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LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Item 4.2 of the Provisional Agenda

TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 26 - 30 June 2006

**SPECIAL SESSION: IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE
FOREST MANAGEMENT: "The search for excellence in sustainable
forest management in Latin America and the Caribbean"**

Secretariat Note

SUMMARY

- The media is full of stories about the destruction of the world's tropical forests. Is this the full story? Are all of the world's tropical forests really being destroyed? Or are there places where forests are being sustainably managed for the mutual benefit of present and future generations?
- An exciting new LACFC initiative, "The search for excellence in forest management in Latin America and the Caribbean," intends to uncover the true story. From the field experience and number of reports, we know that there are many places in the Region where forests are being managed well, where many stakeholders are involved, and where local livelihoods are improving based on benefits from the forest.
- The Asia Pacific Forestry Commission sponsored a similar initiative in Asia, and it was very successful. 172 forests were nominated by countries throughout the Region, and 28 were selected for presentation as case studies in a highly successful publication, *In Search of Excellence: Exemplary forest management in Asia and the Pacific*. This has become the most popular forestry publication in the history of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
- The document reports on the main aspects to be considered when developing a research project for the identification, appraisal, documentation, and distribution of outstanding cases of forestry management in Latin America and the Caribbean. The research to be undertaken would be similar to that carried out by the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO RAP) and published in 2005.
- The outcome of this project will serve to counteract the negative perception of the sector in the Region and, at the same time, provide examples of outstanding cases of forest management which could be adopted by or taken as a source of inspiration for others. Similarly, the analysis

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of promising cases in different contexts and conditions will translate into useful lessons, conclusions, and recommendations, which are expected to contribute to the achievement of sustainable forest management in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- The main output will be a publication in English and Spanish in printed and electronic format. A synthesis will also be published in French and Portuguese.
- Research results will be submitted to national and local forestry authorities; politicians and advisors; forest managers; people interested in forest issues; the local, national, and international community; forestry and academic professionals, and non-governmental organizations.
- The research will be carried out in four phases. The first phase will identify promising cases of forest management and, to this end, institutions, companies, communities, and people will be invited to nominate model cases. In the second phase cases will be screened and analyzed by a Panel of Experts. In the third phase 25 to 30 case studies will be developed, covering a wide range of topics (management objectives) and geographical conditions (types of forests and countries). Finally, during the fourth phase the end product of the initiative will be elaborated and disseminated through seminars in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- The estimated cost of the research is US\$ 340,000, over a three-year period.

Introduction

1. In Latin America and the Caribbean, natural forests have traditionally been managed and over-used for timber production, and great pressure still exists to use forest resources for conversion purposes. This “over-use” has been the result of a response to demands from national and international markets for more timber, as well as the sale of timber as a way to improve domestic economies. To a lesser extent, this may also be due to forestry education which in the past was used to train forest technicians in inventory, use, and silviculture, but ignored the social, economic, and institutional aspects of forest management. These negative results of traditional management of natural forests have often changed the view of forestry professionals and the public in general, as well as the concept of forest management. Current forest management encompasses a holistic, integral, and multiple use view, with a trend towards the sustainable yield of multiple products, goods and services, giving rise to the concept of sustainable forest management (SFM).

2. Sustainable forest management is a flexible process whose objectives change over time. A very important feature of the SFM concept is that it is understood as a state which should be achieved successively and take into account increasing levels of demand, national objectives and conditions, and satisfy society as a whole and perpetually. It is thus difficult to reach consensus on one single definition of SFM, because different users have different expectations and perceptions in terms of what sustainability is, how it can be monitored and assessed, and how to progress should be reported.

3. Qualifying *exemplary forest management* is even more complex. The aim is to highlight situations where the concept has been correctly applied in different forest conditions and with different benefits for owners and society as a whole, while providing possible models and examples of best practices. It is important that the examples reflect a clear objective and appropriate planning so as to ensure “continuous management improvement” although “excellence” has not yet been fully attained.

