



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

## ASIA-PACIFIC FORESTRY COMMISSION

### TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

Hanoi, Viet Nam, 21-26 April 2008

### SUMMARY OF THE APFC AUTO-EVALUATION

### SECRETARIAT NOTE

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Committee of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) has recommended that an auto-evaluation be undertaken to assess its achievements. The APFC evaluation was led by the APFC Secretariat on behalf of the Commission to evaluate the success of the APFC in meeting its mandate and objectives over the period August 2002 to August 2007. The purpose of the evaluation was to objectively assess APFC's strengths and weaknesses in carrying out its mandate and to provide suggestions for strengthening its performance and influence and for enhancing its effectiveness. It also aimed to determine whether the APFC is addressing the priority forestry issues in the region and whether its activities are resulting in tangible outcomes.

## METHODOLOGY

2. Information was collected through a three-pronged approach involving: analysis of existing information through a desk study; survey of individuals who are familiar with APFC; and interviews with participants of an APFC conference *The Future of Forests in Asia and the Pacific: Outlook for 2020*, 16-18 October 2007, Chiang Mai, Thailand. Of the 52 individuals who were contacted, 36 responded. Responses were received from 20 of the 33 APFC member countries, three regional networks, two non-government organizations (NGOs) and three individuals in the private sector.

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)

## KEY FINDINGS

3. Several key findings emanated from the evaluation.
4. The overwhelming majority of the respondents found the agendas of the APFC sessions to be either “interesting” or “very interesting” and felt that the sessions were “useful” to “very useful”. Overall, the respondents only had vague recollection of the recommendations that resulted from the last session organized in India in 2006.
5. Most respondents felt that the member governments and FAO have acted on these recommendations somewhat. However, with a long list of session recommendations, it is relatively easy to indicate some follow up but difficult to monitor progress made. Nevertheless, the follow-up activities undertaken by APFC have been widely acknowledged and positively received. From the respondents’ perspective, most activities addressed relevant national/regional forestry issues and provided useful and up-to-date information.
6. APFC is best known for its biennial sessions, its function as a forum, and some of its policy-related reports, although many of the respondents had difficulty associating APFC with a well-known product. The quality of APFC publications, and value of the information contained, is recognized as one of the strengths of APFC. A majority of the respondents were aware of the APFC website and found it to be useful.
7. APFC has been effective in taking on some of the key forestry issues, while others largely fell outside of its focus. The list of key issues that APFC does not address but respondents felt should be addressing was very diverse, reflecting the diversity amongst countries and also personal interest.
8. While APFC is clearly seen as a very useful forum for high-level member country government officials, the limited involvement of non-government participants was also viewed as weakening it. Overall, APFC is perceived as a FAO-led initiative and the distinction is not clear to most people. Some felt that APFC’s association with FAO is a strength, while others felt that the strong presence of FAO results in lack of ownership by member countries.
9. The importance of APFC as a neutral forum for discussion and information exchange, strong support by FAO, and a motivated Secretariat were reiterated as the main strengths of APFC. Inadequately addressing tough issues was viewed as a weakness, which is not surprising as some of the member countries themselves shy away from controversial and politically sensitive issues, which they prefer to deal with at the national level.
10. Although APFC’s performance of its role was generally regarded positively, it was noted that many countries do not take direct advice from APFC, questioning its role to provide policy direction. It was pointed out that APFC is tackling too many issues and that APFC has not been effective in disseminating session outcomes and transferring them to action on the ground. Cooperation between countries remains weak.
11. The respondents had quite opposing views on whether APFC activities have resulted in tangible outcomes. While noting that change is slow and difficult to measure, it was recognized that APFC has contributed to growing awareness on important issues and has influenced government policies somewhat. On the other hand, it was pointed out that little of APFC guidance/advice is widely implemented, and that most activities are country-driven without much influence from APFC.

## CONCLUSIONS

12. From the analysis of information collected, the following conclusions were drawn:
- Some of the mandates of APFC as set forth in the FAO Constitution are outdated and do not reflect the realities of how the APFC currently implements its work.
  - The APFC programme entity design, objective and outputs are clear and appropriate, given the realities of the situation, and APFC activities are implemented in accordance.
  - APFC needs to engage more with non-forestry sectors, the private sector and civil society in implementing its activities. With regards to institutional frameworks, the Secretariat is understaffed to deal with the abundance of forestry issues in the region.
  - APFC activities generally reflect the session recommendations, and therefore, focus on the identified priority forestry issues. However, given the large number and broad range of priority issues, APFC addresses some of these areas more effectively than others. Political will of the member countries is the most critical component in attempting to deal with these complex, and at times politically sensitive, issues whose implications extend beyond the forestry sector.
  - Discussions on key forestry issues have been valuable and worthwhile, and have subtly influenced how a number of people in member countries think about and implement forest policies. APFC publications have also been influential in providing data and moving people's thinking ahead.
  - On the other hand, some of the survey respondents felt that APFC activities have resulted in discussions and reports, which have translated to very little field-level action and tangible outcomes on the ground.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

13. The following actions are recommended for the APFC to increase its visibility, performance and effectiveness.
- Reduce the number of recommendations of top priority to no more than three, for which APFC would be better known.
  - For each priority area, draft terms of reference, establish working groups and appoint task managers.
  - Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of selected priority activities.
  - Consider the selection of APFC focal points in high-ranking positions over a longer period.
  - Enhance member country participation in session agenda development.
  - Continue efforts to engage NGOs and the private sector in the APFC sessions and inter-session activities.
  - Provide APFC perspectives and report on APFC activities during relevant forestry-related meetings.
  - Consider retaining some of the APFC Executive Committee members in office for a period longer than two years to increase their effectiveness.