



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



ITTO  
INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL  
TIMBER ORGANIZATION

# Call to action on forest education

The International Conference on Forest Education met virtually from 22 to 24 June 2021. It was organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) and was financially supported by Germany's Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. The event convened over 1 000 forest education stakeholders and actors, including policy makers, forest and environmental educators and students, non-governmental organizations, community-based and Indigenous Peoples' organizations, the private sector, and regional and global organizations.

Key findings of the global and regional assessments of forest education<sup>1</sup> undertaken by the Global Forest Education Project from 2020 to 2021 were presented at the Conference. These included:

- While the number, diversity and qualifications of graduates from forest vocational and university programmes have increased in most regions of the world, forest education resources allocated to these programmes are insufficient in large parts of the global South and the quality of forest education is actually declining in some developing countries.
- In most regions, primary and secondary schools are not effectively educating students about forests and trees or motivating them to pursue forest-related studies and careers.
- Weaknesses in forest education programmes have left forest graduates in most regions only moderately prepared to enter the workplace, with their understanding of cultural and social aspects of forest and tree management notably deficient.
- Innovative teaching approaches, digital tools and online learning resources are not adequately employed in forest-related education at all levels in many regions.
- Teaching of entrepreneurship and education geared toward preparing forestry students in vocational and university programmes for the growing green jobs sector is insufficient in most regions.

<sup>1</sup> Formally entitled "Creation of a Global Forest Education Platform and Launch of a Joint Initiative under the Aegis of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests". For more information, see: [www.fao.org/forestry/forest-education/en/](http://www.fao.org/forestry/forest-education/en/)

# The conference participants

## Stressed that:

Robust forest education and training at all levels of formal education and in non-formal programmes around the world **must** build the skills and knowledge needed to maximize the contributions of forests and trees to the Sustainable Development Goals, to achieve the Global Forest Goals and other forest-related goals and targets, and to contribute to UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 agenda.

## Called for action to:



Strengthen policies and strategies to improve forest learning at all levels of education and training;

Heighten awareness of the societal importance of forest careers, and improve their image among youth, students of all ages and the general public through targeted communications;



Promote at all levels of education a more holistic and interdisciplinary understanding of forests, a greater appreciation of the factors of gender, age, rights-based approaches, social inclusion and landscape values in forest and tree management, and an improved understanding of traditional and indigenous forest-related knowledge;



Foster greater appreciation and knowledge of forests and forest careers in primary and secondary education through increased coverage in the curricula, greater use of forest-related learning materials, and direct exposure of youth to forests and forest professionals;



Improve the quality of vocational training and university education programmes through timely forest curriculum revision in consultation with stakeholders, increased use of improved teaching approaches, digital tools and online learning, better incorporation of evidence-based scientific knowledge and of local (traditional and indigenous) forest-related knowledge into learning materials, and provision of a conducive learning environment for all students, regardless of gender, ethnicity or race;



Increase funding for forest education, research and extension programmes and provide scholarships, international exchange opportunities, internships and part-time work opportunities for forest students at vocational and university levels;



Support the expansion of non-formal education (including continuing education, extension training, farmer field schools) and informal learning (e.g. through public media educational programmes, nature clubs, museums, etc.) on forests and trees; and



Strengthen forest education stakeholder engagement and partnerships, including through expediting the dissemination of information, facilitating networking and fostering collaborative action.



## Urge:

All forest education stakeholders and actors to undertake these actions, individually and collaboratively, as appropriate to their respective mandates and capacities.



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This call to action was launched for endorsement at the International Conference on Forest Education.

It does not represent a formally negotiated outcome.

Its endorsement does not carry any legal obligations or financial commitment.