CFA Newsletter

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Editor: Alan Pottinger

Contact: The Crib, Dinchope, Craven Arms, Shropshire SY7 9JJ, UK

Tel: + 44 (0) 1588 672868

Email: cfa@cfa-international.org

Web: www.cfa-international.org

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On forest foods, a festival and community empowerment

Time for rest and discussion after a successful foraging trip [in the vicinity of Mount Pinatubo.

Introduction

To many indigenous communities in Asia, traditional activities such as the gathering of forest foods, hunting and fishing, are vital adjuncts to farming and together, together forming an integrated system of resource utilization, catering to elementary subsistence needs.

Forest foods can be a key emergency food buffer during times of famine or seasonal scarcity. But even in less challenging times, these foods, in the form of side dishes and snacks, are able to provide valuable nutritional supplements to cultivated staples.[1]

In fact, the nutritional value of forest food is in no way inferior to that of farm crops. On the contrary, recent research findings increasingly point to the superior health benefits of wild gathered foods.[2] Another undeniable forte of wild gathered food is the much greater variation in taste.

Furthermore, forest foods are usually free – an important consideration for families with limited cash for purchases.

[1] See, for a more extensive discussion: De Beer & Mcdermott (1996) chapter 3, The Household Economy: Non-Market Aspects.

[2] The incomparable greater variety of wild foods – with greater variety also at the species level – is reflected in high micronutrient value, incl. vitamins, phytochemicals and (in wild greens) omega-3 fatty acids.

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However, where in the past the forest could be considered a good provider[3], in many locations destructive developments have led to a collapse of the food's resource base. In addition, mainstream society often looks down on the consumption of wild gathered food, perceiving the practice as a sign of backwardness[4].

On the other hand, 'modern' processed and comparatively nutrient poor items have gradually entered tribal areas and have become significant staples of day-to-day diets.

Meanwhile, the role of wild gathered foods is commonly underreported, if not outright ignored by development organizations and government agencies alike[5]. This notwithstanding the fact, that currently "food security" (in the context of "poverty alleviation") is a regularly featured item on the international development agenda.

Finally, in and outside of forestry circles, recognition of the importance of non-timber forest products has increased considerably over the last two decades or so, though primarily in terms of the income generating potential for forest dependent communities. But also in this context, attention for subsistence aspects – including those that are nutrition related – is still lagging far behind.[6]

CASE: The Aeta of the Philippines

In the Philippines, the different indigenous peoples with a hunter gatherer background, collectively referred to as 'Negritos' represent the country's most ancient civilization. Few in numbers overall, small pockets are scattered over much of the country. Their distinctive cultures and forest related way of life is little appreciated in mainstream society and they have long since been marginalized, pushed aside and taken advantage off – even as compared to other indigenous peoples.

These ethnic groups, among which number the Aeta of Eastern Luzon, have an exceptionally strong relationship with the forest and many cultural traits reflect this relationship. Furthermore, their societies are highly egalitarian and decision making is traditionally inclusive.

On site preparation of wild banana juice, a most refreshing drink.

Even today foods from the forest are much appreciated by the Aeta. Items include: leaf and root vegetables (the former including various species of ferns, the latter e.g. *Dioscorea esculenta* and several other *Dioscorea*), fruits and blossoms (both e.g. derived from wild banana, *Musa sp.*), palm heart (*'uwud'* a generic term referring to a range of palms), as well as mushrooms, bush meat (wild boar in particular), fish, crabs and other aquatic animals.

Chanting the dururo, thanking all for coming to the festival from far away.

[3] See for example Dounias et al., 2007, who compare the diets of peri-urban and remote forest dwelling Punan communities In East Kalimantan, Indonesia. The authors conclude that the more remote (and therefore the more forest reliant community), the more diversified the diet and the better the nutritional status and physical fitness of its population.

[4] This is not everywhere the case though. In the Russian Federation for example forest foods, even today are widely appreciated and, come autumn, city folks routinely flock to the Taiga to collect mushrooms, berries and the like. There appears also to be a 'back to natural' counter trend in segments of the (upper) middle classes, including in Asia, as, e.g. current soaring demand for wild gathered *Apis dorsata* honey, may reflect!

[5] This is not to deny that there are (but relatively sporadic) wonderful research initiatives on going in this field. See for example (on traditional food systems – both wild gathered and cultivated): Kuhnlein, H. et al. (2009). Indigenous peoples food systems: the many dimensions of culture, diversity and environment for nutrition and health. FAO, Rome.

[6] FAO's Non Wood News regularly pays attention to forest food issues. An important contribution to a facet is also Durst P. et al. (2010). Forest insects as food: Humans Bite Back. FAO, Bangkok.

Sharp shooting with bow and arrow – it is a key part of the Aeta way of life.

Indeed, forest foods, though nowadays a minor component volume-wise, are a healthy and enjoyable part of the Aeta diet[7]. And, in their case, the relevant knowledge base is still largely intact, while some of the skills involved in hunting or gathering also serve as pronounced identity markers.

However, in light of persistent erosive cultural pressures and in order to invigorate the food tradition, 'affirmative' counteraction is warranted.

One action, along these lines, took place earlier this year in the province of Tarlac and in the framework of a larger 'Negrito cultural revival and empowerment initiative'.

During a series of informal '*mam-eh*' (sharing) sessions taking place around campfires or at forest picnics, an upcoming cultural revival festival was discussed. Aeta women and men, members of the local NGO KAKAI and the author participated in these discussions. It became apparent that the Aeta involved were very excited to share their knowledge about forest foods and it was soon decided to let the festival revolve around the subject. From there it was a short walk, and on April 28th, 2010, the first ever 'Aeta Forest Foods Festival' took place.

Over four hundred participants joined in the event, the vast majority Aeta from Tarlac, with a contingent of Aeta and Agta from four other provinces.

[7] The matter of taste is well appreciated locally. During a recent gathering a visitor suggested, to great merriment of the Aeta women and men assembled, that 'one should pity the poor (though generally considered relatively well off) lowlanders, because of their boring food, which every day is (more or less) the same!' All fully agreed with the statement.

At the festival, to which participant0s had brought ample specialty food items from the forests and swiddens in their respective areas, a 'gather, cook and taste' session of traditional foods took central stage.

The session opened with the lightening of a cooking fire – both women and men using their respective traditional implements – and with offerings to 'Anito', environment spirits.

Apart from food preparation and actual tasting, recipes, rituals and information with respect to the ingredients were shared. In addition, survival skills, such as trap making, archery and techniques of sustainable yam digging, were demonstrated and many of the participants engaged in story telling dancing and singing, much of it related to the food served.

The festival was followed by a one-day 'multi-sector development forum'. The forum, with Aeta leaders in charge and top echelon government officials involved, aimed at providing a platform for sharing the communities' aspirations and concerns. The open dialogue largely focused on developments affecting the security of the Aeta's ancestral domains and the natural resources therein. It was noticeable that outside guests were able to gain new appreciation for a special cultural heritage, which is inextricably linked to their forests.

Conclusion

In light of the enthusiastic response of participants during and after the event, it could be argued that, in combination with the intensive preparatory process, it did help invigorate the Aeta's food tradition and it visibly fostered greater pride in related skills, knowledge and customs. (See www.youtube.com.)

Kids with different backgrounds also engaged in meaningful sharings of their own.

It also appears, considering how the activity resonated with officials, media and others, that a better understanding and more respect by outsiders for the rich cultural heritage of the Aeta (and of which forest foods are an integral part), was another remarkable achievement.

Jenne de Beer
The 2010/2011 ISE/Darrell Posey Field Fellow for Enthnoecology and former Executive Director of the NTFP Exchange Programme for South & Southeast Asia

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Association news

Honour for CFA Vice-President

Bob Newman receiving the N.W. Jolly Medal presented by IFA CEO, Cassandra Spencer.

The N.W. Jolly Medal was recently presented to Honorary Life Member, Vice President and former Chairman of the CFA, Robert L. Newman OAM. The Award was presented to Bob by the Chief Executive Officer of the Institute of Foresters of Australia, Cassandra Spencer. The occasion was the 8th Jack Westoby Lecture on 21st July at the Australian National University in Canberra.

In his response, Bob acknowledged those foresters who had supported him through his career right from his early days since arriving in Australia in 1946 from Britain.

"My tertiary education was helped by John Chinner of Melbourne Uni; Sibley Elliot of C.S.IRO Forest Products: Sir Edward Weary Dunlop of Japanese War Fame and a Wallaby, and Dr M.R. Jacobs the iconic Principal of the Australian Forestry School".

"I am humbled to think that my Colleagues would consider me worthy of being allowed to enter the ranks of such a range of talented people ,who have in various ways lead Forestry so well and supported the Institute consistently and persistently in their careers".

The Certificate citation reads
"Awarded as the Institute's highest and most prestigious honour for outstanding service to the profession of forestry in Australia."

Michael Bleby
CFA Regional Coordinator, SE Asia and the Pacific

New faces at CFA

Our AGM signalled a changing of the guard amongst our youth representatives as we said goodbye to Celia Nalwadda (Youth Officer) and Eva Ortvald Erichsen (Liaison Officer with the International Forestry Students Association, IFSA). We would like to thank both Celia and Eva for their hard work in representing CFA to young people, and at the same time welcome their replacements, Nelly Bedijo from Uganda, and Katie Gibson from Canada. Please visit our Youth Page at www.cfa-international.org/youth.html to read more about Nelly and Katie and what they hope to achieve.

Gaining experience with the Young Forester Award

My journey to winning the young forester award started in 2005 when I first learnt about the award while perusing the Commonwealth Forestry Association website. I decided then that the position was a challenge I am willing to undertake someday. Finally I got the opportunity to apply in 2009, what a thing of joy it was for me when I got the news in 2010 that I have won the award. Winning the 2010/11 Young Forester Award of the Commonwealth Forestry Association is a dream come through for me. I have been working towards winning this award ever since I first learnt about it and discovered what a huge potential it holds for my career advancement. You can then imagine how excited and delighted I was when I finally got the news that I have won the 2010/11 edition of the award. I was more delighted with the prospects and opportunities associated with the award.

Winning the award also necessitated adequate preparation on my part in order to take maximum delivery of the benefits associated with the award. Having never travelled to the Eastern part of Africa before, I had to do a lot of fact finding search about my destination in order to avoid any form of culture shock or difficulty in settling down. Finally the D- day arrived, after months of preparation, I arrived Uganda on the eve of 31st January 2011. The flight was about five and half hours from South Africa to Uganda. The excitement, expectation, and uncertainty of what the placement will hold for me kept me pondering and guessing all through the flight duration.

On my arrival at Uganda through the Entebbe/Kampala airport, I was received by the Sawlog Production Grant Scheme (SPGS) where I was placed for the duration of my placement. My integration program started with series of discussions and presentation with SPGS staffs on the vision, mission and operations of SPGS. The whole activities that I underwent in my first week were centered on my integration into SPGS team. I was thrilled to observe how SPGS is actively promoting commercial forestry in Uganda. My integration into the SPGS team was made easy by the great contributions of Ms. Bridget Mbabazi, SPGS finance and administration manager, and Ms. Celia Nalwadda who doubles as SPGS Senior Plantation Officer and Commonwealth Forestry Associations' Youth Officer.

