



LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

THIRTY-SECOND SESSION

6 - 10 September 2021

FRA 2020: THE STATE OF THE FOREST SECTOR IN THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGION

Executive Summary

According to the results of FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020 (FRA 2020), the forest area in the LAC region is 940 million hectares (ha), which represents 23 percent of the world's forests and 47 percent of the total land area in the region. This area is equivalent to approximately 1.4 ha per person at the LAC level. In addition, the region reports 173 million hectares (8.6 percent of the total land area in the region) as other wooded land. By 2020, of these almost one billion hectares of forest, 83 percent (779 million ha) is in the Amazonia sub-region, 9 percent (88 million ha) in Mesoamerica, 7 percent (65 million ha) in the Southern Cone and 1 percent (8 million ha) in the Caribbean.

In terms of forest area management objectives, the LAC region reported that by 2020, 12 percent of its forests were dedicated primarily to production, 11 percent to biodiversity conservation, 4 percent to soil and water protection and 24 percent to multiple uses with social services and other designations accounting for the remaining area. In terms of forest plantations, by the year 2020, LAC reported a total of 21 million ha, with the Amazonia sub-region reporting the largest area (66.5 percent of the total area), followed by the Southern Cone (28 percent).

The region has increased the forest area within protected areas. From 1990 to 2020, a 70 percent increase was reported, from 161 million ha to 275 million ha, equivalent to 29 percent of the total forest area in the region.

Countries in the LAC region have made substantial improvements regarding forest data collection processes, but there is still a need to improve some national processes. FAO continues to support member countries in improving forest information through two complementary programmes, one at the global level (the Global Forest Resources Assessment), and the other at the national level (National Forest Monitoring).

Suggested action by the Commission

The Regional Forestry Commission may wish to invite countries to

- Propose steps to improve coordination to link forest information with national and regional policies related to forests, agriculture, food, land-use and rural development to regulate land-use change more effectively;
- [Continue their active participation in the FRA process](#) and promote ways to improve data to assess the current and potential contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda and NDC reporting under the Enhanced Transparency Framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Promote cooperation, [knowledge sharing](#) and [collaboration at the regional level and with FAO and other institutions](#) with the aim of improving national forest monitoring systems, [the FRA process](#) and the quality of information [they produce and disseminate](#).

The Regional Forestry Commission may wish to request FAO to

- Maintain and strengthen its support to countries in national and global forest monitoring, including the capacity of forest administrations in the implementation of their national forest monitoring systems and the integration of national forest inventories into FAO's Hand-in-Hand initiative
- [Complete the FRA Remote Sensing Survey](#) and support countries by providing tools and methodologies to generate better data on the contribution of forests to the SDGs and to NDCs in line with the transparency framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change..
- Support the consolidation of the Latin American Network of National Experts on National Forest Inventories as a mechanism for South-South cooperation.
- Continue the work on improved reporting on forest characteristics, including on primary forests, and report the first results of the work in the 26th Session of COFO.

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I. Introduction

1. The world's forest area accounts for 4.06 billion hectares (31 per cent of the total land area), of which more than half are located in five countries: the Russian Federation, Brazil, Canada, China and the United States of America.

2. Deforestation and forest degradation continue at an alarming rate, contributing significantly to the ongoing loss of biodiversity. Since 1990, the global forest area has been reduced by an estimated 178 million hectares due to land-use changes, even though the deforestation rate has declined over the past three decades from 16 million ha/year in the 1990s to 10 million ha/year during 2015-2020. The annual rate of net forest loss declined from 7.8 million ha/year in the decade 1990-2000 to 5.2 million ha/year in 2000-2010 and 4.7 million ha/year in 2010-2020. The rate of decline in net forest loss slowed in the last decade due to a reduction in the forest expansion rate.

3. The world's area of primary forests has declined by more than 80 million hectares since 1990. More than 100 million hectares of forests are being affected by forest fires, pests, diseases, invasive species, droughts and adverse weather events.

4. This Secretariat Note is intended to provide an overview of the forestry sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting the most relevant forestry trends that have occurred during the period 1990-2020, and is based on statistical data and data on the region's forest resources compiled by the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA).

II. FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020.

5. FAO has been assessing the state of world's forests at 5–10-year intervals since 1946, providing a consistent approach to describing world's forests and how they are changing.

