



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION

### EIGHTEENTH SESSION

**KHARTOUM, REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN**  
**18-21 February 2008**

## FAO AND OTHER FORESTRY ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST TO THE NEAR EAST REGION

### INTRODUCTION

1. This note informs Commission members about FAO forestry activities of interest to the Near East Region that were carried out in 2006-07. The note describes developments in preparing regional guidelines on best forestry practices in arid and semi-arid zones; and in launching the regional network on forest health and invasive species. Annex A summarises the main activities undertaken in response to the requests and recommendations of the Seventeenth Session of the Commission.

#### **THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION (NEFC) AND OTHER FAO-SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES, INCLUDING FOLLOW-UP TO THE REQUESTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 17TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION (ITEM 4.1)**

2. Forests cover only six percent of the Near East total land area, making it the least forested region. Most of the region's countries are classified as low forest cover countries (LFCC), with less than ten percent of their land area covered by forests. Although many countries of the region are significant producers of oil and natural gas, woodfuel remains the main source of domestic energy in rural areas and around the big cities. Non-wood forest products play an important role in providing income to the poorest layer of the population and in providing forage for domestic livestock.

3. Based on priorities and guidance from the FAO Near East Regional Conference and NEFC, FAO Forestry Department supported numerous activities aiming at meeting the relevant World Food Summit targets and the Millennium Development Goals. The list below summarizes the major activities carried out.

For reasons of economy, this document is produced in a limited number of copies. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring it to the meetings and to refrain from asking for additional copies, unless strictly indispensable.  
Most FAO meeting documents are available on Internet at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

**(i) *Strengthening forest policy formulation and implementation***

Outlook studies and voluntary guidelines, as recommended and guided by the previous Commission session:

- Forestry Outlook Study for West and Central Asia (FOWECA)
- Forestry Outlook Study for Africa (FOSA) – North Africa Region
- Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Management of Planted Forests; and for Fire Management
- Initiation of voluntary guidelines on best forestry practices in arid and semi-arid zones

National forest programmes:

- Support to capacity building for participatory forest policy formulation, implementation and follow-up, including through the National Forest Programme Facility

**(ii) *Strengthening funding support to forestry***

- In 2007, the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) expanded the number of agencies that can prepare and implement GEF projects to include, amongst others, FAO. In addition, a multi-focal area programme to support sustainable forest management (SFM) was launched and FAO, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), was given the lead to develop this further. National forestry agencies may request GEF funding through FAO or other GEF Agencies for projects that contribute to producing global environmental benefits in terms of enhanced biodiversity conservation, reduced carbon emissions or reduced land degradation. GEF is a co-financing mechanism, so countries must also contribute their own resources to the project (or find contributions from other sources), although these contributions can include in-kind resources. In addition, all proposals must be endorsed by the national GEF Operational Focal Point (who is often located in the Ministry of Environment), so it is essential that they be consulted at an early stage of project preparation. Further information about these new opportunities is available at the GEF website ([www.gefweb.org](http://www.gefweb.org)). FAO Forestry Officers are also ready to assist countries with preparing GEF forestry projects as required. So far, the GEF Council has approved one SFM project from the Near East region, namely “Iran: Rehabilitation of Forest Landscapes and Degraded Land with Particular Attention to Saline Soils and Areas Prone to Wind Erosion (FAO) (GEF Grant: \$ 2.67 million)”.
- The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) is expected to consider “a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework for all types of forests” at its next session in April 2009. FAO and a few other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) will be supporting the preparations of the session, including an Ad Hoc Expert Group meeting on this topic, scheduled for late 2008. ([www.un.org/esa/forests](http://www.un.org/esa/forests))

**(iii) *Reinforcing forests and range resources assessment***

- Regional workshop in Alexandria, Egypt, and formulation of regional project for six member countries
- Regional expert consultation on range monitoring, including within forest systems (Cairo, Egypt, November 2007)

(iv) ***Strengthening the activities of the Near East Forestry Commission***

- Two inter-sessional meetings in Cairo, Egypt, (December 2006) and Rabat, Morocco, (July 2007) were held to follow up on the recommendations of the 17th Session (Larnaca, Cyprus, 2006) and to develop an agenda for this 18<sup>th</sup> Session

(v) ***Support to country initiatives***

Forest policies, legislation and institutions:

- Support to the implementation of national forest policy in Morocco
- Support to forest policy and strategy for sector development in Jordan
- Support to forest policy and programmes for sustainable development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Lebanon
- Institutional capacity building in small-scale enterprise development in mountain regions in Kyrgyzstan
- Assistance to forest policy formulation, legislation and institutional reorganization in Egypt
- Forest sector policy and institutional development in Syrian Arab Republic

Forest management:

- National strategy for the sustainable management and development of forestry and alfa resources in Algeria
- Strategy for the sustainable development of Tunisian cork tree forests

Forest protection:

- Monitoring and rehabilitation of juniper ecosystem in Sarawat Mountains in Saudi Arabia
- Support to the implementation of a national strategy for the control and monitoring of forest health – pilot case of the Middle Atlas in Morocco
- Participatory and integrated forest fire management plan project in Syrian Arab Republic

Emergency Assistance:

- Assessment of damage and needs in agriculture, fisheries and forestry, following hostilities in Lebanon

(vi) ***Discussion items for the Commission:***

4. NEFC members are invited to provide guidance to the NEFC Task Force and to FAO in preparing a comprehensive and effective programme to assist member countries in their efforts to sustainably manage forests, trees outside forests and rangelands.

