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LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

TWENTY-NINTH SESSION

Lima - Peru, 9 – 13 November, 2015

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION (FSN) IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARRIBBEAN

Note by the Secretariat

Introduction

By cutting the rate and total number of undernourished people in half, Latin America and the Caribbean have met the two international hunger-related targets: i) target 1.C. of the Millennium Development Goals, and ii) the World Food Summit target. These targets could have only been met with the highest level political commitment of countries to fight hunger, within a context of macroeconomic stability and policies underpinning this process.

This effort for reducing the hunger may translate into putting new land into cultivation, consequently increasing pressure on existing natural resources, including forests and rangelands. Deforestation and unplanned land-use change triggered by increasing demand for food, fibre and fuel are causing biodiversity loss and desertification, reducing the productive capacity of ecosystems, affecting water availability and limiting the collection of fuelwood – all of which have negative implications for food security, especially that of the rural poor.

The Latin America and the Caribbean region produce more than enough food to feed the entire population. Enhanced production and the greater diversity of policies guaranteeing access by the most vulnerable have contributed towards improving FSN, and have led the region to become an important provider of food globally.

However, the hunger in the region still affects over 34 million people. The region aims to eradicate hunger by 2025 through the Latin America and the Caribbean without Hunger Initiative. This commitment was ratified and adopted in 2015 by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC, through its Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication Plan.

The many ways in which forests, trees on farms and agroforestry systems could contribute to this commitment searching food security and nutrition are poorly understood, underestimated and inadequately reflected in national development strategies, especially in developing countries.

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The approach adopted to fight hunger is changing from a sector perspective to a cross-cutting, inter-sector approach. This has made it possible to satisfy both the short and medium-term needs of the population, addressing the many causes of hunger by engaging all social actors, and taking into consideration environmental aspects in the development, including forest sustainable management.

The Latin American and the Caribbean Forestry Commission at its 28th meeting in Guyana, in September 2013, requested FAO to continue strengthening the technical and institutional capacities for the assessment of ecosystem services of forests and trees outside forests, and its importance for food security, and recommended COFO to promote the review and the strengthening of forest policies in order to allow a better integration of forest management in national development processes, aiming to achieve the food security and social welfare. The Forestry Committee on its hand, during the 22nd meeting in Rome, in June 2014, invited countries to strengthen their response to the challenge of Zero hunger through the development of inclusive forestry policies, as well as cross-sectoral integrated approaches to strategies and national programmes for food security and nutrition.

Achievements in hunger eradication

With 1990 as the baseline year, the international community has made a commitment to achieve the following targets in the fight against hunger and poverty by 2015:

- Target 1A of the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to halve the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1.25 per day.
- Target 1C of the first MDG to halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
- Target of the World Food Summit (WFS) of halving the number of people affected by hunger.

Target 1A of the MDG. By 2008, the region was on the verge of reducing the levels of poverty to half of what it was in 1990. In 2011, 4.6% of individuals lived on less than \$1.25 per day, 63% than in 1990 (12.6%). That same year, the target regarding people living with less than \$2 per day was also met.

Target 1C of the MDG and WFS. The prevalence of undernourishment in the region reached 5.5% in the three-year period 2014-2016 (estimated), which corresponds to 34.3 million people¹, down from 14.7% in 1990-92 (66.1 million people). Latin America and the Caribbean have shown positive results overall, however, sub-regional data has revealed certain differences within the region. A greater percentage of the undernourished population can be found in South America, however, the prevalence of undernourishment is below 5%. The percentage of undernourished people has also been dropping in Central America, where the number of people suffering undernourishment in this sub-region has fallen from 12.6 million in 1990-92 to 11.4 million people in 2014-2016 (estimated). This represents a reduction in the rate of individuals suffering from malnourishment from 10.7% to 6.6%. The Caribbean has fallen behind in this regard; the proportion of people affected fell only 7.2 percentage points, from 27% in 1990-92 to 19,8% in 2014-16 (in Haiti the prevalence of malnourishment among the population has reached 75%).

The dimensions of food and nutrition security in the region

Availability - According to recent figures, availability since the 90s, in terms of caloric intake has been risen from a regional average of 2,655 calories per day per person to over 3,000, an increase of 13% in the last 25 years. There are evident differences in each country of the region; however food availability surpasses the minimum calorie needs of the population in 33 countries. Forest foods and

¹ Data has been recorded over a 24-year period, therefore, for purposes of verifying if these targets have been met, an adjustment factor of 24/25 is considered; this corresponds to a reduction in the prevalence target for undernourishment of 48% with respect to 1990, and not 50%.

tree products, such as leaves, seeds, nuts, honey, fruits, mushrooms, insects and game animals, have been important components of rural diets for millennia and may be key in times of economic, political or ecological crisis.

