



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

inFO news 41 – July 2016

Editorial: *Shaping a new agenda for forests*

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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, among others, have set global targets for action on sustainable development. As we prepare to welcome hundreds of delegates and representatives to FAO headquarters in Rome for the 23rd Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO23) and the Fifth World Forest Week (WFW5), conducted in parallel, uppermost in our minds is how best to use these five days to articulate actions within those targets that will help meet the human and natural resource needs of the twenty-first century.

Forests, trees and mountains – and their recognized interrelated, inter-sectoral roles and benefits – are highly visible in both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. COFO23/WFW5 will propose actions for ensuring that they make an optimal contribution to food security, the eradication of hunger and poverty, climate-change alleviation, and others. The International Arrangement on Forests and the XIV World Forestry Congress 2050 Vision will also guide our work.

So what difference can COFO23/WFW5 make?

Under FAO's organizational structure, revised in 2015, FAO Forestry is working more closely than ever with the agriculture and other sectors to achieve on-the-ground synergies, for example to restore degraded agricultural lands and increase farmer incomes. COFO23/WFW5 will explore such synergies, making use of the presence and contributions of FAO members and partners. It will provide a unique space in which participants can listen, contribute and learn; at its conclusion, I expect also a "roadmap" of recommended actions.

Climate change is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest contemporary threats to humanity and the planet. A high-level dialogue at COFO23/WFW5 will examine FAO's corporate climate-change strategy and the role of forests in it, and it will look at funding opportunities for sustainable forestry and how to tap them. Illustrating where the impacts of climate change, food insecurity and

land degradation coincide, another event will consider Africa's response to climate change and zero hunger.

Decision-making and policy-making on forests must be founded on reliable information. *State of the World's Forests 2016: forests and agriculture: land-use challenges and opportunities* – an FAO flagship publication – will be launched on 18 July. This report will add to the authoritative global data on forests compiled in the *2015 Global Forest Resources Assessment*.

The fundamental human dimension of forestry, and the sector's interaction with others, will be emphasized in various events throughout COFO23/WFW5. Increasingly, governments, communities and individuals are putting in place policies and practices that are transforming degraded lands, helping communities thrive, reducing hunger and poverty, conserving biodiversity and cutting greenhouse gas emissions – in short, achieving sustainable development. Examples of these exciting approaches will be presented in informal sessions and as part of an objective assessment of FAO's implementation of previous recommendations of COFO and other FAO governing bodies; this assessment will be aided by another FAO publication, *Moving Forward*, which highlights some of the actions and achievements of the FAO Forestry programme in 2014–2015.

Looking to the future, we will see how technological advances in data collection and monitoring are being deployed in new partnerships to complement established forest reporting. We will also learn how forestry is anticipating and responding to large-scale demographic changes, such as urbanization, and the innovative forms of forestry and urban planning and management this is inspiring.

Although the voices of forest communities are increasingly being heard, they have not yet reached all ears, and ongoing communication efforts are vital for informing and influencing public opinion and policy development. A session at COFO23/WFW5 will bring together forest communicators and experts in international media and advertising to assist us in conveying strong messages on forests to policymakers and the general public.

Fast-moving developments at the local to global scales mean that the forest sector must be both visionary and nimble in adapting to change. The 23rd Session of the Committee on Forestry and the Fifth World Forest week provide an opportunity to shape a new agenda for forests – one that will allow FAO and its members and partners to consolidate the position of forests in the global agenda and to contribute significantly to its implementation. Let us not miss this opportunity!