The SPGS concept is a joint partnership project between the Government of Uganda, Government of Norway, and the European Union aimed at supporting the development of commercial forestry in Uganda through the provision of grants and technical assistance. The SPGS grant is equivalent to the 50% of the cost per hectare of establishing plantation in Uganda. The technical assistance is mostly in the form of training courses and technical advice during field inspections. My experience in Uganda was a very thrilling one, something I will ever cherish. I got a lot of exposure working with SPGS for the thirteen weeks duration of the young forester's award scheme. It gave me a new perspective of commercial forestry. Unlike what is obtainable in Nigeria where commercial forestry is solely practiced by corporate bodies; SPGS has successfully enticed private individuals into commercial forestry practice in Uganda. The SPGS experience has shown that given the right support individuals even at small scale can be very successful in the forestry business.

During the course of my placement, I was able to participate in all of SPGS activities including the clients/investors meeting, field inspections, and training courses. The SPGS courses cover all the core areas of plantation forestry including, site and specie selection, silvicultural practices, forest finance and investment management, and tree plantation maintenance and management. One of the astonishing impacts of SPGS is how they have helped many of their clients to succeed in the forest business most of whom had no formal or prior knowledge of forest science.

Overall my experience has been nothing short of amazing. I have learnt much about plantation forestry and commercial forestry in Uganda. I have also learnt a lot about the Ugandan people and their culture. The skills that I have gained through the Young Forester Award will remain with me as I continue my career as a Forester. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Commonwealth Foundation, Commonwealth Forestry Association and Sawlog Production Grant Scheme for giving me this wonderful opportunity; and a special thank you to my coordinator; Celia Nalwadda for her patience; and to all the Staffs of SPGS who made my stay worth it and very enjoyable, I say a very big thank you. To the Commonwealth Forestry Association, I say keep the good working. My sincere wish and desire is for this scheme to continue so that other young foresters can take delivery of the inherent benefits for their career development and advancement.

Chidiebere Ofoegbu
CFA/YFA winner 2010/11

Forest Scenes

CENDEP introduces REDD in two forest dwelling communities of southwestern Cameroon

Background: The impacts of climate change and global warming has in recent times attracted a lot of attention from scientists, politicians, media practitioners and even the general public. Due to the impacts local populations are facing from climate change and global warming, it is normal for the above mentioned stakeholders to intervene and seek for possible solutions. It is even crucial for civil society organizations operating at the local level and

delivering natural resource management services to be actively involved in order to find practical and adaptable solutions that can mitigate these impacts in a sustainable manner. Sustainable management of forests and other land uses underpins climate change mitigation efforts and the potential for these to tap into the estimated USD$ 170 billion carbon market cannot be overemphasized.

That is why the Centre for Nursery Development and Eru Propagation – CENDEP (www.cendep.org) as service providers in the sustainable management of natural resources to local communities for the past ten years saw the need to get involved in the climate change mitigation/adaptation process in an effort to make a meaningful contribution with her target population through best practice and knowledge sharing.

Due to the proactive engagement with our partners, we were able to participate in the first ever capacity building training workshop series organized for over 20 small scale African NGOs in 2010. The theme of the workshop was "carbon as a funding mechanism for conservation projects." The principal organizers and sponsors were the Netherlands Committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN NL) and the World Land Trust, UK (WLT). The workshops took place in the Akosombo region of Ghana in February 2010 and in the Kibale National Park, Uganda in May 2010 (www.naturepovertyportal.net).

The major outcome of both workshops was the introduction of climate mitigation strategies through reduced emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) and the development of a REDD project idea notes (PINs) with the help of specialized trainers (Face the future, Netherlands; Nature Conservation Research Centre – NCRC Ghana, Peace Parks Foundation South Africa and WLT). The development of PINs was specific to each organization and reflects the realities each organization faces at the national or regional level. International standards such as the Climate Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) and the Voluntary Carbon Standard (VCS) were the guiding principles used in developing the PINs. The intention was for the organizers and sponsors to first of all build the capacity of African NGOs in using carbon as a tool in conservation projects and secondly to select a few feasibility studies and promote to the extent that they may attract donor/investor funding in future.

Perry (CENDEP), Fred (NK), Anist (NU) working with Raj (Face) on their PINs

Project Description: Following the capacity building workshops, CENDEP developed a REDD+ feasibility study for two indigenous forest reserves – Rumpi hills and Nta-Ali of south-western Cameroon – one of the regions where she intervenes. The goal of the project is to avoid deforestation and enhance carbon stocks through the introduction of afforestation and reforestation (A/R) in the two forest reserves that comprise the support zones of the Korup National Park with a surface area of 85,486ha. Drawing from very conservative estimates, project implementation is expected to generate 3,294,165 tCO2 of Voluntary Carbon Units (VCUs) (already discounting non-permanence and leakage buffers).

Activities to achieve emission reduction:

- The institution of a stakeholder management board that will complement work of the technical operation unit (TOU) that oversees the region's forest management initiatives with emphasis on remote sensing for credible and verifiable emission reduction monitoring.
- The promotion of agro forestry and the integration of important tree crops (e.g. *Irvingia gabonensis*, *Garcinia cola*) into the farming system to improve small scale farmers' income levels.
- Reforestation of degraded lands through the creation of community woodlots with fast growing species for the provision of construction materials, fuel wood, the reduction of encroachment into the natural forest and local economic development.
- Developing value chains and strengthening chain actors of the principal cash crop in the area – cocoa.
- Capacity building in pro-poor REDD benefit sharing mechanisms which is expected to be different from the existing forest royalty disbursements currently implemented by the state (which does not particularly satisfy most forest dwelling communities)
- Ensure the actualization of community development benefits and country wide project replication through best practice and knowledge sharing.

The way forward:

For project implementation to effectively start, the following steps are recommended:

i. Maintain contacts and follow-up with policy makers implicated in national REDD project evaluation/approval. CENDEP assumes this role and is willing to continue with that follow-up process.

ii. Continuous capacity building of CENDEP staff in technical aspects of REDD+ development and technology transfer to local communities. This is crucial in reducing transaction costs during project implementation. Inspiration could be drawn from the University of Twente's "Kyoto: Think Global Act Local" or K: TGAL methods and technology used in community participation in the assessment of carbon stocks in a forest and its sequestration potential (www.communitycarbonforestry.org).

iii. Best practice and Knowledge sharing in newsletters and other media outlets is important for the wider public to understand how civil societies across Africa can be engaged to move the climate change mitigation efforts forward and contribute in promoting the goals of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

iv. Finally the continuous search for appropriate funding frameworks from the donor and investor community with the assistance of our partners (IUCN NL, WLT, Face the future etc) is equally important if project implementation is to be realized.

Wirsiy Eric Fondzenyuy
Knowledge Management officer, CENDEP
cendep2001@yahoo.com

GFIS.net
Global Forest Information Service

Focusing on the Future of Global Forest Information

The Global Forest Information Service (GFIS) provides a single entry point at http://www.gfis.net/ to share a wide range of forest – related information from around the world in one online portal for all stakeholders to access easily. With a reputation as being the leading place on the net to easily find and share forest information – GFIS is a tool that should recognized and used by all CFA members.

A CPF joint initiative, created to develop a common information exchange platform, GFIS is building capacity and enhancing partnerships among providers and users of forest information. GFIS is led by IUFRO, in collaboration with FAO, CIFOR, the UNFF Secretariat and IGRAF. The underlying assumption behind the development of GFIS is that its partners share a common need for information sharing that can be addressed most effectively through collaboration. Towards this end, GFIS seeks to develop a system of partnerships with a variety of organizations encompassing the world's leading forest research institutions and individuals.

As greater numbers of organizations operate in international cooperation and international conventions and agreements dealing with the forest based sector are increasingly influencing national forest practices and policies, a demand was created for an online portal which would bring the world's forest information into one place to aid stakeholders finding what they need to stay informed. Research is only worthwhile if the findings are made accessible to those who can use it when making discussions, decisions, and policies.

GFIS works towards eliminating barriers to communication to information providers and seekers and establishing open lines in which organizations can easily access information published from their peers and other forest stakeholders. There is a growing concern over the states of many of our forest systems and with that comes a growing demand for the information that can be used to manage these systems in a sustainable manner.

The institutions and individuals whom contribute to GFIS strongly benefit through:

- better visibility and recognition of information products;
- increased number of potential information users; and
- closer cooperation and networking with global information providers and partners.

Users can view the information provided in several forms by looking through individual information types or through the GFIS search function which provides the option to search all fields. Information is submitted under the classifications ***News, Events, Publications, Job Vacancies, Education, Projects, and Datasets & Databases***. In addition, GFIS has recognized an increasing number of online media and is upgrading its services to carry forest related audio and video files shortly, to further build on its information services.

So, when you are looking for forest information, make your first stop GFIS.net and let us search the other websites for you, providing you with a list of links to the information you need. GFIS offers around 60 fresh headlines daily through the entry page and almost 100 coming forest events are available on the calendar at www.gfis.net/gfis/calendar.faces. 2011 has provided GFIS the best usage statistics thus far. We are averaging just shy of 20,000 unique visitors each month, which far surpasses rates from last year.

2011, is the International Year of Forests and GFIS.net provides an effective way to promote, protect, and preserve our forests through informing the world.

You can now follow us on twitter and facebook!

Michael Huck and Eero Mikkola
Global Forest Information Service
International Union of Forest Research Organizations
c/o Metla
Email: gfis@iufro.org

News from Guyana

In my contribution for the second quarter of 2011, I reported on the discovery in March 2011 in Jamaica of 122 kg of cocaine in a shipping container with logs of the hard dark heavy flooring timber wamara (*Swartzia leiocalycina*), sent from Guyana[1]. In early August, the Guyana Revenue Administration reported the dismissal of one customs officer and suspension of three others in relation to this case[2]. No action has been taken by the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) on the illegal harvest of the logs or the use of a false name on the shipping documents. The shipment to Jamaica was not reported in the monthly trade statistics issued by the Forest Products Development and Marketing Council of Guyana Inc. (FPDMC).

The report for USAID by the Efeca consultancy on the Guyana national Legality Assurance System, undertaken in March[3], has not been released. The local speculation is that the report differs from the usual acceptance of government assurances at face value, and that the government agencies are resisting indications that actual practice differs greatly from those assurances. Likewise, a scoping mission in May by the Governance of Forests Initiative of the World Resources Institute in Washington DC has also not released its report, possibly for the same reason.

