E

联合国粮食及农业组织
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture
Продовольственная и сельскохозяйственная организация Объединенных Наций
Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura
منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة

COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

Twenty-seventh Session

Rome, 22–26 July 2024

Progress of the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2025, including FAO's work on forest degradation

Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:

Anssi Pekkarinen
Senior Forestry Officer
Tel. +39 06570 56587
Anssi.Pekkarinen@fao.org
Please copy: COFO@fao.org

I. Introduction

1. Since 1946, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been monitoring the world's forest resources through periodic assessments conducted in cooperation with its Members. The Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) presents a comprehensive view of the world's forests and of how they are changing, to support the development of sound policies, practices and investments affecting forests and forestry.

2. At its 26th session, the Committee on Forestry (COFO) requested that FAO conduct a global assessment of the status and scaling-up potential of agroforestry, define "forest degradation" within the FRA process, and further strengthen the network of remote sensing experts to foster the sharing of experiences and lessons learned during the FAO FRA Remote Sensing Survey (RSS). Furthermore, COFO recommended that FAO continue strengthening collaboration with its partners to reduce the reporting burden, enhance synergies and increase the transparency of reporting processes and the resulting data. In its 25th session, the COFO also requested that FAO develop, in consultation with Members and other stakeholders, a flexible FRA reporting process that allows countries to do more frequent voluntary updates of key indicators if they so wish.

II. Progress on the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2025

3. The arrangements for FRA 2025 were finalized by early 2023. For this, the scope of the assessment was confirmed with the feedback received from the FRA 2025 expert consultations held in September 2022. The FRA national correspondents' nomination process was also completed, and the guiding documents supporting the reporting process were published. Furthermore, FAO developed an updated version of the online FRA reporting platform[1] with enhanced reporting and reviewing functionalities.

4. As a response to COFO's request to develop a definition of forest degradation, the FRA reporting content was updated to cover the collection of additional information on existing national definitions, the criteria applied, existing related monitoring systems, underlying methods, the monitoring scale, the latest assessment year, and the area of degraded forest.

5. Preliminary analysis of the FRA 2025 country report submissions received revealed that, while most countries and territories still lack both a national forest degradation definition and corresponding monitoring systems, the number of countries that have established these has increased since FRA 2020. The most applied criteria used in the definitions included changes in forest structure, forest disturbances, loss of productivity, and the decline in biomass and carbon stocks.

6. In mid-2024, FAO will establish a technical taskforce to further analyse the FRA 2025 submissions and begin work on a commonly agreed definition of forest degradation for future reporting. To inform the taskforce, FAO has developed a background paper examining international definitions of forest degradation as presented in relevant international agreements, processes, and assessments. This paper also explores national definitions of forest degradation and the extent to which these definitions have been operationalized in the context of reporting to the FRA. The results of the taskforce's work will be presented at the 28th session of the COFO.

7. The FRA 2025 data collection was launched in February 2023 with a first workshop for the Caribbean region, which was followed by 13 other regional workshops throughout 2023.[2] Altogether, 299 FRA national correspondents, their alternates, and collaborators from 150 countries and territories participated in these events. In addition, a series of virtual meetings were organized to support the reporting. These workshops focused on providing technical assistance and guidance to national correspondents on the compilation and finalization of their FRA 2025 country reports. At the same time, they provided a forum for national correspondents to connect and share experiences with colleagues from other countries in their respective regions.

8. The FRA 2025 data collection, validation and cleansing were finalized during the first half of 2024. Altogether, 236 national or territorial reports for FRA 2025 were prepared. The analysis of data, drafting of the global report and developing of the FRA 2025 data dissemination interface will be

[1] https://fra-data.fao.org
[2] https://www.fao.org/forest-resources-assessment/fra-2025-regional-workshops/en/

completed by early 2025, and the results will be published in the fourth quarter of 2025. A pilot enabling flexible reporting for the countries who have expressed their interest in updating their reports has been scheduled to take place in 2024.

9. As part of the FRA 2025 reporting process, FAO has continued its effort to reduce the countries' reporting burden, including through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests' joint initiative on streamlining forest-related reporting. This has included the integration of the quantitative pan-European questionnaire to the FRA reporting platform for the joint pan-European data collection in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and FOREST EUROPE. In addition, FAO has collaborated with the Central Africa Forest Observatory (OFAC) of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) to support FRA 2025 national reporting in the region and to promote data harmonization among the reporting processes. In addition, FAO has continued to develop the Global Core Set of Forest-Related Indicators[3] and worked on specific studies on primary forests and employment in forestry. More results on these specific matters will be published in 2024.

10. In parallel with the FRA country reporting process, FAO is working on a special study on agroforestry. A stocktaking of existing agroforestry datasets and methodologies for agroforestry monitoring at national, regional, and global levels has been completed, and the results of the global assessment of the status and scaling-up potential of agroforestry are foreseen to be published in 2025. For more details, please see COFO/2024/3.

11. In addition, FAO has continued the analysis, generation, and dissemination of information on specific topics related to forests and forestry in the context of FRA. The report *How much do large-scale and small-scale farming contribute to global deforestation? Results from a remote sensing pilot approach*[4] was published in May 2023, and the first participatory global study on mangroves and their dynamics, *The World's Mangroves 2000–2020*,[5] was launched in July 2023. Based on this report, an interactive story, Unlocking the Secret of Mangroves: Mapping and Tracking Mangrove Forests to Safeguard these Ecological Treasures[6] was also launched in July 2023.

12. In late 2022, FAO also published a novel game, Forest Kids,[7] to help younger generations gain knowledge about the importance of forests and forestry.

13. Simultaneously, FAO has proceeded with the preparation and implementation of the FRA 2025 RSS.[8] The survey builds on the methodology used for the FRA 2020 RSS. However, the number of samples to be collected has been reduced to improve efficiency. In addition, the thematic content of the survey has been adjusted to improve available data on some variables, such as deforestation drivers, other wooded lands, trees outside forests, and pastures. Around 30 regional and national capacity-building workshops for the FRA 2025 RSS are planned in 2024 and 2025. The results of the FRA 2025 RSS are foreseen to be published in 2026.

14. Following the recommendation of the *FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022–2031*,[9] the United Nations' *Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere*,[10] and the *UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science*,[11] FAO intends to implement the upcoming RSS according to open science principles. To improve -forest related data and statistical systems, including in terms of transparency, and to ensure equitable and inclusive access to data and information, the countries will be provided with the opportunity to publicly share their geolocated FRA 2025 RSS sample data and the accompanying metadata under an Open Data Licensing Policy.

[3] https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9963en
[4] https://doi.org/10.4060/cc5723en
[5] https://doi.org/10.4060/cc7044en
[6] https://www.fao.org/interactive/remote-sensing-mangroves/en/
[7] https://www.fao.org/forest-resources-assessment/ForestKids/
[8] https://www.fao.org/forest-resources-assessment/remote-sensing/en/
[9] https://www.fao.org/3/cc2274en/cc2274en.pdf
[10] https://www.un.org/en/content/datastrategy/index.shtml
[11] https://doi.org/10.54677/MNMH8546