4. Sustainable forest management may be defined and assessed through a variety of principles, criteria and indicators which help define the concept and its application. Different organizations have developed measurement tools and indicators for assessing management sustainability, adapting the assessment in line with, among others, the type of forest, management scale, and used products. These indicators include environmental, socio-economic, legal, and institutional aspects which help assess progress towards sustainable forest management.

From where does the idea of defining “excellence in forest management” arise?

5. The initiative arose out of a study approved by the 21st Session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) in 2004 entitled “In Search of Excellence: Exemplary forest management in Asia and the Pacific”, and was implemented by FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO/RAP) and the Regional Community Forestry Training Center (Asia and the Pacific) (RECOFTC). The main results were published in 2005.

6. The core motivation of this initiative was to highlight SFM cases in countries of the Region, in order to educate people regarding the fact that forests can be sustainably managed and, at the same time, to thwart the negative view some other sectors have of this activity. The initiative uses real experiences, describing field situations and gathering opinions and lessons learned on forest management from different sources, in order to document the major challenges and the different solutions under various conditions offered by forestry science. The study will help better understand the different components of SFM.

7. Recognizing that forest management in the Region is at different stages of development, the project should identify a broad range of situations, from those where the parties directly involved have overcome the most basic management challenges, to those where more sophisticated solutions for more complex problems are required.

Bibliography

8. There are numerous publications and much “grey” literature which describe forest management endeavours in Latin America and the Caribbean. In most cases, these endeavours are related to successful experiences of specific interest groups.

9. Revision and synthesis on the status of forest management have been carried out at country and/or regional level, or for certain forest types, including specific management objectives (e.g., non-wood forest products, enriching plantations, forest rehabilitation). This information is rather dispersed (generally scattered), making it difficult to have a full overview of different situations and management cases.

10. Some publications make relevant reference to the criteria employed to consider a case or management experience as successful. At a Pan-tropical level, a noteworthy study is “No timber without trees”, 1989, produced by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) which determined how much tropical forest in producing member countries was successfully managed for timber production. In addition, the study identified the necessary conditions for success.

11. Little reference is made in literature to management systems applied to natural forests in the Latin American and Caribbean region. FAO (1993) reports that up to 1989 there were no large-scale programmes in the tropical Americas for operative sustainable management in dry and humid broadleaved forests. The report concludes that despite numerous research and development projects identified in Latin America and the Caribbean, in most countries forest management existed only in theory and was very rarely put into practice. After more than a decade, although some progress has been made, it was not significant. FAO (2001) reported that in 14 Latin American countries, only three percent of total forest area had formal management plans. On the other hand, great advances have been made in terms of certification, with 8 million certified hectares in Latin America and the Caribbean. Brazil and Bolivia are among the ten countries with the largest certified forest area in the world.

12. Even though there are numerous cases of forests managed according to the sustainability concept, and could therefore be considered as exemplary, the area is very small when compared to the large forest area in the Region. The challenge (put forward) is to accelerate the implementation

of sustainable management, including through case studies that clarify the SFM concept and provide proof of its applicability under different conditions.

Purpose of the document

13. The aim of this document is to submit to Members of the Commission information which will facilitate decision-making on the feasibility of undertaking this initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean. The initiative requires the preparation of a draft project to attract financial resources, followed by research to identify, document, and disseminate examples of model cases of forest management in the Region. The project and research would be similar to those undertaken in Asia-Pacific.

14. The draft project will seek to educate foresters, local communities and government officials on the importance of forests and their benefits, as well as to raise awareness in public opinion of the threats to forests. Hence, the importance of demonstrating to the public all successful forest management experiences and how these efforts can be the starting point to stimulate and commit different parties to work in favour of conservation and sustainable use of this resource.

Theme objectives

15. One way of improving forest management is to identify and promote best practices and share workable ideas, methods and approaches at different levels.

16. As for Asia-Pacific, the Latin American and Caribbean research will review different cases of well-managed forests in different situations, namely:

- Forests with a long history in terms of good management, or innovative management systems;
- Different types of forests, so as to have good coverage in terms of formations or forest ecotype;
- Different types of forests in terms of products (wood and non-wood products) and services (environmental and social) they provide, as well as different ownership regimes, such as private industry, community, and small-scale farmers.

