



LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

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INFORMATION PAPER: THE NEW FAO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND FORESTRY

Executive Summary

1. FAO's Strategic Framework articulates FAO's vision of a sustainable and food secure world for all, in the context of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems for Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment, and a Better Life, leaving no one behind.
2. By fully embracing the SDGs, FAO moves away from bespoke targets and indicators and adopts a common universal language consistent with the global agenda and our UN partners. Twenty Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) will guide FAO on filling critical gaps and putting in place the conditions needed to drive the changes that will ultimately contribute to the achievement of the selected SDG targets. This paper briefly outlines to contribution of forests and trees to thirteen of these PPAs

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I. Introduction

3. FAO's Strategic Framework articulates FAO's vision of a sustainable and food secure world for all, in the context of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.
4. The development of FAO's Strategic Framework took place during a period of unprecedented challenges driven by the COVID-19 pandemic - a global crisis, which highlighted the critical mandate of FAO to ensure functioning and sustainable agri-food systems that allow for sufficient production and consumption of food.
5. FAO's Strategic Framework seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems for Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment, and a Better Life, leaving no one behind.
6. The four betters represent an organising principle for how FAO intends to contribute directly to SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), and SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) as well as to supporting achievement of the broader SDG Agenda, which is crucial for attaining FAO's overall vision. Besides the interlinkages that exist between forests and many other goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, forestry specifically contributes strongly to SDG 15 (Protect and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems) and SDG 13 (action to combat climate change).
7. The betters reflect the interconnected economic, social and environmental dimensions of agri-food systems. As such, they also encourage a strategic and systems-oriented approach within all FAO's interventions.
8. Twenty Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) will guide FAO on filling critical gaps and putting in place the conditions needed to drive the changes that will ultimately contribute to the achievement of the selected SDG targets. By fully embracing the SDGs, FAO moves away from bespoke targets and indicators and adopts a common universal language consistent with the global agenda and our UN partners.
9. This paper briefly outlines the contribution of forests and trees to thirteen of these PPAs.

II. Contribution of forests and trees to FAO programme priority areas¹

Better Production: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, through efficient and inclusive food and agriculture supply chains at local, regional and global level, ensuring resilient and sustainable agri-food systems in a changing climate and environment

BP1: Green innovation.

10. Economic activity associated with forests and trees provides an important source of income, both in the formal wood products sectors (which employed over 13 million people in 2011, and more than double this number when forward and backward linkages to other sectors of the economy are taken into account) and in the informal economy (for which there is limited systematic data and much of which is associated with trade in non-wood forest products). This income may be used to buy food and invest in agriculture.
11. In addition, many poor households rely heavily on the consumption of forest and tree products, which include food, livestock fodder, woodfuel, building materials and medicinal plants. Trees in well-planned agroforestry systems can boost the productivity of agricultural crops and by creating diversified livelihoods agroforestry systems they also increase overall resilience.

¹ Much of the information in this Section comes from FAO *State of the World's Forests* publications for 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020 and from the FAO *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020*.

12. The strengthening of sustainable forest products value chains to enhance their social, economic and environmental benefits from production to consumption is vital to ensure that forests supply goods and services to meet both present-day and future needs and contribute to the sustainable development of communities.

BP4: Small-scale producers' equitable access to resources.

13. Access to land, resources and investments in and around forests can propel women, youth and other rural entrepreneurs to be agents of change in the transformation to a sustainable world. Therefore, clear and secure tenure rights which includes ownership, tenancy and other arrangements for the use of forests, are an important prerequisite for the sustainable management of forests and trees. Uncertainty over tenure can lead to under-investment and over-exploitation, causing adverse impacts on livelihoods and the environment. In accordance with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, there need to be clear and consistent legal frameworks that also recognize traditional customary rights, which are especially important for many vulnerable groups of people, including poor rural women and indigenous communities and thus encouraging a long-term, sustainable approach to forest management.

BP5: Digital agriculture.

