



Annex 2

FAO Committee on Forestry inputs to High-level Political forum 2019

“Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”

Goal 4. Quality education; **Goal 8.** Decent work and economic growth; **Goal 10.** Reduced inequalities; **Goal 13.** Climate action; **Goal 16.** Peace, justice and strong institutions; **Goal 17.** Partnerships for the Goals.

The Committee on Forestry (COFO) is the highest FAO statutory body in forestry, open to all Member Nations. Various stakeholders, including international organizations, and non-governmental partners can also participate in its work.

The Committee biannually reviews the situation of forests and forestry worldwide; advises the FAO Council on matters pertaining to the priorities, programmes and budgets of the Organization, and the FAO Conference on global policy and regulatory matters, in its areas of mandate; and provides guidance for its members on promoting the sustainable management of the world's forests. COFO works closely with six **FAO Regional Forestry Commissions** (Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Near East, North America), representing a concrete example of global-regional policy dialogue and programme coordination. COFO also coordinates with other Technical Committees of FAO, including through aligning agendas, discussing common items and developing coordinated recommendations for Member Nations and the organization.

The 24th session of COFO examined forests' contributions to the SDGs, based on the analysis presented in the 2018 edition of [the State of the World's Forests \(SOFO\)](#). The key findings of SOFO were also presented in a special event held during the 2018 HLPF session in New York. The Committee further benefitted from the recommendations of a major international conference, the International Conference: Working across Sectors to Halt Deforestation and Increase Forest Area - from Aspiration to Action organized by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and hosted by FAO, on working across sectors to halt deforestation and increase forest area. COFO also considered the policy recommendations of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) regarding the role of forests in food security and nutrition.

I. Progress and challenges

- While positive developments were observed during recent years in relation to the slowing pace of deforestation, forest degradation continued to increase. (Up-to-date information on the world's forest resources and their multiple benefits will be available



through the FAO [Forest Resources Assessment 2020](#).) Many drivers of deforestation and forest degradation lie outside the forest sector and are rooted in wider social and economic issues, including challenges related to poverty, urbanization, and policies that favor land uses which produce higher and more rapid financial returns, including energy, mining, transportation, and especially agriculture. Effective cross-sectoral collaboration, policy and programme coordination are needed to successfully address these drivers and managing trade-off between sectors. Establishing or enhancing such collaborations is a continuing challenge, and requires a step-wise approach and strong political commitment.

- It is widely agreed that forests and trees contribute directly or indirectly to all SDGs, however the exact nature and dimension of these contributions have yet to be understood and to the extent possible, quantified. This would be an important measure to establish the needed cross-sectoral collaboration or strengthening it further on areas where it already exists. SOFO 2018 made the first comprehensive efforts to present a picture in this regard and allowed COFO to develop evidence-based policy recommendations for strengthening and accelerating the implementation of SDGs.

Key messages and policy recommendations for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda

- Based on the findings of SOFO 2018 and other reports, the Committee:
 - Noted that the impacts of forests and trees go well beyond SDG15 and that quantitative evidence proves that they contribute to achieving SDGs relating to livelihoods and food security for many rural poor, access to affordable energy, sustainable economic growth and employment, sustainable consumption and production, and climate change mitigation, as well as sustainable forest management;
 - Emphasized that urgent actions are needed to sustain the world's forests;
 - Recommended that actions on forests, agriculture, food, land use, rural and national development must be integrated in the future;
 - Stressed that forests' and trees' full contribution to the SDGs should be well understood and properly monitored at all levels so that informed decisions can be taken for calculating incentives, managing trade-offs, investing in technology and innovation and determining the level of support needed for the different sectors of the economy.
- **Policy recommendations** arising from COFO's deliberations:
 - **SDG 4 Quality education**
 - Forestry education in all forms and at all levels, as well as education of consumers of forest products about sustainability in all of its three dimensions should be strengthened.