Rationale

17. In many countries of the Region, some politicians and segments of society do not acknowledge or simply ignore the importance of forest management and its social, environmental, and economic contributions. Similarly, the media hardly ever report on positive forest management experiences, and frequently publish negative and even alarming reports on deforestation, illegal logging, fire, governance issues, and institutional weakness affecting the forestry sector. In summary, the trend has been towards ignoring the positive experiences.

18. It is within this context that the initiative "*In search of excellence in sustainable forest management in Latin America and the Caribbean*" is justified. The aim of highlighting, valuing, and publicizing cases where SFM is duly applied, is to offset the negative view about forestry activities in the region, and to provide examples which could be followed or serve as sources of inspiration. Moreover, the analysis of promising cases in different contexts and situations will provide important lessons, conclusions, and recommendations which will contribute to the on-going processes aimed at increasing SFM in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Selection process

19. The research would comprise four phases. The first phase would be to identify promising cases based on the management criteria previously identified, with the call for nominating model cases under the responsibility of FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Nomination applications will be sent to governmental and non-governmental organizations or institutions related to the forestry sector and the environment in general; development programmes or projects; business or community associations; universities; professional associations or guilds, among others. The information will also be publicized via e-lists, e-bulletins or magazines, and enterprises and national organizations web sites (e.g. CONAF, CONIF, EMBRAPA, INTA, IBAMA*), regional organizations (e.g. CATIE, ACTO*), and international organizations (e.g. FAO, CIFOR, ITTO, ICRAF*), inviting them to cooperate. Nominations might be submitted by individuals or organizations which consider that the management of a specific forest fulfils the requirements to be considered as an example of sustainable forest management.

20. In the second phase, nominations submitted will be analyzed and selected by a Panel of Experts established by FAO. The selection criteria will be defined by the Panel, taking into account the geographical location, type of forests and functions.

21. The third phase will focus on developing case studies. FAO will hire consultants who will prepare studies based on the specific terms of reference for each case. The idea is to develop about 25-30 case studies from proposals which have been selected by the Panel.

22. Finally, in the fourth phase case studies will be made known through four seminars, covering main Latin American and Caribbean subregions (Mesoamerica, Southern Cone, Amazon and the Caribbean), and through a book publication.

Research cost

23. A detailed project proposal will be prepared, but rough estimates of the total cost of the research are about US\$ 340,000, for a three-year period.

Expected product, dissemination, and audience

24. The main product will be a publication with a description of the initiative, the process, the selected 25-30 case studies, conclusions, and implications of the research. The study will be published in Spanish and English, and will be available in printed and electronic format.

25. A synthesis will also be published as an illustrated brochure issued in French and Portuguese. This product will also be available on the web site of different national, regional, and international institutions and organizations.

26. Research results will be addressed to:

- National and local forestry and environmental authorities;
- Influential politicians and advisors in national forestry policy;
- Forest managers and administrators (in influential positions);
- The general public (people with interest in forest issues);

* CONAF – Corporación Nacional Forestal, Chile
 CONIF – Corporación Nacional de Investigación y Fomento Forestal, Colombia
 EMBRAPA – Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária, Brazil
 INTA – Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria, Argentina
 IBAMA – Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis, Brazil

* CATIE – Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Center
 ACTO – Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization

* FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
 CIFOR – Center for International Forestry Research
 ITTO – International Tropical Timber Organization
 ICRAF – World Agroforestry Centre

- Local, national, and international communities interested in the subject;
- Forestry professionals and people from academia;
- Non-governmental organizations (with social and environmental agendas).

Conclusions and recommendations

27. There are several cases of forest management in the region which could be considered as models but are not yet acknowledged as such. These cases need to be identified, described, publicized, and widely disseminated to the public, in order to make forestry activities better known and to be used as a source of inspiration and example for people who are working for the sustainable management of their forests. The aim is also to counteract any negative publicity on forestry management arising in the media.

28. The success of this initiative depends on cooperation among countries and particularly on having many organizations taking an interest in submitting exemplary forest management cases.

29. It is advisable that the Commission support this FAO/RLC initiative in order to develop a draft project and raise the necessary funds for its implementation.