The GFC has meanwhile claimed that 'many of Guyana's lesser used species of lumber continue to catch the attention of the overseas markets in Asia, the Caribbean, Europe and North America'[4]. However, there is no way of verifying this claim because since February 2008 the GFC has ceased to publish the exported volumes by species for any category of wood product[5]. An Access to Information Bill has been sent to a special committee of the National Assembly but enactment of this Bill would not force the GFC to release such data. The Bill has no retroactive force; information might be accessible only from the time of enactment. Civil society has protested about the highly restricted nature of the freedom of information proposed in this Bill[6] but the Government's Parliamentary majority means that it can force through any wording that it wants on new legislation. The customary Government reluctance to accept even non-partisan amendments from opposition Parties makes a mockery of the parliamentary process.

The GFC continues a slow process of developing formal standards for operation of wood processing facilities, including the lumber yards which transform chainsawn lumber into construction material. Since 1953 the GFC has had the power to regulate the licence conditions for these yards but most of them continue to operate extremely inefficiently with low rates of recovery of usable lumber. The political reluctance to set resource access taxes such as royalties and area fees at an economically rational level, partly because of regulatory capture[7], means that chainsawn lumber and logs can be purchased relatively cheaply by lumber yards and there is little incentive to function more efficiently. When, as now, the Asian markets for logs of flooring and furniture quality timbers are booming, the sawnwood domestic market in Guyana is being supplied very largely by chainsaw operators because the main loggers and increasing numbers of Chinese log traders are focused on export of unprocessed logs. This is entirely contrary to the national policies for on-shore value addition.

After many months, the GFC has quietly released onto the website of the President's Low Carbon Development Strategy the draft of Guyana's REDD+ Governance Development Plan (June 2011, 54 pages[8]). This is a useful compilation of normal government development actions but says very little about REDD+ or forward plans. I hope to comment on this draft in the next quarter's report.

Janette Bulkan
CFA Governing Council

[1] http://www.illegal-logging.info/item_single.php?it_id=5648&it=news

[2] http://www.stabroeknews.com/2011/news/stories/08/10/customs-officer-sacked-three-suspended-over-cocaine-in-container/

[3] http://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2011/03/18/guyana-reviews-system-to-ensure-that-logging-meets-international-standards/

[4] ITTO Tropical Timber Market Report 16-14, 16-31 July 2011, page 11.

[5] http://www.stabroeknews.com/2011/opinion/letters/08/07/it-would-be-good-practice-for-the-gfc-and-the-forest-products-development-and-marketing-council-to-join-the-global-best-practices-in-reporting/

[6] http://www.stabroeknews.com/2011/features/08/01/freedom-of-informationaccess-to-information-2/

[7] State or regulatory capture occurs when a government regulatory agency which is supposed to be acting in the public interest becomes dominated by the vested interests of the existing incumbents in the industry that it oversees.

[8] http://www.lcds.gov.gy/images/stories/Documents/RGDP%20-%20June%202011.pdf

European forest ministers agree to negotiate legally binding agreement on Europe's forests

At the latest FOREST EUROPE ministerial meeting on the protection of forests in Europe, ministers from 43 European countries and the European Community adopted a mandate for negotiating a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe. Ministers also adopted a decision outlining a vision, goals, targets and actions for Europe's forests through to 2020.

The meeting took place in Oslo, Norway from 14–16 June 2011, and provided an opportunity to discuss and take decisions on the future of the protection and sustainable management of

forests in Europe. Delegates heard statements from signatory and observer countries on national forest management activities, and from several intergovernmental organizations, and took part in a multi-stakeholder panel debate on European forests in a global perspective.

But the highlight of the meeting was the adoption of the ministerial mandate and decision. The mandate for negotiating a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe establishes a negotiating process and an intergovernmental negotiating committee, chaired by Jan Heino. The legally binding framework agreement will address, *inter alia*: ensuring SFM in Europe; maintaining and enhancing forest resources, their health, vitality, resilience and adaptation to climate change; increasing resilience to natural hazards and human-induced threats; enhancing forests' contributions to climate change mitigation; enhancing protective and productive forest functions; halting the loss of biodiversity and combating desertification; creating and maintaining enabling conditions for European forests to contribute to a green economy, employment and rural and urban development; maintaining and enhancing cultural and social forest functions; reducing, with the aim of eliminating, illegal logging and associated trade; improving forest knowledge; and, enhancing participation and cooperation on forests at all levels. The negotiations on the LBA are expected to begin later in 2011, and to conclude by mid-2013.

The Ministerial Decision: European Forests 2020 describes a shared vision and goals for Europe's forests, and sets out the following targets: all countries have developed and are implementing national forest programmes (NFPs); forest knowledge is improved; in response to the objective on the use of renewable raw material and energy, wood supply and other forest products from sustainable managed forests has increased substantially; full value of forest ecosystem services is being estimated; all countries include strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation in NFPs; the rate of forest biodiversity loss is at least halved, and measures are taken to significantly reduce forest fragmentation and degradation; forests' role in combating desertification is fully recognized and forests managed to that end; all countries have measures to ensure a significant increase in socio-economic and cultural benefits; and, effective measures are taken at regional, sub-regional and national levels to eliminate illegal logging and associated trade.

Many delegates at the meeting considered the adoption of these documents a historical moment for European forests, one that will shape forest policy over the next decade.

FOREST EUROPE, officially called the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe and previously referred to as the MCPFE, is a high-level political initiative working towards the protection and sustainable management of forests throughout the European region.

For more information:
FOREST EUROPE website: http://www.foresteurope.org/
IISD RS coverage of the meeting: http://www.iisd.ca/ymb/forest/femc/2011/

Reem Hajjar
CFA Vice-Chair

Sierra Leone forestry sector at a glance

Power saw operation at Kasewe Sawmill cutting a Anisophyllea laurina *tree, used mostly as construction poles.*

Country Background

Sierra Leone is located in West Africa shares borders with Liberia in the south west and Guinea from north east to the north west. Mount Bintumani in Loma mountains has a height of 1946m whilst the second highest Sankan Briwa in the Tingi Hills attains 1715m. A mean annual rainfall of 3000–5000 mm along the Atlantic coast decreases to 2000 mm on the northern border.

Socio-economic situation

Current population hovers around 5 million increasing at 2.7% per annum giving a population density of 58 persons/km^2 standing on an area of 72,000 km^2. Access to clean drinking is limited to 57% of population in 2004; life expectancy at birth in 2006 was 41; 57% of population below poverty line. The Forestry Department (now a division of the Agriculture ministry) was established in 1911 to address the then land degradation problems identified by two investigations. Other sub-sectors of the now Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Sector are: Crops, Livestock, Land and water Development and Projects Evaluation Monitoring and Statistics Divisions.

Divisional mandate

The FD promotes sustainable forest management through the concept of "wise use" of the country's natural resources. It comprises of the Wildlife Conservation, Forest Conservation and the now privatized Rubber Development Branches. The Forest Conservation branch is the largest of the three. The Division has

carefully and consistently followed the Decentralization process since the release of the Decentralization Act (2004). Major activities include soil, energy, water and energy conservation in addition to forest replenishment, maintenance, harvest regulation, product processing, value addition etc. Public sensitization and awareness-raising on the ills of deforestation and the wisdom in resource conservation arte major public relation drives.

Staffing situation

The FD is poorly staffed with 15 professionals, 7 sub-professionals and 8 technical staff in 1990, manning 48 forest reserves at different locations nation-wide. Currently there are around 50% vacancies in all cases for professionals, sub professionals and technical positions. The Wildlife conservation Branch had filled only 49 vacant posts out of 93 by 1990. Salaries are incredibly low and logistical support for forest management is unreasonably low compared to the numerous challenges the Division is facing. Only a small number of staff has been trained over the last 10 years due to funding constraints. There is an on-and-off moratorium on staff recruitment coupled wit very low wages which prevents even sympathizers from helping with their expertise.

The Forest Research and Training Center was closed in 1995 due to the negative war impacts on infrastructure, staff and operations. Forest research is now combined with Tree Crop research under one station out of 8, thereby diluting the output of forest research which was a full-fledged institution covering the whole country before the war.

Spondias mombin *and* Albizzia lebbec *trees serving as shade trees at Njala University.*

Forest Policy and Legislative Reviews

Forest policy and legislative reviews over the past 7 decades had been necessitated by efforts to address some of the drivers of deforestation; the increasing demand for firewood, charcoal and construction poles to satisfy the demand for refugees and internally displaces persons; conflicting activities and policies of other sectors of the economy; the need to put in place more realistic fines and jail terms for defaulters against the forest law; changes in the physical location of the sector in different ministries; attempts to decentralize the sector and especially the negative impacts of agricultural policies on the development of the sector. One major by-product of the war is the introduction of individually-operated power saws which operations which are often restricted to remote areas are difficult to police due to their mobile and underground operations. Major policy reviews were documented in 1998, 2007, and lately 2010.

Commitment to International conventions and treaties on conservation and environmental management.

Sierra Leone has done very well in terms of appending signatures to internal agreements on conservation and environmental management but what is questionable is the implementation of the terms of these agreements and especially follow-up actions to agreements and conclusions taking at the Conferences of Parties and other interim meetings. To date the country is at various stages in the development of the following agreements:

Convention on the Conservation of Biodiversity; UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species; UN convention to Combat Desertification; Convention covering World Cultural Heritage; African Convention on Nature and Natural Resources; Coastal Environment for West Central Africa Region etc.

Sierra Leone responded to the FAO call to celebrate World Forestry Day in March 1985 by the inauguration of an annual National Tree Planting Day that year and the programme has resulted in the planting of millions of trees to date. However the trees have suffered from the effects of annual wild fires, real estate development, war-related urbanization pressure, lack of incentives for maintenance, need for firewood, charcoal and poles especially in urban environments where the demand for them is high owing to scarcity. There is a need for the development of an incentive scheme for tree planting and especially tending up to a certain age.

The Forest Estate and Deforestation Trend

Sierra Leone was once a well forested country, but the closed forest cover has been reduced from about 70% of the total land area in about 7 decades time to only 5% of land area in 1990 and even lesser today, assuming a deforestation rate of about 1% per annum. In 1990, the area of the forest re-growth portion increased to 3,774,000ha out of 6,305,000 ha of total area of all types of forests. Major causes of deforestation are anthropogenic including: shifting cultivation, wild fires, mining of minerals, stone and sand mining (war-induced), logging for timber, firewood harvest for sustenance, utilization and for charcoal burning and pole harvest etc. Of all the round-wood removals annually, about 95% goes for firewood and charcoal; 3% to construction poles and 2% for timber, but post war rehabilitation efforts have clearly changed the trend for the worst. There are very few significant natural causes of deforestation in the country.

The National Forest Estate

The 1990 records also indicated the following distribution of national forest estates:

Forest Reserves	=258,300 ha.
Proposed Forest Reserves	=34,000 ha.
Protected Forests	=11,000 ha.
Total	=331,110 ha.