6. The methodology and frequency of the FRA has evolved over time in response to changing information needs. The latest assessments take a holistic approach covering all aspects of sustainable forest management and are country-driven, drawing on data provided by a consolidated network of officially designated national correspondents across 236 countries and territories, who use commonly agreed terms and definitions through a transparent and traceable reporting process.

7. For the purpose of this paper, the LAC region has been subdivided into four sub-regions as follows:

Table 1: List of FRA 2020 reporting countries and territories by sub-region

Southern Cone	Amazonia	Mesoamerica	Caribbean	
Argentina Chile Paraguay Uruguay	Plurinational State of Bolivia Brazil Colombia Ecuador French Guyana Guyana Peru Suriname Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	Belize Costa Rica El Salvador Guatemala Honduras Mexico Nicaragua Panama	Anguilla Antigua y Barbuda Aruba Bahamas Barbados Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba Curaçao British Virgin Islands Cayman Islands Cuba Dominica Dominican Republic Granada Guadalupe Haiti	Jamaica Martinica Montserrat Puerto Rico Saint Kitts and Nevis Saint Lucia, and. Saint Martin (French part) Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Trinidad and Tobago Turks and Caicos Islands Virgin Islands of the United States

8. FRA 2020 provides essential information for understanding the extent of forest resources, their condition, management and uses, analysing the status and trends of more than 60 forest-related variables in 236 countries and territories over the period 1990-2020.

9. FAO is the responsible agency for three forest-related SDG 15 indicators, namely 15.1.1 (Forest area as a proportion of total area), 15.2.1 (Progress towards sustainable forest management) and 15.4.2 (Green mountain cover index). FAO is responsible for collecting the data, through the FRA process, preparing the tables for reporting and writing the narrative for indicators 15.1.1 and 15.2.1.

10. On the FRA website, FAO offers data, analysis and results of the FRA 2020 to the general public, among them:

- The FRA 2020 main report contains the detailed results of the data analysis, including the status and main trends of each variable. Available for download at: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9825en/>.
- FRA 2020 Key Findings: A snapshot of the world's forests and the ways in which resources have been changing over the period 1990-2020. Available for download at <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8753en> as well as the interactive version: <http://www.fao.org/forest-resources-assessment/2020/en>.
- FRA open data platform: The platform provides a wealth of information on forest resources in the six official UN languages. Access to this information helps shape policy; informs and encourages forest investment decisions by governments, private companies, NGOs and donor organisations; and supports countries to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. Available at: <https://fra-data.fao.org/>

III. The State of Forests by Region in Latin America and the Caribbean

Forest area

11. The forest area in the LAC region is 940 million hectares, which represents 23 percent of the world's forests and 47 percent of the total land area in the region. This area is equivalent to approximately 1.4 ha per person at the LAC level, which is almost three times the global average of half a hectare per person. In addition, the region reports 173 million hectares (8.6 percent of the total land area in the region) as other wooded land.

12. By 2020, of these almost one billion hectares of forest area, 83 percent (779 million ha) is in the Amazonia sub-region, 9 percent (88 million ha) in Mesoamerica, 7 percent (65 million ha) in the Southern Cone and 1 percent (8 million ha) in the Caribbean (see Figure 1).

13. Suriname (97.4 percent), French Guiana (97.4 percent) and Guyana (93.6 percent) are the countries reporting the highest percentage of forest area in LAC (see Table 4), while Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire, Sint Eustatious are the countries/territories reporting the lowest percentage of forest area in LAC.