14. Digital innovations offer new opportunities for improving the sustainable management of agroforestry systems. They can be used to improve the dissemination of advice on good practices and provide early warning systems for disaster management. They can also facilitate financial transactions and offer better access to markets by creating new links between small and medium-scale producers and consumers and more reliable sources of market information. Technology can also help with traceability along the value chain for certification schemes. There is a need to up-scale these digital solutions and to ensure that they do not create a technological divide, adversely affecting smallholders who do not have access for reasons of poor connectivity, cost or lack of training.

Better Nutrition: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition in all its forms, including promoting nutritious food and increasing access to healthy diets

BN2: Nutrition for the most vulnerable.

15. For many of the poorest people in rural areas, food security and nutrition is closely linked to the plant and animal food products that can be derived from forests and trees. While forest foods may have a small role in terms of calories, they form a critical part of diets commonly consumed by rural, food-insecure populations and add variety to predominantly staple diets. A variety of wild products – including herbs, leaves, fruits, nuts, insects, wild meat, and inland and coastal fishery products – supply energy and carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins and minerals to the diets of around 1 billion people. Furthermore, forest employment and income enable people to purchase food to ensure healthy and diversified diets throughout the year for millions of rural people and indigenous communities across the tropics and subtropics.

16. Woodfuel from forests, by offering the means for food processing, cooking and sterilizing water, directly contributes to nutrition and health and to decreasing the occurrence of food- and waterborne diseases. This is vital, as waterborne diarrhoeal diseases, for example, are responsible for 2 million deaths each year, with the majority occurring in children under five.

BN3: Safe food for everyone.

17. Where there are no alternative sources of affordable energy, the availability of woodfuel is essential for providing households with safe food and water. It is estimated that some 2.4 billion people, in both urban and rural areas, use firewood or charcoal for cooking, and around 765 million of these people use woodfuel to boil and sterilize their water. Those most dependent on woodfuel are often vulnerable groups in developing countries.. With adequate policy and legal frameworks in place,

woodfuel production, harvesting, processing and distribution can be a source of sustainable green energy and provide employment opportunities.

18. However, with forest loss woodfuel becomes more expensive or more time-consuming to gather, and over-exploitation can lead to severe land and forest resources and trees outside forests degradation, which puts at risk the multiple benefits that forests and trees provide for people's food security and nutrition. As cooking with woodfuel can cause indoor air pollution and associated health problems, there is also a need to promote safe practices and more widespread use of efficient stoves.

Better Environment: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems and combat climate change (reduce, reuse, recycle, residual management) through more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems

BE1: Climate change mitigating and adapted agri-food systems.

19. As recognised in the Paris Agreement (2015), forests have a key role in climate change mitigation. Nevertheless, the global forest area declined by about 178 million hectares between 1990 and 2020. The rate of net forest loss has decreased since 1990, declining from 7.84 million hectares per year in 1990–2000, to 5.17 million hectares per year in 2000–2010, and 4.74 million hectares per year in 2010–2020. These net figures take account of afforestation and the natural expansion of forests, as well as deforestation. An estimated 420 million hectares of forest was lost through deforestation between 1990 and 2020, with rates of deforestation falling from 15.8 million hectares per year in 1990–2000, to 15.1 million hectares per year in 2000–2010, 11.8 million hectares per year in 2010–2015 and 10.2 million hectares per year in 2015–2020. More than 90 percent of deforestation in 1990–2020 was in the tropical domain. If deforestation is halted and degraded forests are restored, this will provide up to one third of climate mitigation needed between now and 2030 to stabilize global warming to below 2°C.

BE2: Bioeconomy for sustainable food and agriculture.

20. Wood products form an important component of the bio-economy. In addition to its development of recycling technologies to reduce requirements for virgin wood fibre, the forest industry produces second-generation biofuels and biobased materials that can substitute for fossil-based fuels and products. There are also opportunities to encourage more use of wood products for construction, substituting for materials with higher embodied energy, such as concrete, steel, or brick. Sustainable wood value chains for wood production and trade coupled with the forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT) initiatives can enhance the sustainable wood products in the bioeconomy.

BE3: Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture.