While the national forest estate occupies under 5% of the total land area most other forest lands are on communally-owned land, hence the urgent need for the introduction of a community forestry programme. Forest inventories are very rare, infrequent and mostly incomplete due to funding and logistical constraints. The last significant inventory was in 1979 covering only parts of the 750,000 ha. Gola Forests bordering the Gola forests in Liberia. Despite the small size of merchantable forests and the high rate of deforestation, pressure on the forests is high. For instance, by early 2010 about 8 sawmilling companies were successful in obtaining licenses for logging in 5 different locations in the country albeit covering relatively small forest areas. The national firewood demand was estimated at 2.3 to 3.9 million M3 in the early 90s but the high population growth of 2.7% per annum has significantly changed these figures. Also the per caput construction pole demand of 2.1% at the same time may have changed especially during the post-war rehabilitation period (2000–2004).

REDD Potential of Sierra Leone forests

Despite the current low forest cover, a few evergreen and semi-deciduous forests and heavily wooded savanna woodland estates stand a chance for qualifying for carbon trade due to security of tenure, current sustainable management practices, supportive policy measures, success of benefit sharing practices etc.

The 750,000 ha. Gola Forest Complex has been managed under a conservation concession programme since 2004 and was relatively well-managed from 1990 to 2004. This forest complex is part of the Gola National Forests (Liberia) Peace Park conservation corridor between Sierra Leone and Liberia inaugurated in 2009. Gola Forests (Sierra Leone) is now Sierra Leone's second national park after the 1109 km^2 Outamba Kilimi National Park (OKNP). Both forests can be described as moist semi-deciduous lowland forests with high species diversity and endemism typical of most of the Upper Guinea forest blocks. Large mammals include, elephants, bongo, buffalos, hippopotamus and a variety of primates- including the Chimpanzees, duikers, bird species etc. are typical inhabitants of these forests whish provide ideal habitats for them.

The OKNP is located in northern Sierra Leone bordering Southern Republic of Guinea with a diverse vegetation type as it lies in the transition zone between the Guinea highlands savannahs to the north and remnants of the lowland of the lowland tropical forests to the south. The Park comprises of two segments-Outamba (741 km^2) and Kilimi (368 km^2) but separated by a 25 km wide buffer zone along the road. The flatter and drier Kilimi section is covered with short dry savannahs and open woodlands. Other forests with potential for carbon trade include the Western Area Peninsula Forest reserves (17,600 ha.) Tama Tonkoli in the central region (50,300 ha.) Kambui Hills in the east (23,000) etc.

Non Timber Forest Products

Non timber forest products play a key role in sustenance and livelihood support for rural communities; provision of construction materials, handicrafts, support to food security, healthcare delivery, sources of proteins and essential vitamins, gums and resins, wrapping materials, beverages etc. The conservation of these resources could make a good entry point to the introduction of community forest management. Since the majority of forests lie on communal lands, only the introduction of community forestry practices can effectively stall deforestation especially in areas where communities realize substantial benefits from forest and other natural resources management.

Recent efforts at attaining Semi-Autonomy

Recent efforts at the attainment of some semi-autonomy completely excluded the serving Government Forestry staff defining conditions for only the Commissioner and his Executive Secretary. Despite it's good intentions and purposes, the internal resistance and the the many grey areas in the draft policy document quickly necessitated a reversal of the poorly-planned process which saw a quick return to the original position probably to the satisfaction of the permanent staff who were frightened by this unplanned and biased development.

Conclusions

The Sierra Leone forest sector is under-funded, marginalized and located in a Ministry with heavy bias towards food security despite it's negative impact on the environment in general and to the forest sector in particular. A well planned and well studied commission status like in Ghana and Zimbabwe should upgrade this sector once staff welfare and logistics for forest management are seriously addressed, the fully potential of the sector will be realized. Law enforcement and the harmonization of government policies and legislations on land use will help enhance forestry development in Sierra Leone.

Emmanuel Alieu
Senior Teaching Fellow
Forestry Department, Njala University
and CFA Governing Council

The International Model Forest Network

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, was the scene not only for international recognition of the need for global action on the environmental challenges to development, but also for the presentation of a practical Canadian proposal to put the draft principles regarding the sustainable management of forests into action – namely the concept of the Model Forest.

Simply defined, a Model Forest is a large-scale, forest-based landscape that encompasses a variety of land uses and values,

resource management administrations, and land ownership. Those involved may thus include land users, owners and managers; forest-based industries; communities; NGOs; government agencies at various levels; academic and research institutions; conservation areas; and indigenous peoples. All of these groups and individuals, who support a wide range of forest interests and values, agree to collaborate to devise and demonstrate ways in which forest-based landscapes and natural resources may be managed using approaches that are locally acceptable and nationally relevant.

Initially ten Model Forests were developed in Canada, followed by others in Mexico and Russia. In 1995 the International Model Forest Network (IMFN) was established, with headquarters in Ottawa, Canada to support the development of the network, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise, and champion the concept to the international community.

My own involvement in the IMFN arose from my participation in the mid-1990s on behalf of FAO in some of the early meetings which were held in Japan. Recently I renewed my association with the Network when I acted as *Rapporteur* to the 3-yearly meeting of the IMFN Forum, held in March 2011 in Burgos, Spain. I was glad to find that some things have not changed – the enthusiasm of those attending, for example, is as great as it was in the early days, and Canada's commitment to supporting the Secretariat of the IMFN and its components seems to be as wholehearted nearly twenty years on as it was in the beginning. But some things have changed, since there are now more than 58 Model Forests in over 24 countries on five continents, with thousands of partner organizations – and there are several candidates awaiting acceptance. The Forum was attended by over 200 participants from most of the Model Forests, whose total global area is now over 108 million hectares, with over 65 million ha in Canada, or 60% of the total.

Regional networks of the IMFN have now been formed in order to facilitate their continued growth. The largest of these is the Ibero-American, which includes 25 sites in Central and South America as well as one in Spain. The newest is the Russian and Northern European, which has 5 sites. The other regional Model Forest networks are the Canadian, the Mediterranean – with headquarters in Valladolid, Spain – the African (based in Yaounde, Cameroun), and the Asian, which has its secretariat in Beijing, China. There may be opportunities for strong collaboration around boreal forest issues in the near future, with several sites already established or proposed for development in North-eastern Europe and North-western Russia.

Five Strategic Initiatives were introduced at the 2008 Forum and were further developed at Burgos. They were established to enable members to develop and implement programming priorities that address thematic issues common to more than one Model Forest with the goal of each to use Model Forests as a platform for examining the links between international policy objectives and on-the-ground actions. The current Strategic Initiatives are:

- Circumboreal
- Ecosystems Goods & Services
- Climate Change
- Community Sustainability
- Knowledge Sharing

The Burgos Forum also discussed a new Charter for the IMFN, which will include the criteria for membership of the IMFN and provision for candidate status of applicant Model Forests; the Forum agreed the steps necessary for the final adoption of the Charter.

Some of the other points that stuck me included:

- There is no "one size fits all" prescription for Model Forests, and continuing social and climatic changes especially are likely to lead to the need for flexibility and continual adaptation.
- Two of the principles of Model Forests, namely the need for a programme of work, including research, that reflects partner needs and interests, and the overriding importance of participatory approaches, were strongly emphasised by all speakers.
- Ecosystem management and landscape-level approaches go beyond national borders, and this is where the coordinating role of the IMFN is especially important.

In summary, I was struck once again by the enthusiasm of all involved in the Model Forests at all levels; they, and the IMFN, seem set to continue to provide an important means for the exchange of information and experience and to influence sustainable forest management where it matters most – in the forest.

If you want to know more, then see the IMFN website http://www.imfn.net/

Jim Ball
President, CFA

Two international forestry meetings

Two recent international meetings of interest to foresters have been Forest Europe Ministerial Conference, 14–16 June (Oslo, Norway) and the Climate Change Conference of 6–17 June (Bonn, Germany).

Forest Europe was formerly known as the Ministerial Conference on Forests in Europe (MCPFE) until it changed its name in 2010. Ministers responsible for forests and senior representatives of 43 European countries, officials of the European Community and observers from 29 NGOs attended to discuss the future of the protection and sustainable management of forests in Europe. The most important outcomes were the adoption of a mandate to negotiate a Legally Binding Agreement (LBA) on Forests in Europe, and the Oslo Ministerial Decision: European Forests 2020. The latter describes the vision, the goals, the targets and the actions proposed for Europe's forests. Negotiations should start on the LBA before the end of 2011, for conclusions by mid-2013. The preamble to the terms of reference for the International Negotiating Committee (INC) focuses on: SFM and climate change mitigation as well as other ecosystem services; economic functions of forests in a green economy; illegal logging; accessibility of forest information; national sovereignty and the added value of European cooperation; and raising public awareness of forestry issues. The chair of the INC will be Jan Heino (Finland – and former head of FAO's Forestry Department).

The LBA, once adopted by member countries, will be historic: the only other international agreement is the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests, which was adopted at the 7th Session of the UN Forum on Forests in 2007 and is in effect a reiteration of the Forest Principles from UNCED in 1992. A report on UNFF-7 and comment on its outcome is in CFA Newsletter #37 of June 2007, while the report on the Forest Europe Ministerial Conference can be found on www.ymbvol180num2e.pdf

The report *State of Europe's Forests 2011* was also presented at Forest Europe. Its findings include the expansion of European forests, which absorb the equivalent of about ten per cent of Europe's greenhouse gas emissions, and the provision of four million jobs (but the sector only accounts of 1 per cent of the region's GDP) – but the low carbon:nitrogen ratio in several areas my become an issue. Other challenges include: landscape fragmentation; a shrinking and aging workforce; negative net revenues of several forest enterprises; and mobilizing enough wood for energy while meeting both biodiversity values and the needs of the traditional wood sector.

The Bonn Climate Change Conference of the UN Framework Conference on Climate Change (UNFCC) attracted around 3,500 participants, and included meetings of its the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA). It also comprised the second part of the 16th session of the *ad hoc* Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) and the second part of the 14th session of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWGLCA) and many of the items on the agenda of each of the technical bodies were controversial. You can find a report on the whole meeting on the Earth Negotiations Bulletin at www.isd.ca/climate/sb34/

Perhaps what was said at this meeting was of less interest to foresters than what was unsaid, especially on the Kyoto Protocol. The first commitment period (of developed economies) under the Kyoto Protocol will expire at the end of 2012, and it is not clear what will replace it, or who will sign up. Already some straws in the wind suggest that major forest resource nations such as Canada and the Russian Federation, as well as consumer countries such as Japan, have said that they will not sign up for Kyoto 2, with the result that some developing countries are questioning if they will even take part in the negotiations at the next session of the UNFCC in Durban (South Africa) from 28 November to 9 December 2011. Watch this space.

Jim Ball
President CFA

Issues and Trends

LiDAR for forestry fun or profit?

It seems every few years someone purports to offer a new way of measuring forests that is faster, cheaper or better. Some of those claims end up being real advances that improve forest planning and management, others go nowhere. In the area of remote sensing, large format aerial photography, satellite imagery of many sorts and aerial digital imagery have all proven to be real advances that help foresters and others understand the extent and content of surveyed forests. By the late 1990s a new technology emerged with great promise for forestry – LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging).

