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FAO members adopt first global action plan for forest genetic resources

There are an estimated 80 000–100 000 tree species worldwide. Forests and trees outside forests provide essential ecosystem services, such as the protection of water catchments and soil and carbon sequestration, and they also produce important foods and other products. The capacity of humanity to meet the present and future challenges of food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development depends in large part, therefore, on the continued availability of the rich diversity between and within tree species. Genetic diversity is needed to ensure that forest trees can survive, adapt and evolve under changing environmental conditions, such as those brought about by climate change.

Genetic diversity is also needed for selection, breeding and domestication programmes for the development of adapted varieties or to strengthen useful traits. In many countries, the prospects for sustainable development in rural areas will be greatly influenced by the state of diversity in forest ecosystems and species.

The Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources, the first of its kind in the forest sector, was adopted by the FAO Conference

Researchers tend seedlings in a greenhouse at the Indian Council for Forestry Research Institute, Dehradun, India. A new global action plan aims to conserve the genetic diversity of the estimated 80 000–100 000 tree species worldwide

in June 2013. The Global Plan was prepared based on needs and priorities identified in regional consultations and reports submitted by member countries for the first edition of *State of the world's forest genetic resources*, which will be released by FAO in 2014. FAO's Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture has asked the Organization to develop an implementation strategy for the Global Plan and to ensure the mobilization of adequate financial resources for its implementation, particularly in support of developing countries.

The main aims of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources are to:

- strengthen understanding and knowledge of forest genetic resources;
- promote the sustainable use and management of forest genetic resources;
- develop and strengthen *in situ* and *ex situ* forest genetic resource conservation programmes through collaboration at the national, regional and global levels;



- promote access to, and the sharing of, information on forest genetic resources at the regional and national levels;
- create and strengthen national programmes to increase regional and international cooperation, including in research, education and training on the use and sustainable management of forest genetic resources, and enhance institutional capacity;
- assist countries, as appropriate, to integrate forest genetic resource conservation and management needs into wider national policies and programmes and frameworks of action at the national, regional and global levels;
- promote the assessment of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices related to forest genetic resources, the equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use, the recognition of their roles, and, where appropriate, the putting in place of effective policies and legislation addressing these matters;
- promote adequate access to, and use of, quality forest reproductive material to support research and development programmes at the national and regional levels and in line with international laws and regulations regarding intellectual property;
- promote ecosystem and ecoregional approaches as efficient means of promoting the sustainable use and management of forest genetic resources;
- assist countries and institutions responsible for the management of forest genetic resources to establish, implement and regularly review national priorities for the sustainable use and management of forest genetic resources;

- strengthen national programmes and enhance institutional capacity – particularly in developing countries and countries with economies in transition – and develop relevant regional and international programmes. Such programmes should include education, research and training to address the characterization, inventory, monitoring, conservation, development and sustainable use of forest genetic resources.

A total of 27 strategic priorities at the international, regional and national levels are identified in the Global Plan, grouped into the following four areas:

- improving the availability of, and access to, information on forest genetic resources;
- the conservation of forest genetic resources (*in situ* and *ex situ*);
- the sustainable use, development and management of forest genetic resources;
- policies, institutions and capacity-building.

For more information go to: www.fao.org/forestry/fgr/64582/en/.

Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission

The 28th Session of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission was convened in Georgetown, Guyana, on 9–13 September 2013. It was attended by delegates from 21 member countries and the representatives of seven international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The session was opened by His Excellency, Mr Donald Ramotar, President of Guyana.

The Commission considered, and made recommendations on, a range of topics, including FAO's sustainable forest management



Delegates pose during the 28th session of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission

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toolbox, which is under development, the FAO Fire Management Umbrella Programme, the state and conservation of the world's forest genetic resources, voluntary guidelines on national forest monitoring, incentive mechanisms for the protection of natural forests, such as payments for ecosystem services, and follow-up to the conclusions of the International Conference on Forests for Food Security and Nutrition.

The Commission formulated regional priorities for consideration by FAO's Committee on Forestry (COFO) and recommendations for the attention of the 33rd FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean. It expressed support for FAO's new Strategic Framework, which promotes an intersectoral working approach, highlighting the role of forests in the five Strategic Objectives.

The Commission recommended that COFO promote the revision and strengthening of public forest policies so that forest management can be better integrated with national development processes seeking to achieve food security and social well-being. The Commission also recommended that COFO promote the appropriate governance of forest resources, including land and forest tenure, and support the development of mechanisms for the valorization and recognition of ecosystem services for the benefit of those owning or managing forests. All this should be done while promoting the appropriate incorporation and recognition of the economic importance of the forest resource in national accounts.

The Commission recommended that the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean stress among its member countries the contribution of forests to reducing poverty and food security, improving and protecting livelihoods, and guaranteeing sustainable, productive agrosilvopastoral systems. The Commission reinforced the importance of forest ecosystem services for the development of the agricultural and livestock sectors.

The Commission recommended that the Regional Conference consider that food security depends on a strengthened forest sector, given that forests, trees and forest genetic resources play important roles in achieving strong and resilient agricultural and livestock sectors. It further recommended that the Regional Conference promote national-level institutional efforts to develop intersectoral development policies and agendas, which should encompass forest, environmental, agricultural and livestock issues in a holistic approach to promoting food security and economic development and reducing rural poverty.

The Commission recommended that the Regional Conference, working at the international level, foster action to strengthen intergovernmental organizations carrying out technical cooperation in the forest sector, with a view to promoting sustainable forest management for the benefit of food security and poverty reduction. It specifically requested that FAO be strengthened so that it can continue to work with the countries

of the region on forest issues in the context of the Organization's new Strategic Objectives.

Meeting during the session, the Commission's four Subregional Groups (Caribbean, Mesoamerica, Amazon and Southern Cone) discussed and prepared their work plans for the period 2014–2015.

For more information go to: www.rlc.fao.org/en/events/28-session-of-the-lacfc/.

African Forestry and Wildlife Commission wants sustainable development goal on forests

One of the main outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference, held in 2012, was the agreement by countries to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals, which will build on the Millennium Development Goals and converge with the post-2015 development agenda.

At its 19th session, held at Windhoek, Namibia, on 30 September to 4 October 2013, the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission "strongly recommended a standalone forest Sustainable Development Goal that takes into account the achievements and inadequacies of the Millennium Development Goals and related processes". The Commission requested its Chair to submit this recommendation to the Open Working Group process on the development of the Sustainable Development Goals, including through the G-77 and China; encouraged its members to convey the recommendation through their representatives in the Open Working Group; and invited other forestry and related bodies on the African continent and other regions of the world to support the implementation of the recommendation.

A report on other outcomes of the African Forest and Wildlife Commission meeting will appear in the next edition of Unasylva.