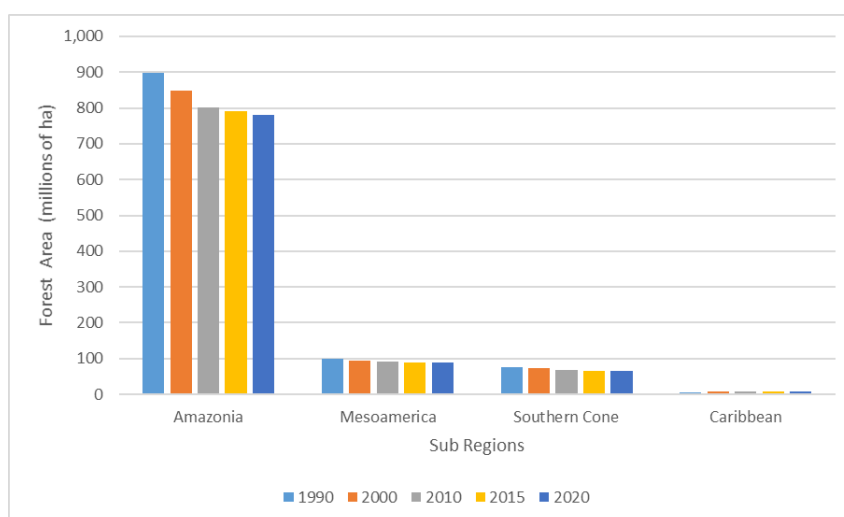


Figure 1: Forest area for the Latin America and the Caribbean region distributed by sub-region and in millions of hectares for the years 1990, 2000, 2010, 2015 and 2020.

Table 2: Countries with the highest percentage of the forest area in Latin America according to information reported to FRA 2020.

Country	Forest Area (1000 ha)	Percentage of total forest area in LAC	Percentage of cumulative forest area
Brazil	496 620	52.8%	52.8%
Peru	72 330	7.7%	60.5%
Mexico	65 692	7.0%	67.4%
Colombia	59 142	6.3%	73.7%
Plurinational State of Bolivia	50 834	5.4%	79.1%
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	46 231	4.9%	84.0%
Argentina	28 573	3.0%	87.1%
Guyana	18 415	2.0%	89.0%
Chile	18 211	1.9%	91.0%
Paraguay	16 102	1.7%	92.7%
Suriname	15 196	1.6%	94.3%
Ecuador	12 498	1.3%	95.6%

14. In percentage terms, the region decreased its forest coverage from 54 percent in 1990 to 47 percent in 2020. The sub-region with the highest percentage of forest area in 2020 was the Amazonia (58 percent), and the lowest was the Southern Cone (16 percent). (Table 3).

Table 3: Forest area as a percentage of total land area by subregion in Latin America and the Caribbean per FRA reporting year.

Year	LAC Region	Sub-regions			
		Amazonia	Caribbean	Mesoamerica	Southern Cone
1990	54%	67%	27%	40%	19%
2000	51%	63%	30%	38%	18%
2010	48%	60%	34%	37%	17%
2015	47%	59%	35%	36%	16%
2020	47%	58%	35%	36%	16%

Net changes in the forest area

15. From 1990 to 2020, the total forest area in LAC decreased by 138 million hectares, an area similar to the total area of Peru.

16. The country that reported the highest net forest loss from 1990 to 2020 in LAC was Brazil, with a total of 92 million hectares, representing 67 percent of the net forest loss for the region during that period (see Table 5).

Table 4: List of the ten countries with the highest and lowest forest area as a percentage of total land area.

Countries or territories with the highest forest area as a percentage of total land area			Countries or territories with the lowest forest area as a percentage of the total land area		
Country or territory	Forest Area 2020 (thousand ha)	% of total land area	Country or territory	Forest Area 2020 (thousand ha)	% of total land area
Suriname	15,196	97.4%	Curaçao	0.07	0.2%
French Guiana	8,003	97.4%	Aruba	0.42	2.3%
Guyana	18,415	93.6%	Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba	1.91	5.9%
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	29	73.2%	Argentina	28,573	10.4%
Dominica	48	63.8%	Turks and Caicos Islands	10.52	11.1%
Anguilla	6	61.1%	Uruguay	2,031	11.6%
Costa Rica	3,035	59.4%	Haiti	347.30	12.6%
Brazil	496,620	59.4%	Barbados	6.30	14.7%
United States Virgin Islands	20	56.9%	Antigua and Barbuda	8.12	18.5%
Honduras	6,359	56.8%	British Virgin Islands	3.62	24.1%

Table 5: List of the 10 countries in LAC with the highest rate of net forest loss from 1990 to 2020.