A LiDAR instrument fires rapid pulses of laser light at a target which are reflected back to a sensor which measures the amount of time it took for the round trip for each pulse. The promise that LiDAR offers to forest management is that is provides vegetation and topographic mapping that can occur on the same sensor pass – through clouds. LiDAR provides opportunities for mapping surfaces that can be converted into a digital elevation model (DEM) of the canopy top, the bottom of the canopy or the ground. One can produce a high quality topographic map (as a digital terrain model – or DTM) with LiDAR data and easily calculate a map of vegetation height as the difference between the DEM and the DTM.

Our professional ancestors who mapped terrain by walking with compass, transit and clinometers perhaps dreamed of such a tool on a hot Wednesday afternoon.

So why is not everyone using LiDAR everywhere if it can do such miraculous things? It has been because of the perceived cost. Most LiDAR sensors are themselves quite expensive, are flown on multi-engine aircraft and produce huge datasets that require massive storage and substantial processing capacity. The latter is a component of cost that continues to decrease – giving hope for increasingly affordable LiDAR solutions for forestry. So how much does it cost? Commonly quoted prices for LiDAR at a large scale are in the range of US$4-9 per ha depending on scale and specifications, however in some locations private vendors offer much lower costs (as low as US$0.50 per ha). At these lower cost ranges LiDAR can be substantially cheaper and faster than other inventory approaches.

LiDAR does not always provide all of the above – in dense, tight canopies with low-light forest conditions it is difficult for LiDAR to penetrate to the forest floor and return an interpretable signal to calculate a terrain model. Without some means of optical overlay/interpretation, it can be difficult to tell a poplar from an obelisk. These are problems that can be overcome – but often at additional cost. Is this tool one that can live up to the promise of faster, cheaper, better forest management information? One has to say that the answer can be a definite yes – depending on what the user needs and ultimately the comparative cost:benefit compared to other approaches.

Ken MacDicken
FAO

This article is one in an occasional series on trends and new issues in forestry. If you have any ideas for future articles please send them to Jim Ball at jbball1@yahoo.co.uk

Publications

Forest Products Annual Market Review 2010–11

The *UNECE/FAO Forest Products Annual Market Review, 2010–2011* is now available on-line and in hard copy. The theme of this year's review is "Forest products – contributing to the green economy". It provides general and statistical information on forest products markets in 2010 and early 2011 in the UN Economic Commission for Europe region – that is, Europe, North America and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

The Review begins with an overview chapter, followed by a description of the economic situation of forest products markets in the region and then presents the policy implications of market developments in the region. These market developments are described in five sectors, based on annual country-supplied statistics: wood raw materials, sawn softwood, sawn hardwood, wood-based panels and paper and paperboard.

Other sections discuss markets for wood energy, certified forest products, carbon, value-added wood products and tropical timber and there is a special chapter with which reviews market developments in China. Tables included with the text present summary statistical information.

It is available on-line at http://live.unece.org/forests-welcome/areas-of-work/forestsforest-productsmarketswelcome/forestsfpmoutputs/forestsfpmannualmarketreviews/2010-2011.html Copies can be ordered from the UN Sales Section, fax +41 (22) 917-0027, https://unp.un.org

Also just released on-line is *Preliminary 2010 Forest Products data for selected countries and products* on the FAO website http://faostat.fao.org/site/630/default.aspx

Pakistan Forest Digest

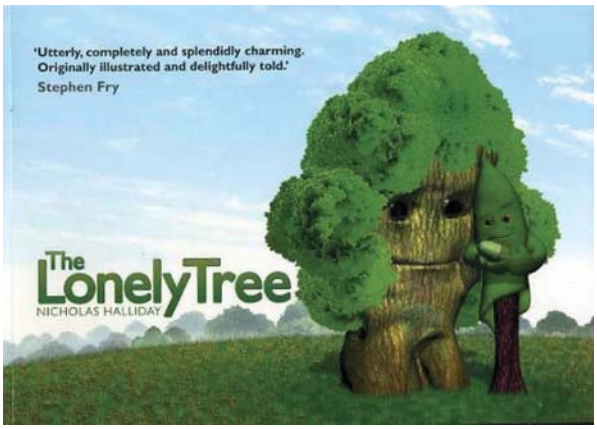
The latest issue of the Pakistan Forest Digest is published and its English version is available from the following links http://sdpi.org/publications/publication.php?id=33 http://sdpi.org/manage/publication/files/Vol-01,%20No.%2004,%20January-March%202011.pdf

The Pakistan Forest Digest (PFD) is a quarterly series of digests focused on the forest related issues, government and non-government endeavors, community concerns and rights reported by the leading Pakistani local and national newspapers and periodicals.

The current issue of forest digest comprises eight chapters. It encompasses daily affairs of forest department, "Timber Mafia", "Illegal Cutting of Trees", "Timber Smuggling", "Forests and Environment", "Protection of Forests and Awareness" "National Parks and Gardens", "Project NCCR (North South) activities and a miscellaneous chapter" "News", "Columns" and "Pictures".

The PFD is published by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and supported by Partnership Action for Mitigation Syndrome (PAMS) project of Swiss NCCR (North-South).

Hard copies of the digest have been dispatched to the concerned stakeholders in Pakistan. If you intend to receive a copy pl. send an e.mail to forestd@sdpi.org



We really liked The Lonely Tree! The story is based in the New Forest and was great because it taught us about the life cycle going through the year and Nicholas Halliday described everything brilliantly. It also teaches us what happens in the seasons to the trees, animals and birds. We also liked how (almost) every page began with a large coloured letter with an animal on it which, if you look carefully, is in the picture.

The pictures were wonderful and we loved how they go on the text a little bit. They look very magical and real at the same time. We've not been to the New Forest yet but one day, would love to see the ponies, bluebells, oak trees and evergreens!
★★★★★ (5 stars!)

Ellie Steel (8) and Barney Steel (5)

Around the World

Australia: Forest opportunities missing in latest Climate Commission Report

A group of highly qualified forest scientists has told the Federal Government that Australia's forests could play a greater role in helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Correspondence signed by 87 highly qualified forest scientists has been sent to the Climate Commission and to Labor Ministers Greg Combet, Tony Burke and Joe Ludwig.

Tasmanian Liberal Senator Richard Colbeck said the signatories had provided a sound, science-based argument which the Government should consider carefully. "The signatories include fellows and members of organisations like the Institute of Foresters, the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, the Commonwealth Forestry Association, and also a number of Registered Professional Foresters. Their advice to the Climate Commission – and to the Gillard Government – is that there is significant potential for managed forests to help address carbon emissions but the Climate Commission's latest report does not include such strategies.

"The scientists are highlighting opportunities like carbon storage in wood products and the use of wood in construction as opposed to metal, concrete and plastic alternatives that have greater fossil fuel emissions. They also draw attention to the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation's recognition that sustainable management of forests, including a mix of conservation and timber harvest, is optimal for carbon reduction.

"The Federal Government should listen to the advice of these qualified forestry professionals and carefully consider these practical, science-based strategies if it is serious about lowering Australia's carbon emissions".

Media release – Senator for Tasmania

Australia: Historic agreement provides certainty for Tasmania's forests and forest industry

Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Tasmanian Premier Lara Giddings have signed a landmark agreement that will provide certainty for Tasmania's forestry industry, support local jobs and communities, and protect the state's ancient forests. The agreement has been reached between the Federal and State Labor Governments after a long period of collaboration and consultation with key industry and environmental stakeholders. The agreement will help the forest industry adapt to market changes while protecting the communities and families that rely on the sector to survive.

Under the agreement a total of $276 million, including $15 million from the State Government, will be provided in the following key areas:

- $85 million to support contractors and their families affected by the downturn in the industry, and in particular Gunns Limited's decision to exit native forest harvesting
- $43 million to facilitate protection of new areas of high conservation value forests
- $120 million over 15 years, including an initial payment of $20 million to identify and fund appropriate regional development projects
- $7 million per annum ongoing to manage new reserves.

The industry support package includes up front funding of up to $25 million for immediate employment and training support for redundant forest workers. Those made redundant from eligible companies in the forestry industry will receive intensive and accelerated support through Job Services Australia and other providers.

In recognition of the impact of the forestry industry changes on the people in the timber communities, the Agreement also provides $15 million to ForestWorks Ltd to administer transition support payments for workers and contractor employees as well as $1 million in support through Rural Alive and Well.

The Australian Government will provide $45 million in assistance for voluntary exits from public native forest operations for haulage, harvest and/or silvicultural contractors. Significantly, the agreement guarantees protection for Tasmania's most iconic ancient forests.

Tasmania will immediately place 430,000 hectares of native forest into informal reserve, subject to verification, which the governments will protect under a Conservation Agreement. Reserves will include areas such as the iconic forests in the Styx, Upper Florentine, Huon, Picton and Weld Valleys and the Great Western Tiers, Tarkine and Wielangta areas. These forests will not be accessed for harvest while verification takes place.

An Independent Verification Group will be established to provide advice to the Prime Minister and the Tasmanian Premier on sustainable timber supply requirements and areas and boundaries of reserves from within the ENGO-nominated 572,000 hectares of High Conservation Value native forest.

For the first time, this process will provide an independent and robust assessment of the definition of high conservation

values and recommendations of the areas that should be protected in permanent reserve. Once this process is complete the State will develop legislation to formalise reserves and guarantee annual sustainable timber supply from production areas in public forests of at least 155,000 cubic metres of high quality sawlog per year.

Contracts for 265,000 cubic metres of peeler billets will be honoured and protected. In addition, specialty timber will be provided and all contracts for native wood supply will also be honoured.

The Agreement is consistent with the Statement of Principles agreement between environment non-government organisations, the Tasmanian forestry industry and the CFMEU, which was presented by independent facilitator Mr Bill Kelty last month. The Federal and State Governments urged all parties to recognise the opportunity to move forward after more than 30 years of bitter conflict in order to build a stronger future for Tasmania.

This agreement marks a new chapter in the diversification of the state economy and the protection of Tasmania's precious environment.

www.pm.gov.au

Brazil: Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon up 15%

Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon increased by 15 percent during the past 12 months, the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) said. From July 2010 to July 2011 the vast South American rainforest lost 2,654 square kilometers (1,649 square miles) of vegetation in the states of Mato Grosso and Para, according to a preliminary analysis of satellite photos.

The year before, 2,295 square kilometers (1,426 square miles) were destroyed over that time period. This July, 225 square kilometers (139 square miles) were lost to deforestation, though this was significantly less than the 485 square kilometers (301 square miles) destroyed in July 2010. In April 477 square kilometers (296 square miles) were destroyed, with more than 95 percent of the devastation taking place in Mato Grosso, which is a major agricultural frontier used for cattle ranches and soybean farming. The most recent figures were calculated from a satellite system known as DETER, which detects in real time when an area larger than 61 acres is destroyed, though its results are not always exact due to cloud cover.