Access - For the past 24 years, regional economies have grown at an average rate of 3%, above the global rate of 2.7%. During the 90s, the rate of economic growth was at 2.9% on average compared to 2.7% globally, with periods of growth that surpassed 5% (1997) and others below 1% (three years). During the next decade, the region experienced greater stability in terms of economic growth, and in spite of the economic downturn in 2002 and the 2009 crisis when the economy contracted -1.6%, the region grew an average of 3%, exceeding the rate a decade earlier and the overall rate of growth worldwide, with a positive impact on the wellbeing of the region's population. Economic growth has had an impact on reducing hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean. Income generation from forests could be the result of increasing green jobs and improving conditions for forest workers, integrating the decent employment, encouraging the development of markets for forest products and ecosystem services, and providing opportunities to women and youth, in the forest sustainable management.

Utilization - The double burden of malnutrition is evident in the region. Chronic malnutrition has experienced definite improvements. Some 13.5 million children under 5 were malnourished in 1990 (24.5%) and this figure dropped to 6.2 million children (11.6%) in 2015. Conversely, overweight and obesity are now challenges that both the region and the rest of the world are now confronted with. According to the latest WHO figures, overweight affects 7.1% of children in the region, well above the global average. Forests offer a diversified diet for local population increasing the nutrition security, and also a wide range of medicinal plants that contribute to the health and well-being of forest-dependent people and forms the basis of many pharmaceutical products now produced globally

Stability - The region has made headway in fighting hunger in the past 25 years. This progress can be compromised by the unsustainable use of natural resources, food losses and waste, the prevalence of natural disasters and the effects of climate change. Conservative estimates suggest that a temperature increase of 2.5°C would result in losses of between 1.5% and 5% of GDP in the region, affecting the economy and access to food of the most vulnerable segments of the population. The cost of adapting to climate change globally is calculated at approximately 0.5% of GDP per year, considerably lower than the economic costs mentioned above. Forests and trees mitigate climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and storing carbon. They can also help to reduce the vulnerability of people to climate change and increase their capacity to adapt to it.

Forests and food security

The rate of deforestation in the region fell to less than half between the 90s and the last five years: i) between 1990-2000, 4,455,000 ha/year, ii) 2000-2005, 4,761,000 ha/year, iii) 2005-2010, 3,568,000 ha/year; and iv) 2010-2015, 2,178,000 ha/year. This reduction is the outcome of the efforts made in the region to fulfil MDG targets 7A "Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources", and 7B "Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss."

Studies indicate that the enhanced FSN in each country in the region should not be directly related to deforestation. FSN and forest conservation are, therefore, not incongruous. Forests contribute significantly to each of the four pillars of food and nutrition security, given that they provide food of plant and animal origin, thus making it possible to improve and diversify the diet and/or generate income from the sale of wood and non-wood forestry products (NWFP) that is used in turn to purchase food. For instance, Chile indicated that the NWFP provides jobs for 200 000 rural inhabitants, and Peru stated that the total exports of forest products reached almost USD 400 million in the year 2010 of which 38 per cent corresponds to non-wood forest products such as colorants of animal origin, seeds, fruits, gums, resins and palm hearts, among others.

In addition, the forest contribute indirectly to FSN since they are important elements in regulating water regime, provide a habitat for pollinators and pest predators, and provide important sources of energy in the region for cooking food. Significant percentage equivalent to 59 per cent of the total roundwood production is used as fuel and for the production of charcoal, part of them used for rural families for heating and cooking.

It is estimated that the regional average participation of the forest sector in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the countries is around two to three per cent. However, it is a belief that these percentages do not represent the reality and several countries are developing detailed studies to provide a better estimate. More accurate information is needed.

Points to consider

The Forestry Commission may wish to consider:

1. Further discussing the availability of data in the region, which would help better determine how and how much forests contribute to food and nutrition security.
2. Analyzing and agreeing on initiatives that would help the forest sector to contribute more toward FSN in the region and reducing rural poverty.
3. Advocating greater political commitment at a regional level, given the importance of forests in FSN, to share experiences controlling and reducing illegal deforestation.
4. Consider personal initiatives for promoting forest management and forestry integrated practices for FSN.

Considering that the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is expected to discuss forests and food security in 2017, the Commission may wish to provide strong recommendations to feed into this discussion.

Finally, considering the importance of the forest for achieving the food and nutrition security, the Commission may wish to invite countries to work actively towards achieving zero illegal deforestation, drawing attention to the need to protect, conserve, restore and sustainably manage forest resources, for reducing hunger.