5. NEFC members are also invited to discuss ways to further strengthen the role of the NEFC Task Force.

## **REGIONAL GUIDELINES ON BEST FORESTRY PRACTICES IN ARID AND SEMI-ARID ZONES (ITEM 4.2)**

6. NEFC-17 recommended that FAO consider elaborating a special code of practice for arid and semi-arid zone forestry and COFO-18 noted the request for such voluntary guidelines. The subsequent NEFC Task Force meeting recognized this work as a priority for the Near East Region and agreed to quickly move this recommendation forward.
7. In response to these recommendations, FAO organized an expert meeting in Alexandria, Egypt, in December 2007, to discuss the scope of the guidelines and to prepare an annotated outline. It assessed the lessons learnt from the last three decades of forestry and related activities in arid and semi-arid zones, discussed new challenges such as climate change impacts and the shift to bioenergy, and analyzed the impacts of food insecurity and poverty on the management of forests and wildlands in the region.
8. Based on the outcome of the expert meeting, a team of experts, supported by FAO, is preparing a draft of the Regional Guidelines for Good Forestry Practices in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands. A document, including the scope and main content of the guidelines, will be distributed to the Commission delegates at the Khartoum session.
9. The expert meeting proposed the following guiding principles to form the main content of the final document.
  - Developing, conserving, assessing and monitoring the forest estate
  - Assessing, protecting and using forest biological diversity
  - Maintaining health and vitality of dry forest resources
  - Maintaining the productive functions of natural resources
  - Enhancing the protective functions of forests
  - Assessing, recognizing and expanding the social and economical roles and contributions of dry forests
  - Strengthening and updating the legal, institutional and policy foundation of forests and forestry
10. An expanded expert meeting is scheduled to be organized in April 2008 to develop the draft guidelines to be posted on the FAO web site. Comments would be received and analyzed by September 2008. A final draft would be reviewed by the core group, and the final document is expected to be ready by the of 2008.

### **Discussion item for the Commission:**

11. NEFC members are invited to review the proposed scope and content of the guidelines and provide guidance for the team of experts for the elaboration of the guidelines.

## **REGIONAL NETWORK ON FOREST HEALTH AND INVASIVE SPECIES (ITEM 4.3)**

12. NEFC-17 expressed concern about the increased threat to forests and trees outside forests from the movement and establishment of new insect pests and diseases as a result of climate change. COFO recommended that FAO work with Members to promote networks on invasive species. Subsequently, as recommended by the NEFC Task Force, an expert meeting was organized in Hammamet, Tunisia, in December 2007, to discuss regional cooperation for addressing forest health and invasive species issues.
13. The meeting recommended the establishment of a Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS). The network aims to provide a platform to share information, experiences and benefit from activities within and beyond the region, in order to foster integrated and dynamic forest pest management and generation of baseline data for decision-making. The

outcome of the meeting will be posted on the FAO Forestry website and included in the documentation available to delegates of NEFC-18. Tunisia has agreed to host the interim Secretariat of the network.

**Discussion item for the Commission:**

14. The Commission is invited to endorse the proposed network including its modus operandi, and to provide guidance for its work and its linkages with the NEFC regular and inter-sessional activities.

**Annex A. Summary of action taken in response to the recommendations of NEFC-17**

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION
<p><b>For the attention of member countries</b> <b>(The commission recommended that...)</b></p>	
<p>countries continue to exchange experience in profiling forestry in national education, and in developing modalities for curriculum revision, and the ways to support such efforts both nationally and through international cooperation. (para 9)</p>	<p>Member countries have not reported action. The report of the FAO Expert Consultation on Forestry Education was widely disseminated in the region.</p>
<p>member countries and FAO strengthen efforts to bring up regional specific issues in the international dialogue, building upon the Tehran Process on Low Forest Cover Countries (LFCCs) and the earlier initiatives under this. It particularly emphasized the need for strengthening the current mechanism of the NEFC Task Force/bureau to articulate clearly issues pertaining to the region and to bring them to the attention of the Committee on Forestry and the United Nations Forum on Forests.(para 14)</p>	<p>Reactivation of the Teheran Process was debated by the NEFC Task Force (December, 2006). Prior to this FAO had followed up on the issue with Iran.The issue remains under the leadership of the governments of the region.</p> <p>The NEFC Task Force has actively guided the follow-up to and preparations for the Commission sessions. The NEFC Chair participated actively in the COFO Steering Committee and made a presentation of NEFC activities at COFO 18 in 2007. A number of NEFC issues were brought up in COFO, which took note of the need to establish regional networks under the umbrella of NEFC on forest fires and invasive species. The Task Force has also successfully brought key issues to the attention of FAO, such as forest and energy and forests and climate change. It also reinforced the member countries' request for assistance for strengthening the region's participation in UNFF and, particularly in UNFF8.</p>
<p>member countries make efforts to improve the information base on forest and range resources and that FAO support such activities upon request. The Commission recognized the deficiencies in data on forest resources in many countries of the region and stressed the need for countries to mobilize national resources for national forest inventories and to seek complementary support from FAO and donor institutions. (para 15)</p>	<p>FAO organized an expert meeting on "Range monitoring including rangelands under forestry systems" which 12 member countries and 4 regional organizations attended (Cairo, November 2007).</p>