Brazil, the world's fifth largest country by area, has 5.3 million square kilometers of jungle and forests – mostly in the Amazon river basin – of which only 1.7 million are under state protection. The rest is in private hands, or its ownership is undefined.

Deforestation has made Brazil one of the world's top greenhouse gas emitters, and the pace of deforestation peaked in 2004 at 27,000 square kilometers (10,000 square miles) a year. The rate of deforestation has declined since then, in part because of DETER, and at the 2009 UN climate change summit in Copenhagen, Brazil committed itself to reducing Amazon deforestation by 80 percent by 2020.

AFP

Brazil cuts off credit to illegal loggers

With fines for illegal deforestation rarely paid, Brazil is using a novel approach to save the Amazon: block those who clear land illegally from accessing credit. And, refreshingly, the system seems to be working.

"If you can link someone who has been charged with an infraction with their accessibility to credit, that can be an effective deterrent," said Peter May, a scientist working in Brazil in association with the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). "That is one tool that the judiciary is now using fairly effectively, jointly with the national monetary council, that those who are not in accordance with the environmental codes should not be allowed to take out (publicly approved) credit."

He said that in Brazil only about 5 people in every 100 who are fined for environmental crimes ever pay up. "Fines can go on for decades before you can actually force someone to pay a fine, if it ever happens. So fines have not been an effective deterrent. There are about $4.3 billion of unpaid fines out there. The vast proportion is not effectively enforced," he said.

May said that coupled with a weak judiciary unable to force wrongdoers to pay their fines, the police force and environmental agencies have been underequipped and unable to effectively crack down on illegal land clearing. He said they often "don't have gasoline to get out there (into the forests) or don't have a helicopter or don't have bullets for their guns to chase after the criminals." And most of all, he said, decision-makers lack the political will to do so.

www.trust.org

Ghana: Lecturer calls on Government to protect forest cover

A Lecturer at the University of Ghana, Legon, Rev. Dr. Elias Kwaku Asiamah, has called on the government to pay special attention to the rich natural forest resources of the country, by adopting effective strategies that would help protect the vegetation from destruction. Rev. Dr. Asiamah stressed that it was important for the government to help divert nature and convert it into wealth, by making judicious use of the numerous plants to the benefit of the nation. He further noted that it was not enough to only depend on generating foreign income from timber from the forests of the nation.

Speaking to the media and Forestry Commission officials at Jasikan, the Lecturer, who has cultivated much love for nature, said the country lost huge sums of money in felling trees for export, because in so doing, the people were rather deprived from having access to the many medicinal values of the trees being used as timber for export.

Rev, Dr. Asiamah, who is also a Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, protects a big forest at Jasikan, popularly known at the local level as Akrofo Environmental Resource Center, noted that it would be of much economic interest for the government to prune the leaves, bark of trees and roots, as he put it, to package it in a more scientific way for the cure of the many diseases confronting people all over the world by exporting, with assistance from those with profound knowledge in plant medicine like him.

He pointed out that the nation could see significant development if the country takes care of its natural resources, including the vegetation, adding that many of the plants in the nation's forests had the high potency of curing rapid emerging sicknesses like blood pressure, diabetes, and heart diseases among others.

allafrica.com

Indonesia's forests play role in global emissions

Indonesia's commitment to reducing carbon emissions by 26 percent found itself at the heart of global climate change progress. As a tropical country rich in natural resources — boasting the third-largest rainforest area — forest conservation is one of the top items on the climate change agenda. Deforestation is responsible for about 80 percent of Indonesia's emissions, National Council for Climate Change (DNPI) chairman Rachmat Witoelar says.

While many have called the target unrealistic, the DPNI is certain that 85 percent of the target may be achieved through more efficient forest management alone, with the help of foreign partners. President Susilo Bambang Yu-dhoyono also stated that Indonesia's reduction efforts should be domestically funded, while additional cuts of up to 41 percent would be possible with international aid. "We will achieve the targets," Rachmat said recently.

The strong correlation between deforestation and carbon emissions brought about the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation and Enhancing carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+) initiative to slow down the rate of deforestation. REDD+ has become the center for international cooperation in Indonesia in the effort to mitigate deforestation and forest degradation and conserve peatlands, Rachmat said. Peatland degradation is responsible for some 65 percent of Indonesia's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The scheme will not commence until 2013. However, some regions have started projects similar to REDD+. Central Kalimantan became the location of choice for implementing REDD+ in Indonesia. Controversies arose surrounding the REDD+ carbon trading system, which allows developed countries to pay off high carbon emissions by sponsoring developing countries in their fight against deforestation and forest degradation. Problems surrounding this system include the possibility of a decrease in the value of carbon, which would tempt both corporations and governments to avoid alternative low-carbon technologies.

Various nations have committed to funding Indonesia, with emphasis on the REDD+ scheme. Norway has agreed to a payment-for-results plan that could reach up to US$1 billion. While the partnership between Norway and Indonesia concentrates on carbon mitigation measures to avoid deforestation and protect peatlands, there are significant side-effects that would positively impact water, biodiversity and indigenous people, according to Rachmat.

There is broad consensus that to tackle the underlying problems, the entire forest governance sector in Indonesia must be reformed. However, there are signs of clear improvement in Indonesia's forests since 2002. In 2002-2003, 2 million hectares of forest disappeared. Since then, less than half of that is being cut down.

www.thejakartapost.com

Namibia launches Forest Research Strategy

A forest research strategy has been launched as a way to improve the management of forests in Namibia, based on improved forest research. Abraham Nehemia, Under Secretary in Department of Water affairs and Forestry in the Ministry of Agriculture, said at the launch that the development of a forest strategy is the first step in improve research in forest management and resource development. Nehemia said the Ministry is committed to integrate "science and technology as a critical ingredient in the strategic plan."

According to Nehemia "forests and woodlands play a pivotal, life supporting role in the lives of Namibia's people". He said that forests provide "benefits including livelihoods, vital ecosystem services, raw materials, fuels and goods for training".

However, deforestation in the country is posing a major threat to the potential benefits. Nehemia said that "over a single decade, natural woodlands in Namibia have been reduced from 15 per cent to less than 10 per cent of total land area". He warned that if Namibia wishes to restore woodland coverage "we need to share knowledge and open up opportunities for the full and enthusiastic involvement of forest scientists".

In Namibia, indigenous natural products include "high value products from tree species", Nehemia said. The total export value of marula oil in 2009 was N$561,113 which put N$251 thousand cash into the pockets of producers, who are mainly female. "This industry has significant potential for growth, given increasing demands in international markets for natural ingredients, mainly for use in medicinal and cosmetic products".

Nehemia said however that more research is needed and Namibia should aim to become "innovative in product development, to keep pace with market demands and to ensure sustainable resource base and guaranteed supply". Nehemia said that the Ministry has pledge vital investment for the development of research actions and to acquire the support of scientists as outlined in the strategy document.

allafrica.com

Russian forests burn for second successive year

Lack of funding and equipment hampers efforts to prevent and extinguish fires despite pledges and threats from Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev. Only a year ago Russia was overwhelmed by an exceptional heat wave, triggering hundreds of fires that destroyed thousands of hectares of woodland. Burning peat bogs around Moscow stifled the city in a thick cloud of bitter smoke. Now, Russia is burning again. Since the beginning of this year more than 1m hectares of forest have gone up in flames, or are still burning, outstripping the disastrous record of 2010. But the affected areas are more sparsely populated and far fewer people have been evacuated.

The far north of Russia is among the areas that have suffered the most. During the last week of July, Arkhangelsk and the Komi republic had temperatures exceeding 35C. More than 80 fire outbreaks were reported. The far east has suffered too. At the beginning of August about 50 fires were raging, especially around Khabarovsk, Yakutsk and the island of Sakhalin. Southern Russia has not escaped: several villages have been evacuated around Rostov-on-Don and Volgograd, where temperatures rose above 40C in July. In a country that is 97% forest or woodland, fires are an inevitable hazard. But the scale of last year's disaster drew attention to the poor job the Russian authorities were doing to prevent and combat fires.

In 2006 Vladimir Putin, the former president and current prime minister, took the job of supervising woodland out of the hands of 80,000 federal foresters and transferred responsibility to local authorities. Endemic corruption and inadequate regional budgets seriously jeopardised forest inspections and fire prevention. Last autumn the federal government agreed to a bigger budget for monitoring forest fires, and launched a massive scheme to deal with the peat bogs in the Moscow area. After being drained during the Soviet era so the peat could be used as fuel, they have been left untended for decades.

But the administration's efforts have not been equal to the task. In April President Dmitry Medvedev attacked bureaucrats who announced that plans to flood the peat bogs would be delayed. In a meeting broadcast on television, he said: "If you fail to control the fires . . . you'll all be going to fight them in the peat bogs with your own hands."

Fortunately the peat bogs have not so far given any trouble this year. But despite reassurances from the emergency situations minister, the lack of equipment, human resources and funds is often obvious. Greenpeace claims that the government is playing down the situation. "Official reports indicate 93 hectares of land on fire in the Amur area; in fact it is more like 50,000 hectares, as can be seen from satellite images," says an NGO spokesperson. The Russian authorities have not so far asked for outside assistance. More than 5,000 fire-fighters have already been deployed, backed by 800 specialist units, some equipped with aircraft. Current, more favourable, weather conditions may make life easier, with temperatures dropping to more usual levels all over Russia.

www.guardian.co.uk

Scotland: UPM Tilhill funds new road to access land-locked Scottish timber

The UK's leading forestry and timber harvesting company has provided co-funding for a timber transport road on Mull – and helped make Scotland's first community forest purchase under the national forest land scheme financially sustainable.

The North West Mull community, which purchased 700ha of woodland from Forestry Commission Scotland as part of the National Forest Land Scheme, required a timber haul route that minimised the impact of timber traffic on local fragile rural roads to transport timber for their venture to be sustainable.

The Scottish Timber Transport Scheme offered almost 40 per cent funding of the proposed route which enabled the community to go into partnership with UPM Tilhill who agreed to provide the co-funding necessary for the 15.5km route.

When this has been completed, it will reduce the impact on Mull's roads by an estimated 120,000 tonnes of timber over the next ten years.

UPM Tilhill's Argyll Area Harvesting Manager Gavin Brown said: "This project was a win-win for the local community and our company. The community would not have been able to make the purchase of the woodland profitable without a haulage route and they didn't have the funds to build one. As a company, UPM Tilhill is always looking to secure timber in large volumes and so we have benefitted by being able to purchase the timber from the site."

Colin Morrison, Chair of North West Mull Community Woodland Company Ltd, said: "The completion of the North West Mull Timber Haul Route means hundreds of thousands of tonnes of previously landlocked timber, both our own and that managed by Forestry Commission Scotland, can be harvested and brought to market. It brings NWMCWC to a point where we can now manage our local woodlands effectively and for the benefit of all in the community. Without the road all our other projects would have been in doubt.