Ranking	Country	Net loss (thousand hectares)	% of total net loss in the region (-138 Million hectares)
1	Brazil	92 278	66.8
2	Paraguay	9 444	6.8
3	Plurinational State of Bolivia	6 971	5.0
4	Argentina	6 631	4.8
5	Colombia	5 816	4.2
6	Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	5 795	4.2
7	Mexico	4 900	3.5
8	Peru	4 118	3.0
9	Nicaragua	2 992	2.2
10	Ecuador	2 134	1.5

17. The rate of net forest loss in LAC declined from 5.5 million ha per year in the decade 1990-2000 to 2.9 million ha per year in 2010-2015 and 2.7 million ha per year in the period 2015-2020. The rate of decline in net forest loss slowed in the last decade due to a reduction in the rate of forest expansion.

18. At the sub-regional level, in the period 2015-2020, Amazonia reported a net loss of forest area of 11.2 million hectares, Mesoamerica reported a net loss of 1.3 million hectares, the Southern Cone reported a net loss of 1.2 million hectares and the Caribbean reported a 0.1 million hectare increase in forest area.

Forest area by management objective

19. In terms of forest area management objectives, the LAC region reported that by 2020, 12 percent of its forests were dedicated to production, 11 percent to biodiversity conservation, 4 percent to soil and water protection and 25 percent to multiple uses with social services and other designations accounting for the remaining area (see Figure 2). It is interesting to note that 32 percent of the forest area in LAC is reported as areas with no or unknown use; it would be important to go into more detail on this information, as it is an important aspect for forest management. The Amazonia sub-region reports the largest amount of forest area in this category (203 million hectares) equivalent to 70 percent of the total reported, followed by the Mesoamerican sub-region with 22 percent of the area reported in this category.

20. In terms of trends, a slight increase is observed from 2010 to 2020 in the categories of biodiversity conservation, soil and water protection, other uses, as well as social services. At the forest production level, a slight increase is observed from 2010 to 2015, but a slight decrease in 2020.

Naturally regenerated and planted forest

21. An estimated 97.7 percent (919 million ha) of the forest area in Latin America and the Caribbean is composed of naturally regenerated forests and 2.3 percent (21 million ha) has been planted.

22. The area of naturally regenerated forests decreased by 14 percent (152 million ha) from 1990 to 2020 while the area of planted forests increased by 14 million ha. The rate of increase in planted forest area has slowed over the last ten years, a trend similar to that observed worldwide.

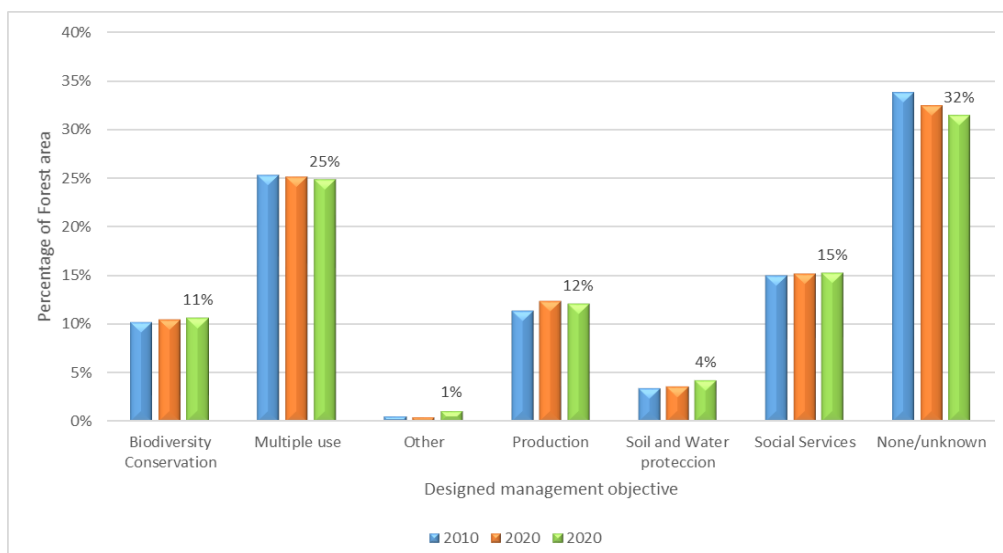


Figure 2: Percentage of reported forest area by designated management objective for the Latin America and Caribbean region per FRA reporting year.

23. In terms of forest plantations, by the year 2020, LAC reports a total of 21 million hectares, with the Amazonia sub-region reporting the largest area (66.5 percent), followed by the Southern Cone (28 percent) (see Table 6).