<p>countries endeavor to undertake a proper evaluation of goods and services in order to enhance the awareness of decision-makers on the socio, economic and environmental roles of forest and trees, and to seek assistance from FAO to improve valuation methodology;</p> <p>countries in the region take appropriate measures to integrate forests and rangelands in national policies and development programmes; and</p> <p>countries of the region ensure that nfps take due account of water resources concerns. (para 30)</p>	<p>Member countries have not reported any action</p> <p>The NEFC Task Force commissioned a study on “Integrated Forests and Water for desertification control in the Near East”, published in March 2007</p>
<p>community involvement in forest resource management be strengthened through appropriate adaptation of legislation and policies. (para 33)</p>	<p>Many countries of the region are in the process of revising their forest policies and legislation and re-organizing institutions with a strong emphasis on participatory approach. This effort is being supported by FAO through TCP projects and the NFP Facility</p>
<p><b>For the attention of FAO</b> <b>(The Commission recommended that...)</b></p>	
<p>FAO and other relevant partners provide support to national and regional academic institutions to review forestry curricula and increase training capacities. (para 9)</p>	<p>So far, such request was received from member countries. The Report of the Expert Consultation on Forestry Education was widely disseminated in the Region. Some countries (Lebanon, Tunisia and Syria) were also assisted by the MEDFOREM project coordinated by the Forest Technology Centre of Catalonia (CTFC), Spain.</p>
<p>FAO consider elaborating a special code of practice for arid and semi-arid zone forestry. (para 10)</p>	<p>This activity was initiated through an expert consultation held in Alexandria, Egypt, 3-5 December 2007. Key elements of the guidelines were identified and a comprehensive outline prepared.</p>
<p>The NFP Facility to cover more countries in the Near East Region. (para 11)</p>	<p>Four countries applied in September-October 2006 for new partnerships with the Facility. Yemen was selected as a new country in addition to Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia.</p>
<p>FAO strengthen support to the Commission Task Force or similar arrangements as well as the establishment of ad hoc technical working groups. (para 12)</p>	<p>See above.</p>
<p>FAO pursue and strengthen its support to projects and studies on non wood forest products (NWFPs) in the region and promote their sustainable development. (para 13)</p>	<p>FAO-RNE assisted Egypt inorganizing a stakeholders’ workshop on Aromatic, Culinary and Medicinal plants and their role in achieving the MDGs. It is expected that this will be followed by an international workshop during the course of 2008.</p>

<p>member countries and FAO strengthen efforts to bring up regional specific issues in the international dialogue, building upon the Tehran Process on Low Forest Cover Countries (LFCCs) and the earlier initiatives under this. It particularly emphasized the need for strengthening the current mechanism of the NEFC Task Force/bureau to articulate clearly issues pertaining to the region and to bring them to the attention of the Committee on Forestry and the United Nations Forum on Forests. (para 14)</p>	<p>FAO consolidated a number of LFCC case studies into the Working Paper on "The Role of Planted Forests and Trees Outside Forests in Landscape Restoration in Low Forest Cover Countries (2004) Copies are available at the NEFC Session in Khartoum.</p>
<p>FAO support member countries, upon request, to improve the information base on forest and range resources. (para 15)</p>	<p>See above.</p>
<p>FAO help countries in undertaking studies that highlight the role of forests, woodlands and trees outside forests in environmental protection, watershed management and poverty alleviation, through the appropriate valuation of goods and services. (para 17)</p>	<p>Some relevant FAO work on this issue, especially in Asia-Pacific and in Africa, could be of great interest. FAO has worked with some countries in the region to better integrate forestry into poverty reduction strategies</p>
<p>FAO continue to support member countries in developing self- financing mechanisms to support forestry. It underscored the importance of institutional changes appropriate to the specific conditions in each country, to enhance the participation of other stakeholders in forestry. (para 20)</p>	<p>These issues are being addressed through the many country initiatives (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen) supported by FAO TCP projects and the NFP Facility.</p>
<p>FAO assist in resource mobilization for effective implementation of programmes of action in the region. (para 21)</p>	<p>Through its field programme development activities, FAO has been developing TCP, GCP and UTF projects to support specific programmes aimed, among others, at addressing desertification control issues.</p>