UPM Tilhill

South Africa: Sydney bluegum is Africa's tallest tree

A Sydney bluegum tree (Eucalyptus saligna) in Limpopo is the tallest tree in Africa, the department of agriculture, forestry and fisheries says. Spokesman Steven Galane said the tree measured 80 metres and broke the previous South African tree height record by a metre. It was also a new African tree height record. The previous South African record was held by two bluegum trees measuring 79 metres.

"The Sydney gum tree towers above a stand of gum trees planted in 1906 in the Woodbush Forest Estate in Limpopo province," Galane said.

He said three giant Mexican pine trees (Pinus oocarpa) were also measured, the tallest of which measured over 50 metres. "Few pine trees anywhere in the world reach these dimensions." It was estimated that the pine trees, like their gum tree counterparts nearby, were older than a century.

www.timeslive.co.za

Uganda: Plan to sacrifice forest for sugar puts economy before ecosphere in Uganda

As Uganda grapples with an acute shortage of sugar that has caused prices to more than double in a year, President Yoweri Museveni has deemed the timing perfect to resurrect his plan to convert a quarter of a major natural forest into a sugarcane plantation.

Underlying Museveni's plan is an obvious conflict of economic and environmental imperatives. Environmental authorities say that Uganda, with the world's third-fastest growing population, loses 2% of its forest cover annually; 10% of this vanishes from protected areas like Mabira, thanks to logging and human settlement. The National Forestry Authority (NFA) highlights warnings by some experts that, at the current rate, the country could have no forests by 2050.

But Museveni last week told local leaders that the Sugar Corporation of Uganda Limited (SCOUL), owned by the Mehta family, would be given about 7,100 hectares of the 30,000-hectare Mabira forest to expand its cane plantations. The move, which has been condemned by conservation groups and the political opposition, is not new. In 2007, three people died during demonstrations against Museveni's intention to turn over the land, located 55km east of the capital Kampala, to SCOUL.

At the time, the government said SCOUL would double annual sugar production to 100,000 tonnes, create 3,500 jobs and pay an extra UShs 11.5bn ($4m) in taxes. The director and other officials of the NFA resigned in protest and, as the riots subsided, the government appeared to back down.

Museveni has now revealed it was only a retreat, not a surrender. The government needs parliamentary approval to change the forest's protected status, but Museveni's party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), has a clear majority in the house. Although some NRM MPs have promised to resist the forest giveaway, Museveni is used to getting his way.

His logic appears to be that Uganda should not have to import sugar while forest land lies idle, or hosts trees that cannot be eaten, exported or taxed. He has vowed to defeat opponents of the move, whom he describes as "unarmed terrorists", according to a report in the Daily Monitor newspaper.

The government has claimed that the targeted portion was not even forest any longer because it had been degraded by encroachers. This, however, was contested by NFA officials in 2007, and when the environment minister took journalists to show them how degraded the coveted area was, the view was blocked by growing trees. The government also promised to replace any lost forest cover by planting trees elsewhere, but this drew scorn from sceptical conservationists.

Critics point out that Uganda has a lot of unencumbered land elsewhere, where the company can grow sugarcane. Conservation groups and forestry experts have long warned that destroying even part of the forest's diversity would affect the region's microclimate, lead to a loss of fauna and flora, and affect the already falling water levels of Lake Victoria and the Nile, which would affect the country's floundering hydropower stations.

Four years ago, the statutory Forestry Authority went as far as to argue that converting the reserve into a sugar plantation would be counterproductive because it would affect the rainfall on which sugarcane depends. Another fear is that by giving forest land to a sugar company despite opposition by experts in the field, the government is sending a message that the forest is dispensable.

Ideally, there should be no need to choose between economic growth and the environment in an age abuzz with "sustainable development". Museveni can't be faulted for wanting millions more in the treasury coffers – especially if it is going to put medicines in health centres or agricultural inputs in peasant households. But it beggars belief that the president, whose spokesman describes him as "an environmentalist", should trade protected forest hectares for tax revenues.

And it doesn't stop with the forest. Wetlands and other important environmental resources are appropriated, with authorities either helpless or complicit. Sadly, it is the poor who will be hit hardest by the repercussions of environmental degradation.

The last attempt to give away the forest was reportedly abandoned after pressure from the World Bank. Announcing the government's retreat in 2007, Ezra Suruma, the finance minister at the time, said: "We have committed ourselves to conserving Mabira forest. There is other land in Uganda suitable for sugarcane growing." Clearly the government's position has changed.

www.guardian.co.uk

UK: New moves to boost tree planting for carbon capture

Two new moves announced today are expected to attract significant new investment into UK tree planting projects designed to help combat climate change.

Planting new forests and woodland helps to counteract the greenhouse gas emissions caused by burning fossil fuels such as oil, coal and gas. As trees grow they capture carbon dioxide (CO2) from the atmosphere and store the carbon as wood and organic matter, whilst releasing oxygen back into the atmosphere. Commercial interest in investing in tree planting for carbon capture in this way is increasing, but until now there have been neither standards against which to measure the carbon capture claims, nor a mechanism to report the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

A new Woodland Carbon Code, launched today by the Forestry Commission, provides a consistent national approach as well as clarity and transparency to potential investors about just what their money should buy them. In addition, Defra has today issued new government guidance on how organisations should report greenhouse gas removals and emissions from UK woodland planting where a project meets the requirements of the Woodland Carbon Code.

Pam Warhurst, Forestry Commission Chair, welcomed the moves, saying: "Tree planting projects are attractive to organisations on a number of levels: they can reduce their carbon footprint at low cost, improve the environment, and enhance their environmental reputation. It's a win, win, win situation for smart organisations. We now have the means to capitalise on some very significant funding opportunities and attract very welcome new woods and forests for everyone's benefit."

To comply with the Code, woodland projects must be responsibly and sustainably managed to national standards, use set methods for estimating the carbon that will be captured, be independently certified, and meet transparent criteria and standards. Project providers must register with the Forestry Commission, stating the exact location and long-term objectives of their projects. Once approved, projects will appear in a national, on-line register.

The UK's woodland absorbs about 2 per cent of our annual emissions of greenhouse gases, but with increased planting, they have the potential to soak up much more and further help to mitigate climate change. The independent Read Report, commissioned by the Forestry Commission to examine the potential of the UK's forests to mitigate and adapt to our changing climate, concluded that woodland creation provided a highly cost-effective and achievable means of abating greenhouse gas emissions.

forestry.gsi.gov.uk

USA: Gibson Guitar to fight US probe of its wood imports

Gibson Guitar Corp Chief Executive said he would fight a federal investigation of the legendary guitar maker's wood imports after agents raided the company for the second time in two years. Federal agents raided Gibson facilities in Nashville and Memphis, Tennessee, on Wednesday, seizing wood imported from India, and workers were sent home. In an affidavit, authorities indicated they are weighing charges against the company or its executives for illegally importing wood under a U.S. law barring importation of endangered plants and woods. The company has sued to recover its property.

"Gibson has complied with foreign laws and believes it is innocent of any wrong doing," Chief Executive Officer Henry Juszkiewicz said in a statement. "We will fight aggressively to prove our innocence." Juszkiewicz said the company, which began more than a century ago and makes some of the world's most prized guitars, has worked with environmental groups such as the Rainforest Alliance to ensure its wood imports are from sustainable sources.

"(The government) has suggested that the use of wood from India that is not finished by Indian workers is illegal, not because of U.S. law, but because it is the Justice Department's interpretation of a law in India," Juszkiewicz said. If the same wood from the same tree was finished by Indian workers, the material would be legal, he said.

In an affidavit, agent John Rayfield of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said U.S. Customs agents in June detained a shipment of sawn ebony logs from India. The paperwork accompanying the shipment identified it fraudulently as Indian ebony fingerboards for guitars and it did not say it was going to Gibson, the affidavit said.

In July, agents observed Indian ebony and rosewood delivered to a storage facility for Gibson, according to the affidavit, which asked permission to seize Gibson's business computers. Gibson plants also were raided in 2009, when agents confiscated ebony imported from Madagascar.

www.trust.org

USA: E.P.A. Bans Sale of Tree-Killing Herbicide

The Environmental Protection Agency banned the sale of Imprelis, a weed killer introduced this year that landscapers link to thousands of tree deaths around the country. DuPont, which held discussions with the E.P.A. on the herbicide, suspended sales of the product last week and announced plans for a refund program. The company already faces lawsuits from property owners who lost numerous trees after landscapers began applying Imprelis to lawns and golf courses this spring.

A spokesman for the E.P.A., Larry Jackson, said the agency acted because data provided by DuPont showed that at least three types of evergreens — balsam fir, Norway spruce and white pine trees — were susceptible to damage or death from Imprelis. In a statement, the agency said it was investigating whether the widespread tree deaths resulted from misuse of the weed killer, inadequate warnings or directions on the product's label, its persistence in soil and plant material or other factors.

Kate Childress, a spokeswoman for DuPont, said that the data mentioned by the E.P.A. indicated vulnerability only when the three tree species were exposed to "extreme conditions" in tests. "We did them to understand the tolerance and sensitivity of these species under extreme conditions," she said. Those tests were conducted before the product was approved by the E.P.A. last fall, she added. Whether the product will return to the market after the agency's review is unclear.

Only turf and landscaping professionals were allowed to buy or apply Imprelis. While it has been highly effective at killing clover and broad-leafed weeds like dandelions, landscapers say, nearby evergreens in many cases began dying within weeks of the first applications. Some agricultural experts have suggested that the tree toll could reach into the hundreds of thousands. Landscapers had initially welcomed the herbicide, which was marketed as an environmentally friendly product that did not, for example, pose risks to animals. However, state environmental officials in New York did not approve its use because in tests the herbicide did not bind with soil and seeped into the groundwater.

The national law firm Parker, Waichman and Alonso has filed a dozen lawsuits against DuPont over the tree deaths in federal courts across the Midwest, and more are pending. "We expect at the end of the day there's going to be more than a billion dollars of damage or as much as several billion," said Jordan Chaikin, a partner in the firm. "You are talking about a lot of people who have dead trees 40 to 50 feet tall, 30 or 50 years old that each cost $20,000 or $25,000 to replace."

Imprelis has also caused concern among composters. DuPont warns in its instructions that grass clippings treated with Imprelis should not be composted because the chemical does not break down. "You have to ask why the E.P.A. would allow a chemical out there that doesn't break down," said Dan Sullivan, the managing editor of BioCycle Magazine. "It could be a problem for months or years to come."

www.nytimes.com

Vietnam: Authorities call a halt to illegal, failing Dak Lak forestry projects

Authorities in the Central Highlands province of Dak Lak have so far this year withdrawn the licences they issued to 18 rubber farming and afforestation projects on various grounds. The three main grounds were lack of financial capability, illegal acts, and land grab by local farmers.

Most of them were in the districts of Ea Sup, Ea H'Leo, and Krong Nang, People's Committee chairman Lu Ngoc Cu said. The projects that were scrapped on grounds of legitimacy had either been illegally sold by the original licensees or the investor did not carry on the business licensed for. One of the latter was a project by Loc Phat Company and Hoang Nguyen Company to grow rubber and forests on hundreds of ha. But they used the land allotted to them for building residential and commercial areas, Cu said.

