, projects, and external partners. The table below provides some examples of these contributions:

Activities/Components	EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS FROM FAO-FORESTRY STAFF, PROJECTS AND PARTNERS
1- CONCEPT NOTE	– Inputs and feedback
2- SFM SCENARIOS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identification, development and discussion of additional SFM scenarios (and related modules and tools) related to the different areas of expertise – Participation in brainstorming meetings to define the different modules and how they are interlinked, so as to promote a comprehensive approach to SFM
3- MODULES	– Development of the content of the modules (e.g. overview, tools, cases) and contributing to the discussion forum
4- TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Suggesting additional tools for the database and supporting classification – Identifying gaps and needs, and developing new tools
5- CASE STUDIES & EXPERIENCES	– Suggesting exemplary and interesting cases
6- WEB PLATFORM	– Testing first demos and suggesting possible improvements
7- USABILITY TESTs	– Testing usability and usefulness of the toolbox through ongoing/planned field projects (and providing feedback)

ANNEX

Terms and Definitions

SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT (SFM) TOOLBOX

The toolbox is a compilation of SFM tools and cases (best practices, examples etc.) that facilitates the implementation of SFM.

TOOL

A tool is a resource that supports, guides and/or informs users about the implementation of SFM. Tools can contribute to the user's knowledge, skills and ability to put SFM in practice.

Tools may be displayed in different formats and may be guides, guidelines, codes of practice, technical sourcebooks, manuals, software, capacity development and educational/dissemination material. Tools may be linked to one or more toolbox records.

SCENARIO

A scenario is a collection and/or presentation of detailed information on the application of SFM in a particular or various contexts. Scenarios illustrate how to address or approach a thematic area of SFM, constraint or challenge related to SFM.

TOOLBOX RECORD

A toolbox record is a data entry in the toolbox that is described by specific metadata. The record may be a document, video, image, game, presentation, software etc.

METADATA

Metadata is structured data that describes, explains, locates, or otherwise makes it easier to retrieve, use, or manage an information *record*.

For the SFM Toolbox, metadata allows records to be found by relevant filters; identifies records; brings similar records together and distinguishes dissimilar records.

FILTER

A filter is a set of metadata, used to narrow down the selection of data shown. It provides a user with a variety of ways to identify subsets of data, specific to the user's need.

MODULE

A module is a section of the toolbox covering a thematic area relevant to the implementation of SFM. A module provides an overview of the thematic area (e.g. forest harvesting) and offers relevant toolbox resources (tools and cases) for learning and support.

SFM SCENARIO

A SFM scenario is a written description defining interactions between a user and the toolbox. The classical way of writing a scenario is as follows:

As an [**actor**] I want [**action**] so that [**achievement**].

It therefore begins with the user's need and ends when that need is fulfilled.

The nature of SFM scenarios will differ for users inserting information/records in the Toolbox and those extracting information from the Toolbox.

Examples of SFM scenarios of information providers:

- As a [**system maintainer**] I want to [**log in, using my FAO account**], so that [**I can maintain data in the Toolbox**].
- As a [**partner e.g. ITTO**] I want to [**log-in**], so that [**I can input a new relevant SFM tool for the Toolbox**].
- As a [**system owner**] I want to [**log-in and review newly entered records**], so that [**I can authorize them as new records, given they fulfill certain quality criteria**].

Examples of SFM scenarios of information extractors:

- As a [**private forest owner**] I want to [**get information on charcoal production**] so that [**I can decide whether this will be profitable for me**].
- As a [**forestry consultant**] I want to [**get information on the management of planted forests**] so that [**I can advise my client on the best silviculture practices for his teak plantation**].

USER PROFILE

A toolbox user profile is a collection of user-specific data that defines a user's preferences and can be used whenever the user accesses the toolbox (e.g. country, interests etc.), proved a log-in. It requires a user account.

USER ACCOUNT

A user account is a generic functionality used to authenticate (identify) a user, i.e. a log-in. Often the user account contains some basic information about the user beyond name and email. A user account will facilitate that the user can save previous searches, selected knowledge modules and tools for later consultation.