

FOREST GOVERNANCE FOR THE FUTURE HEALTH OF THE PLANET

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Abstract

Forest governance is that management branch that deals with the administrative, economic, legal, social and technical measures involved in the conservation and use of natural forests and forest plantations. It also involves various degrees of human intervention to safeguard the forest ecosystem, its functions and its resources for the sustained production of goods and the provision of environmental services.

Key words: conservation of the natural forest, ecosystem, participatory management, sustainable governance

INTRODUCTION

Although the old forestry continues to be widely practised, specially in the developing countries, there is an increasing trend in EU countries and specially in USA towards the forest management as ecological systems with multiple economic benefits and environmental values, and with broad public participation in the decision-making process. This new concept is named 'sustainable forest management'.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The aims to ensure that the benefits - both material and intangible - derived from the forest meet present needs, while at the same time ensuring their continued availability and contribution to long-term social and economic development. General acceptance of, and political commitment to, the principles of sustainable forest management have continued to grow, reinforced by the increased focus on forestry since UNCED. Chapter 11 ('Combating Deforestation') of UNCED's Agenda 21 and the 'Forest Principles' emphasized strongly the need to reconcile the productive functions of forests with their protective, environmental and social functions. Substantial effort has been made over the last two years to develop common criteria at national, regional and eco-regional levels by which sustainable forest management can be defined, and to specify indicators that can be used to monitor and evaluate it. The trend towards sustainable forest management is bringing considerable change in how

forests are perceived and used. Forest management for production of non-wood forest products is receiving more attention. Protective functions of forests are being given more emphasis, resulting in modified management practices. The needs of local, forest-dependent people are being given greater attention. The strict distinctions formerly drawn between production forests, protection forests and (nature) conservation areas have become more important today. For example: many rural development and conservation projects are focusing on increasing production of wood and non-wood forest products in 'buffer zones' as a means of taking pressure off conservation areas; the maintenance of protective functions is being given greater attention in production forests; and the role of forests outside protected areas in the conservation of biological diversity is being studied more intently. Trends in forest policies and institutional arrangements are having direct impacts on forest management. Following the general trend towards decentralization, government forestry administrations in many countries, developed and developing, are making efforts to decentralize control over forest resource management. This involves the gradual devolution of responsibility within the line agencies, from the central to the provincial or district level. Local officers are being given greater decision-making authority on local management issues. This implies changes in management practices to those which have a closer relation to local conditions. A second significant trend is in privatization, either of land or of forestry operations. This trend has obvious implications for forest management in terms of an increased profit motive driving management decisions and, in the case of leases and concessions, the need for government to monitor operations to ensure that agreed conditions related to management are met. A third trend is that of ensuring greater participation by a wide range of interest groups in the planning process. This requires that forest departments develop the institutional capacity and the capability to work with various groups (implying far more effort than in the past in communication, extension and mediation) and are able to modify management plans and practices effectively to meet the agreed objectives. Finally, there is a trend towards encouraging greater involvement of local communities in the management of forest resources. Participatory management of forest resources is not only seen as a means to encourage sustainable forest management, but is also a pragmatic response to the constraints imposed on forest departments by their shrinking financial and human resources. The development of participatory management systems, in which local communities play an important role in the day-to-day management and protection of forest resources, has been rapid in many developing countries, resulting in a wide variety of management arrangements fashioned as appropriate to local conditions. These include:

joint forest management; community forestry programmes; integrated conservation and development programmes used mainly in conjunction with nature conservation efforts; and village land management (referred to as 'aménagement des terroirs' in French), which is developing rapidly in West Africa. Joint forest management (JFM), a collaborative management approach that has been adopted in a number of states in India and in some Southeast Asian countries, has had some major successes. It is based on the principle that local communities become directly involved in the management of public forests and, in doing so, benefit directly from the use of the forests. The forest products industrial sector in most countries continues to adapt to current trends and to anticipate future developments. Recent advances in achieving higher recovery rates have led to a significant reduction in the amount of wood harvested from the forests. Increased consumption of forest products, demand for higher quality products, changes in the availability of raw materials, and public pressure towards environmental aspects of forest management, production and processing, will continue to be major factors affecting technology and product development. Major trends in supply and demand of forest products are having a significant impact on marketing at both the industrial and community enterprise levels. Industrialized and developing countries, and countries in transition, are facing different challenges related to marketing of forest products. Industrialized countries are responding to the emergence of a range of new products (including those filling a small market niche for products from sustainably-managed forests and for speciality non-wood 'natural' forest products, and those resulting from new processing technologies) and an increasing number of products made from residues, recycled materials and plantation-grown timber. Decreasing availability of well-known, quality tropical hardwoods is directing them to high-value end uses. Marketing such wood products requires specialized information and capabilities in order to compete effectively with other materials. Changes in the developing countries are due to more fundamental trends, both within and outside of the forestry sector, including: banning of exports of logs and a rapid move to manufacturing of value-added products in an increasing number of tropical and non-tropical countries; reduced availability of industrial wood from virgin forests with an increased supply of wood coming from plantations, woodlots and agroforestry systems; and a rapid rate of urbanization in many countries, which is changing, quite dramatically, the demand for forest products and the ways in which the products are provided to customers. Countries in transition, as Romania, are facing a dramatically different marketing environment than in the past. Captive domestic markets are being replaced by competitive domestic and export markets. Parastatal organizations, previously responsible for

marketing products in centrally-planned countries, have been replaced by privatized industries and their emerging marketing organizations.

All these changes have focused more attention on marketing issues, and various actions are being taken in many parts of the world to enable marketing to function more efficiently:

- marketing information systems are being invigorated or set up (e.g., the SIMSTRAT of the Fundación Chile);
- forest products marketing education and training programmes are being initiated and strengthened in many universities and training schools throughout the world (e.g., the College of Forestry at the University of the Philippines in Los Baños); and
- a number of international and regional workshops on marketing have been organized to facilitate exchange of information (e.g., sawnwood marketing in countries in transition).

CONCLUSIONS

As community forestry, agroforestry and local production systems for non-wood forest products have gained in importance, increased attention has been paid to marketing as an essential component of these activities. The emergence of these new sources of wood and other forest-derived products is resulting in the development of new, locally-based marketing structures. This trend is also reflected in increased attention being paid to marketing in community forestry and agroforestry education and training programmes (e.g., the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre, RECOFTC, at Kasetsart University, Thailand), and in efforts to build local capacities in marketing.

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