- The potentials of forestry education in addressing gender equality in the forest sector and in society in general should be fully exploited.
 - Investment in training, capacity-building and the development of producer organizations should be supported to help understand the importance of sustainable management and persuade young people to see the value of making a living by the forest and resist uncertain migration.
 - Climate change education is an essential component of climate action, helping young people understand and address the impacts of and adapt to climate change-related trends should be strengthened. Such education should include mitigation and adaptation, with the aim of promoting climate-resilient development.
 - Education programmes should promote the understanding of causes and effects of climate change, as well as the development of possible responses from a cross-curricular and multidisciplinary perspective.
- **SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth**
 - Investments, sustainable value chains and enabling frameworks need to be created or strengthened to unlock forests' contributions to enhancing economic growth and decent employment in particular in the following areas:
 - empowering women and youth by enhancing their rights, increasing their income and employment;
 - helping formalize the informal sector by increasing economic activity, improving employment conditions and fostering a more sustainable approach to forest management. Although appearing to be local, the impacts of these actions can stretch from forest to farm to town to city.
 - **SDG 10 Reduced inequalities**
 - Develop policies and promote, as appropriate, forest tenure rights of poor and vulnerable, including local and indigenous communities, landless farmers, rural women and youth, in accordance with the VGGT¹, as a means to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food, in the context of national food security, taking into account national laws and legitimate tenure rights.
 - **SDG 13 Climate action**
 - Undertake and monitor domestic mitigation efforts in the forest sector including, as appropriate, in the implementation of the respective NDCs;

¹ Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security



- Incorporate forests into National Adaptation Plans, develop policies for adaptation through forests, and take action to improve forest health and to restore degraded forests and landscapes;
 - Increase the resilience of forests and people dependent on forests and promote the involvement of stakeholders, including rural and indigenous communities, which depend on forests for food and survival, in climate actions;
 - Contribute to enhancing the role of the private sector in forest related actions, including the promotion of responsible investments that are consistent with the conservation and sustainable use of forests.
- **SDG 16 Peace justice and strong institutions**
- Effective partnerships and private sector engagement need to be established for integrating forests into sustainable development strategies. Clear legal frameworks, community engagement and coherent policy measures that balance stakeholder interests should be part of the enabling environment. Policies must be geared towards incentivizing companies and small producers to engage in sustainable forest management, addressing potential barriers to investment and removing motives for clearing forests.
 - The institutional framework should encompass local communities, civil society organizations and responsible private sector interests, as well as government departments and agencies. FAO should continue to strengthen the capacity of government institutions and of local communities to integrate food security and nutrition objectives into their sustainable forest management practices.

III. **Successful experiences and lessons learned on HLPF theme**

- Experiences show that landscape-scale approaches for integrating forestry, agriculture and other goals such as watershed management and climate resilience can be very efficient, however, these need to be adopted to local regulatory, institutional and social frameworks. The need for reconciling a broad landscape-scale approach with a fully decentralized one that empowers local communities and villages, as well as the need to overcome these difficulties through cooperation between community groups and authorities operating on a landscape scale should be duly recognized.
- Country experiences show that a strong enabling environment is needed to strengthen the contributions of forests and trees to the SDGs. A mix of regulatory approaches, economic incentives and education and social marketing programmes (aimed at behaviour change) appear to work best. Although each factor is necessary, neither one is sufficient, and their composition should be determined according to national conditions.



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



- Good understanding and solid information on the value and volume of the multiple products and services from forests and trees can be instrumental in moving the focus from the productive functions and help incorporate forests' contributions to broader developmental policies and programmes. Success rate is higher in countries where scientific and technical support and solid data are available to support the related decisions.
- The particular relevance of forest-based solutions lies in the fact that people left furthest behind are often located in and around forests. Evidence points to around 40 percent of the extreme rural poor - 250 million people - living in forest and savannah areas. Access to forests' goods and services is vital for the livelihoods and resilience of the poorest households, acting as a safety net in difficult times. Some studies suggest that forests and trees may provide around 20 percent of income for rural households in developing countries, both through cash income and by meeting subsistence needs. Non-Wood Forest Products provide food, income, and nutritional diversity for an estimated 1 in 5 people around the world, notably women, children, landless farmers and others in vulnerable situations. Harnessing the potentials offered by forests and trees can provide immediate solutions for implementing the principle of "ensuring that no one is left behind".