The administration also decided to scrap rubber farming licences issued to companies that lack the financial capacity to carry on. They include Phu Vinh, Tran Canh, Cari Lan, Dai Hung, and Phu Rieng, mostly in Ea Sup, Krong Nang, and Ea H'Leo. Some licensees were also unfortunate to lose lands allotted to them to local farmers.

Thuan Thien Company was one such victim. It had been permitted by the Dak Lak People's Committee to do a feasibility study for a rubber farm in Ea H'Leo District's Don Commune but by the time it was ready for the study, the majority of the land had been illegally occupied. Cu blamed this on weak oversight by local authorities, shortage of forest protection personnel, and the lack of strong deterrents. Since 2008 local and outside companies have managed to develop 85 rubber and afforestation projects on a total area of over 67,885 ha.

vietnamnews.vnagency.com.vn

World: The forest companies of the future

Forests could increasingly act as a backbone of sustainable economies. Companies that recognise this can advance their own bottom line, and help ensure that forests thrive. Forests can provide a multitude of renewable goods and services and forward thinking companies will realise this opportunity.

Over the past 150 years, industrialisation has taken its toll. All too often, forests have been sacrificed in the face of expanding business and national interests. In the future, forests could act as a backbone of sustainable economies by providing a multitude of renewable goods and services. The successful forest companies of the future will recognise this opportunity, use it to advance their own bottom line, and help ensure that forests survive and thrive.

Climate change, population growth, and soaring demand for food, energy, water and other resources are changing the way the world sees and values forests. A vision is emerging of a new kind of company – the forest services company.

Our vision is being propelled by new markets that are emerging for forest services such as carbon storage, wildlife preservation, recreational facilities and watershed protection. This trend is creating huge business opportunities for forest companies with the foresight to reinvent themselves and look beyond the traditional equation of forests equal timber.

Forest companies of the future will expand their business model beyond delivering products to providing an array of crucial services to communities. Timber revenue will still be important, but successful companies will have supplemented their income from the fast-growing new markets that emerge from the increasing scarcity of ecosystem services.

Why should forest management companies diverge from a seemingly successful business strategy to follow the services route? For the reason CEOs like best – it makes good business sense. Multiple global forces are converging in a perfect storm, creating a new operating context.

Climate Change: Trees not only capture and store carbon, they also produce fossil fuel substitutes (such as biomass) and provide flood control and water regulation services, helping reduce the impacts of climate change. The transition to a new era in forestry will be underpinned by the climate change imperative.

Rising demand for renewable energy and materials: Limited supply and rising prices of fossil fuels, concerns about energy security and climate change are reviving demand for renewable wood-based energy and materials. The European Union, for one, has pledged to boost biomass energy consumption, stimulating the market.

Restoring nature's fraying services: Many of the services provided by forests have been degraded, including water purification, erosion control and flood control. This can create serious problems downstream as ports and hydro-dam reservoirs become silted up, fresh water supplies become degraded, and flash floods become more frequent. In response, there is a growing need to increase funding for restoring ecosystem services and the public benefits they provide.

Increasingly urban population eager to enjoy nature: With most of the world's population now living in cities, forests fulfil a growing demand for recreational, educational and spiritual escape. At the same time, city planners are increasingly interested in the role urban forests can play in reducing water run-off, improving air quality, curbing noise pollution and providing green space.

In order to meet these growing demands, forests companies must be able to shift from a narrow commodity focus (trees for timber and paper) to a multiple ecosystem service strategy.

Sveaskog, Sweden's largest forest company, is doing exactly that. Approximately 15% of annual net sales comes from biomass for energy and non-timber services such as windfarm leases and hunting and fishing licences. In addition, Sveaskog is managing one-fifth of its land for conservation and promotion of biodiversity. The company is also experimenting with ways to maximise carbon uptake through different forest management measures and plans to sell the additional uptake to carbon markets. In 20 years, Sveaskog expects its current sales share of 15% from biomass and different kinds of non-timber services to have doubled.

Other major companies are similarly shifting focus to incorporate services. Plum Creek, the largest US private landowner, has about a third of the company's 7m acres of timber lands under revenue-generating conservation and wildlife protection agreements. Mondi, a leading international paper and packaging group, recently identified opportunities to tap into growing markets for biomass and ecotourism through a review of ecosystem services at three of its South African plantations.

The shifting nature of forest companies is a win-win opportunity for governments as well, creating new jobs in struggling rural areas and improving the quality of life for urbanites.

But three interconnected conditions are needed to transform the forest sector as a whole. First, sceptics in the industry need to see more first-movers, who can point to positive balance sheets from non-timber services. Second, the industry needs clear signals from governments that they recognise the role of forests in combating climate change. Third, to truly transform the industry, more countries will need to adopt policies that value ecosystem services and put a price on carbon to mitigate climate change. Sweden, for example, introduced a carbon tax that transformed the country's energy sector, boosting biomass.

We are betting that these three conditions will be met over the next decade, setting the stage for a transformation of the global forestry industry.

www.guardian.co.uk

World: Model works out trees' maximum height

Scientists have developed a mathematical model that predicts the maximum height trees can reach in particular environmental conditions. They hope their model will help ecologists get a better understanding of the relationship between trees and the surrounding ecosystem. The tool could also help policymakers calculate how climate shifts could affect timber yields, they added. The findings have been published in the journal Plos One.

"The real goal of the model was to produce something that was based in fundamental mechanisms," explained co-author Chris Kempes, a PhD researcher from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Department of Earth, Atmosphere and Planetary Sciences. "This looks at the basic physics affecting a tree, such as internal fluid flow and the structure of the canopy," he told BBC News. "We really wanted something that was based in those mechanisms but at the same time was, conceptually, relatively simple."

He said tree branches formed a fractal, which meant that if you effectively cut off a branch and then enlarged it, it looked like a whole tree. "If you nail down that network structure correctly, then you can use it to predict how things change with size." From this framework, the team then incorporated local meteorological data, such as rainfall and mean annual temperatures, to allow them to predict the maximum height of trees in the area.

The model was based on a "generalised tree" and did not take into account traits of particular species. Interestingly, the model was based upon an "idealised" tree – one that was designed to represent all tree species, and was not adapted to reflect the type of tree being modelled. "If we are making a prediction in the North-West, where there is a lot of rain and very tall trees, or if we are making a prediction in the South-West, we don't actually change the model in terms of species traits," Mr Kempes said. "Our 'test tree' that we use to make these predictions remains the same across environments."

The team also used the model to look at what would happen to maximum tree heights if there was a change in the national mean annual temperature. They found that a 2C (3.6F) increase resulted in the average maximum height of trees shrinking by 11%, while a 2C decrease in the nation's average temperature saw a 13% increase in the predicted maximum height of trees.

Mr Kempes observed that this sort of prediction could be useful for policymakers who wanted to know what sort of impact climatic shifts would have on the country's forests. "[The model] might help inform any number of policies in terms of how much you could expect timber yields to change," he said. He added that the model was likely to work in other regions of the world, not just in the US.

The team hope to develop the model in a way that will allow them to predict the potential height of particular tree species. "If you take a really small juniper tree that lives in the desert and you put it in the North-West, it will grow to perhaps four times as tall, but it won't grow to be the height of a redwood. "This is what all of ecology is interested in: how much of your existence is determined by the environment verses your genetics?"

www.bbc.co.uk

U.K.: Beavers fell one in ten trees at trial site 'changing structure of woods' Premium

Beavers released into the wild in Scotland have gnawed down one in ten trees in their trial area, a new study has revealed. Scottish Natural Heritage has been monitoring the impact of the large rodents in Knapdale Forest, Argyll, and has discovered they have changed the structure of the woodland. A recent report showed that 17 months after their release about 10 per cent of trees were showing signs of beaver activity – most being felled. The beavers feed on bark, twigs, shoots and leaves and also use the material for building lodges and dams. The researchers discovered they have a particular taste for willow and rowan and tend to avoid alder.

The research, carried out by the James Hutton Institute on behalf of SNH, found the average size of trees felled was 5cm in diameter, but the largest were 30cm. Being felled does not mean the death of the tree – 44 per cent have already sprouted new growth. The report, The Scottish Beaver Trial: Woodland monitoring 2010, will help the Scottish Government decide whether the mammal should be permanently brought back to Scotland.

Beavers, which had been extinct in Scotland for 400 years, were reintroduced in May 2009 as part of a five-year trial run by the Scottish Wildlife Trust and the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, hosted by Forestry Commission Scotland. The Scottish Wildlife Trust revealed yesterday that two more beaver kits had been born at the trial site, but one had died after it was attacked by a predator, possibly a fox. Currently there are 12 beavers in the wild at Knapdale - four fewer than the 16 originally released at the site. Four have been born over the past two years, but eight have either died or have gone missing and are presumed dead.

A critic of the project, Robin Malcolm, who owns a 2,000-hectare farm next to the trial site, said nearby trees had been "savaged". He said: "They eat the bits that are juicy and palatable and leave the rest to rot. It's not a pretty sight." He added that he thought it was "cruel" on the beavers to bring them to Scotland where so many had ended up dying. "It would have been much kinder to let them live their gentle lives in Norway."

However, Roisin Campbell-Palmer, Scottish Beaver Trial field operations manager, said the death of the young kit was an "inevitable part of any animal reintroduction. We're extremely pleased to have a successful wild birth again, and all indications for future breeding are extremely positive," she said.

Martin Gaywood, who leads the independent scientific monitoring of the trial for SNH said: "This trial will give the Scottish Government the information it needs to decide whether beavers should be reintroduced on a wide-scale in Scotland.

www.Scotsman.com

Brazil calls upon the President to veto 'retrograde' changes to forest law

Brazil's lower parliament has passed a batch of reforms to the existing forest code, which BirdLife Partner SAVE Brazil has called "a monster which will have significant impact over deforestation for the next 50 years". The reforms ease restrictions on clearing forests along rivers and on hilltops, and provide amnesties for small landholders who illegally cut down forest prior to 2008.

"This is a truly a huge loss and disappointment to all of us, who have been fighting against the changes," said SAVE Brasil's Director, Dr Jaqueline Goerck. "We wrote a technical article arguing against the changes, which was published and sent to the government. All data shows that the old code was appropriate, with minor changes needed."

The changes are also opposed by Brazil's current and former Ministers of the Environment. Jaqueline Goerk says the unification of such a group from various political parties towards a single objective is without precedent in Brazil. All ten of the people who have held this post since the Ministry was created have sent a letter to President Dilma and to members of Congress, urging them to reject the reforms, which they describe as a "retrograde step".

They say the code "has been the single most relevant institutional basis for the protection afforded to forests and all the other forms of natural vegetation in Brazil, as well as protecting the biodiversity associated with them, the water resources they protect, and the ecological services that they provide."

www.birdlife.org