24. Of the total area of forest plantations in LAC, 84.8 percent have introduced species. Use of introduced species is more prevalent in the Southern Cone (97 percent of all forest plantations) and in the Amazonia sub-region (85 percent), with Mesoamerica being the sub-region that uses introduced species the least in its forest plantations (8 percent).

Table 6: Area of forest plantations (thousands of hectares) in Latin America and the Caribbean by subregion and reporting year .

Sub-region	Reporting year		
	1990	2000	2020
Amazonia	4 417	5 308	14 141
Caribbean	440	453	716
Mesoamerica	107	158	431
Southern Cone	2 624	4 014	5 958
Total LAC	7,588	9,932	21,247

Primary forest

25. In 2020, the Latin American and the Caribbean region reported 35 percent of its forest area as primary forest. This percentage has remained stable at the regional level; however, from 1990 to 2020, there has been a slight decrease in the Caribbean and an increase in the Southern Cone, which could be due to changes or adjustments to the definition of primary forest. The sub-region with the largest primary forest reported is the Amazonia (38 percent), followed by Mesoamerica (37 percent), the Southern Cone (9 percent) and the Caribbean (2 percent).

Forest area classified as protection areas

26. The region has increased the forest area within protected areas. From 1990 to 2020, a 66 percent increase was reported, from 161 million hectares to 268 million hectares, equivalent to 29 percent of the total forest area in the region (see Figure). The region with the highest increase of forests in protected areas was the Amazonia region, from 149 million hectares in 1990 to 252 million hectares in 2020.

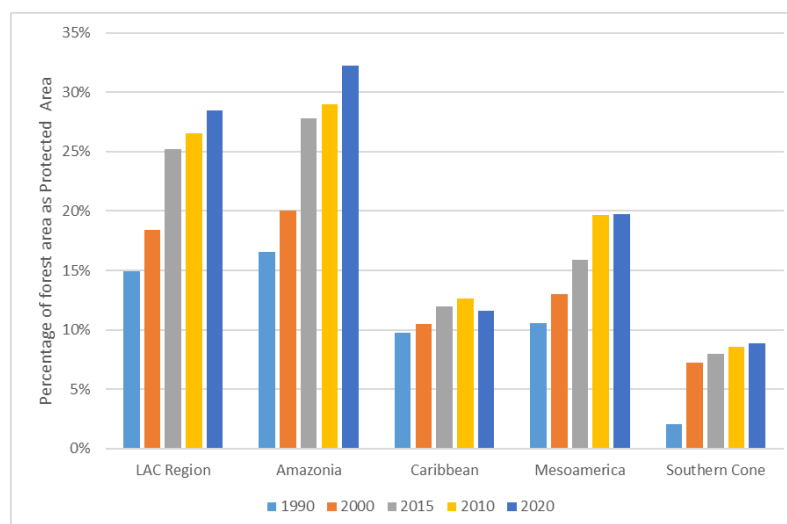


Figure 3: Percentage of forest area within protection areas in the Latin America and Caribbean region by sub-region and reporting year.

IV. Improving forestry information in the region

27. The information compiled in FRA 2020 describes the status and trends of more than 60 forest-related variables in 236 countries and territories. This information is key to decision-making and policy

development for forest resources management in individual countries, and at regional and global level, and provides the information needed for international reporting, including indicators 15.1.1 and 15.2. of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for monitoring the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement adopted by the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015.

28. The quality, reliability and transparency of information are critical. Transparency is the backbone of the Paris Agreement; hence, robust data collection is the basis for reporting on carbon emissions and removals and tracking progress on NDCs.

29. Over the past 10 years, capacity development has led to unprecedented forest data transparency, with an increasing number of countries able to meet international reporting requirements. In addition, continued capacity development in National Forest Monitoring Systems and the experience of REDD+ reports have provided useful lessons in the development of the Paris Agreement's enhanced transparency framework in the forest sector.

30. A recent study based on FRA 2020 data¹ shows that, at the global level, the number of countries having good to very good remote sensing capacities to monitor the forest area increased from 55 in 2005 to 99 in 2020, while the number of countries with good to very good national forest inventory capacities increased from 48 in 2005 to 102 in 2020. The percentage of the global forest area for which the use of remote sensing was rated as good or very good increased from 69 percent (2 848 million ha) in 2005 to 84 percent (3 406 million ha) in 2020. The percentage corresponding to the use of national forest inventories increased from 55 percent (2 280 million ha) in 2005 to 85 percent (3 462 million ha) in 2020.

