

FRR



FRR – Making the Best Use of our Forests

Forests cover 30% of the world's land surface: 0.6 hectares (ha.) for everyone on the planet. Forests play a vital role in our economic, social and environmental needs, annually supplying 160 billion tonnes of paper pulp, 190 billion tonnes of industrial round wood and 2 trillion tonnes of fuel wood... and rising. We also use huge amounts of non-timber forest products and depend on forests to protect our land and homes.

And all this is before we consider the richness those forests bring to our environment and their vital role within our planet's "carbon cycle" and climate.

THE FOREST POLICY ENVIRONMENT

At the heart of most forest policies is the desire for sustainable management, with protection for special areas. However, results have not matched policy objectives. During the 1990s alone, global forest cover fell by 9.4% (335m ha.). One reason is the difficulty governments have in implementing policies. Why?

Policy matters. Ultimately, policies and priorities must make sustaining a forest more valuable than eroding it.

Economic development opportunities, regulation, incentives and the needs of the population are all critical. This mix of factors influences the behaviour of loggers, communities, politicians and conservationists. In general though, good policy succeeds where rules are followed. Deforestation often occurs where they are not.



MANAGING FORESTS

There are four main categories of forest:

- Natural forests
- Plantations
- Protected forests
- Social forests.

Each type offers different opportunities and demands different policy responses.



NATURAL FORESTS

As long as a forest's resources are worth more when unsustainably managed, hunted or gathered, or when converted to other uses, there will be pressure on natural forests.

Sustainable forest management is easy to prescribe, but hard to deliver. However, technical and domestic policy solutions are now being backed by international initiatives focusing on market mechanisms, international trade regulation and bilateral and multi-lateral agreements.

PLANTATIONS

Plantations increased during the 1990s by 45m ha's - principally in SE Asia and South America - driven by growing demand from developing economies. Asia's demand for wood products will triple between 2000 and 2015.

Plantations provoke mixed feelings. Managed well and using the right species, they generate wealth and relieve natural resources. Conversely, they are often less environmentally diverse. On balance, however, both economists and environmentalists recognise them as an important part of the "solution".

PROTECTED FORESTS

By 2050 there will be 1.2 billion ha. of protected forest. Conserving forests can enrich us all when part of a coherent land use strategy, but it is important to understand what needs to be protected and how to do it.

Law and regulation are the principal vehicles. Other approaches can also prove successful - e.g. ecotourism, and conservation trust funds that compensate people for not using forests for other uses.

SOCIAL FORESTRY

Trees grown in small plots, often on farms, were once commonly dismissed as irrelevant. Together with timber from industrial plantations (e.g. rubber wood) and agroforestry schemes, they are now seen as a major source of future forest produce supply and conservation in densely populated areas - contributing timber, fuel, fodder, fruit, shade and more.

WHAT HAPPENS IN FORESTS IS GREATLY INFLUENCED BY WHO MANAGES THEM

Government

Well resourced, well managed state agencies, with clear objectives and control over their resources, can produce impressive results. However state forests often suffer from the difficulties that government management brings - especially when public agencies are under-resourced. This has led some countries to encourage more private sector participation in state-owned forests.

Private Sector

There are many well-managed forests where companies operate sustainably - and reap the rewards. The plantation sector is a particularly good example. On the other hand, private companies are responsible for much of the over exploitation and asset-stripping of the world's forests - the result of ineffective policy management, poor regulation and enforcement

and a drive for short term profits. Sometimes, timber prices may make sustainable forest management nonviable when managed purely on business terms; if the world wants private investment in sustainability, new means of paying for it will have to be found.

Communities

Community forest management - putting management in the hands of those who have most interest in sustaining the forest - is growing. By 2050 an estimated 1.2 billion ha. will be under collaborative or community management. Some exploitation is through hunting and gathering; other communities are being introduced to industrial forestry techniques.

Results are mixed, and some initiatives are too new to be properly assessed. However, the demonstrable success of community projects in Nepal, Mexico and elsewhere illustrates the potential.



WHY FRR?

- FRR works around the world with Governments, businesses, trust funds, NGOs and communities to strengthen their role so that forests can be responsibly managed or conserved.
- Our consulting services are based on a practical forest culture, be it large scale plantations or community level forest management, forest and wildlife conservation or sector-level governance reform.
- FRR's work often focuses on achieving pro-poor outcomes, with a range of approaches to match different environmental, social and governance circumstances.



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