21. Forests are home to most of the Earth's biodiversity, which is essential for the future resilience of human food systems. Forest and trees also provide other ecosystem services that are crucial for agriculture. They are integral to the water cycle, regulating streamflow, supporting groundwater recharge and, through evapotranspiration, contributing to cloud generation and precipitation. They also help reduce soil erosion, prevent desertification, circulate nutrients and provide habitat for pollinators. Trees can provide shade and shelter in agricultural landscapes. Farmers are well aware of these benefits and as a result, 40 percent of all agricultural lands have more than 10 percent tree cover.

Changes in biodiversity can influence the supply of ecosystem services. Despite the critical role of biodiversity and ecosystem services in sustaining life on Earth, there are knowledge gaps and therefore these assets are not adequately accounted for in political and economic policy, which means there is insufficient investment in their protection and management.

Better Life: Promote inclusive economic growth by reducing inequalities (urban/rural areas, rich/poor countries, men/women)

BL1: Gender equality and rural women's empowerment.

22. While the formal forest sector is often largely a male domain in many countries, the harvesting and marketing of non-wood forest products is often dominated by women. Improving access to decent employment and forestry education can have a major impact on gender equality in the forest sector, providing opportunities for gender transformative change.

23. Other barriers that need to be overcome to achieve gender equality include the lack of women's rights to land and lack of access to technology, credit, training and decision-making. Community ownership can offer a platform to enhance gender equitable access to forest resources, especially where women have rights through community-based tenure.

BL2: Inclusive rural transformation.

24. Forests and trees contribute to rural livelihoods and poverty alleviation through income generated by employment in the production of forest goods and services. These employments are exceptionally important in rural communities where there are often few alternative sources. However, there is a knowledge gap on the socioeconomic benefits provided by forests that needs to be addressed to support coherent action planning and evidence-based decision-making at all levels.

25. Furthermore, decent employment in forestry is key for safer and more stable working conditions. This, in turn, contributes to improving availability and stable access to adequate and nutritious food.

26. Inclusive rural transformation to enhance livelihoods and wellbeing and promote inclusive economic development by reducing inequalities, requires new thinking in terms of how we tackle complex challenges and act beyond sectoral boundaries and scaling-up sustainable production models, with effective coordination between agri-food, land use, rural development and forest policies.

BL3: Sustainable urban food systems

27. Urban and periurban forests contribute to the sustainability of urban food systems, either directly, by providing food (fruit, mushrooms, wildlife, etc) or indirectly by providing the energy and the water for the proper preparation of food. They also play a key role in protecting cities for natural disasters such as floods that have a heavy impact on both food storage and food distribution systems, as well as protecting urban and periurban agricultural fields. It is important therefore, to integrate the planning, design and management of urban forests into city planning and to strengthen the linkages between cities and the surrounding regions. Well established and managed urban forests and trees also provide a wide range of other ecosystem goods and services.

BL5: Resilient agri-food systems.

28. Effective forest management can strengthen resilience and adaptive capacities to climate-related natural disasters, highlighting the importance of integrating forest-based measures into national disaster risk reduction strategies.

29. Trees and forests can serve as important safety nets during critical periods. Trees are less susceptible to weather shocks than non-perennial crops and, as natural ecosystems are more diverse than agricultural systems, they are generally more resilient. It is often the most asset poor households that have the greatest need for access to alternative sources of food from forest resources at times of crisis, such as crop failure, or during periods of seasonal scarcity.

BL7: Scaling up Investment

30. Forest finance affects the economic feasibility of sustainable practices, the distribution of costs and benefits amongst different stakeholders along value chains and the provision of the multiple socioeconomic benefits provided by forests.

31. Despite the private sector's importance to forests, information on private forest financing remains scarce and inadequate. Data on private forest financing is not systematically reported in either global or regional databases and the quality remains inconsistent.
32. Investments in sustainable forest management and forest-based value chains will have major climate and development benefits. These investments are critical to drive a transition towards a greener, healthier and more resilient future.
33. Public resources can be increased and spending optimized but alone are not enough to achieve the SDGs. Therefore, enabling investment environment, improving policies and legislation, governance, transparency and infrastructure is critical to attract and leveraging private investments. By lowering the risks and increasing the profitability of forest-based businesses, blended finance can be transformational for rural economies.
34. An environment that is conducive to investments includes efforts to secure land tenure, build capacities and access to technology in order to address the drivers and underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, or to enhance forest carbon stocks.