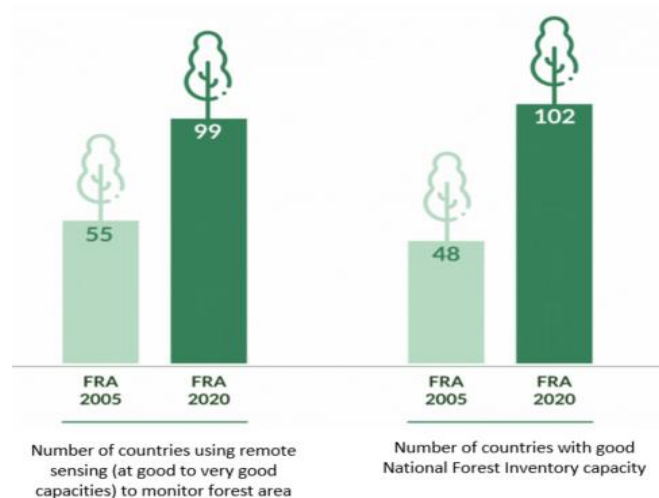


Figure 4: Comparison of remote sensing and forest inventory capacities of FRA reporting countries from 2005 to 2020.

31. The same study also concluded that tropical countries have begun to implement national forest inventories, but that repetitive or even permanent forest inventories remain scarce, particularly in Africa and parts of Asia and South America. At the global level, 53 percent of countries use high-quality data to report on the state of forest area. However, according to the same study, information needs to be improved to monitor growth, biomass and carbon stocks in Africa, parts of Asia, South America and Eastern Europe. Therefore, more efforts should be made in these regions to enable countries to

¹ Nesha, K., Herold, M., De Sy, V., Duchelle, A.E., Martius, C., Branthomme, A., Garzuglia, M., Jonsson, O., & Pekkarinen, A. 2021. An assessment of data sources, data quality and changes in national forest monitoring capacities in the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005-2020. *Environ. Res. Lett. in press* <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/abd81b>

implement national forest inventories, which will also help to improve data quality, especially for biomass and carbon stocks that depend on data collected in the field.

32. Countries in the LAC region have made substantial improvements regarding forest data collection processes, but there is still a need to improve national processes. Several experiences in LAC will be summarised in a forthcoming publication on National Forest Inventories in Latin America and the Caribbean, an initiative supported by FAO, the National Institute for Agrifood Research and Technology of Spain (INIA), the Universidad Federal de Amazonas of Brazil (UFAM) and the Forestry Institute of Chile (INFOR). The publication includes information on the history, design, planning, implementation and future prospects of the NFIs in the region.

V. FAO support to improving forestry information in Latin American and the Caribbean countries

33. FAO continues to support member countries in improving forest information through two complementary programmes, one at the global level (the Global Forest Resources Assessment), and the other at the national level (National Forest Monitoring).

34. Furthermore, the FRA team is developing a capacity building process focused on national information reporting and has made available an open data platform in six languages (<https://fra-data.fao.org/>) with the aim of strengthening global efforts to address climate change, halt deforestation and increase sustainable forest management. The platform features data and metadata reported to FRA 2020.

35. In addition, and following the recommendations of the 23rd Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO), FAO is conducting a Global Participatory Remote Sensing Survey (RSS) with the aim of improving estimates of forest area change at global and regional scales. The FRA team, in collaboration with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the FAO working group on remote sensing, has developed a global methodology for the FRA 2020 RSS, which is also scalable to national assessments. The scope and methodological design of the survey was defined upon experiences, in particular from the previous FRA 2010 RSS and taking advantage of technological advances and the increased availability of satellite imagery. The final results are expected to be published by the end of 2021.

36. The FRA team has also begun a process of revisiting the definition of Primary Forests, and several regional consultations have been carried out in the region.

37. At the national level, the National Forest Monitoring team has developed various tools, protocols and guidelines to improve National Forest Monitoring Systems. These can be found at: <http://www.fao.org/national-forest-monitoring/en/>