

ITTO Tropical Forest

UPDATE

A newsletter from the International Tropical Timber Organization to promote the conservation and sustainable development of tropical forests



Indicating progress

The founders of ITTO faced a challenge shortly after establishing the Organization in the 1980s. They had negotiated a far-reaching international accord to promote sustainable forest management (SFM) in the tropics, developed guidelines for SFM, and undertaken a ground-breaking study that determined tropical SFM was almost non-existent. But they had no way to measure the progress they hoped and expected would be made in the future towards the Organization's overarching

goal. This gave rise to discussions about the need for a way to measure such progress and ultimately led to the publication of ITTO's *Criteria for the sustainable management of natural tropical forests* nearly 25 years ago.

Over the ensuing years, ITTO has continued to develop its pioneering concept of criteria and indicators for



Inside: Implementing C&I; Africa's PC&I; assessing the pan-European C&I ...

The impacts of criteria and indicators	3
Africa's process for implementing PC&I.	11
Implementing criteria and indicators in Europe	15
ITTO's knowledge management strategy.	18

Regular features

Fellowship report	22
Market trends	26
Recently funded projects	29
Recent editions	30
Topical and tropical	31
Meetings	32



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Images: Progress towards SFM in this Indonesian forest is monitored and reported on using ITTO's C&I. *Photo: T. Bruder* (cover); tree marking for forest management in Peru's Amazon. *Photo: P. Santiago* (above)

SFM. The original *Criteria* published in 1990 evolved into the ITTO criteria and indicators (C&I) a few years later, with the *Revised ITTO criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of tropical forests including reporting format* published in 2005. Throughout this period, ITTO's focus has continued to be on the field-level application of the C&I, to allow countries to assess and report progress towards SFM, and to improve forest management in general. As Caswell points out in this issue in her report on the field-level implementation of C&I, ITTO has devoted around US\$30 million to promoting the implementation of C&I over its history, through nearly 30 national training workshops that have reached over 1500 forest management stakeholders and via projects throughout the tropics to assist with the development and implementation of national-level C&I based on the ITTO framework. ITTO's 2005 and 2011 reports on the *Status of tropical forest management* were largely based on reports submitted using the C&I reporting format.

The utility of C&I as a forest management tool was increasingly recognized by the international community following the UNCED meeting in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Several international C&I processes arose globally, covering different regions and/or forest types. ITTO collaborated with several of these processes, providing ongoing support for those in the producing regions of Africa (see Ahimins' article this issue on the ATO-ITTO PC&I) and Latin America (Tarapoto process). ITTO also collaborated with C&I processes in the developed world, namely the pan-European process (now coordinated by FOREST EUROPE, see article by Inhaizer this issue) and the Montreal Process covering most non-European developed countries with temperate and boreal forests. This collaboration has led to the development of the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire (CFRQ), a joint effort to collect information on forests and forest management under the framework of the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment. The CFRQ brings ITTO together with FAO as well as FOREST

EUROPE, the Montreal Process, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Observatory of Central African Forests (OFAC) in an effort to reduce the reporting burden on countries imposed by the various information requests on forests, and to improve the overall consistency of responses to such requests. The CFRQ was distributed to countries for the first time in 2013 and responses to it will be used in reports to be issued by the partner agencies over the next few years, including ITTO's next *Status of tropical forest management* report.

The proliferation of C&I sets over the past two decades gave rise to criticism that too much attention was being paid to the process of developing the sets and not enough to their implementation. However even in processes where no implementation of the agreed C&I sets ever took place, the process of developing them led to a better understanding and agreement of the concept of SFM and how it can be measured. The process of developing C&I also fed into the deliberations on forestry in the UN General Assembly, contributing to the definition of SFM adopted by that body in 2007.

ITTO will soon embark on another revision of its C&I, taking into account developments in international forest policy over the past decade and the approval and publication in mid-2014 of its *Voluntary guidelines for the sustainable management of natural tropical forests*. This continuing evolution of ITTO's C&I will be accompanied by continued support to countries to implement them in the field, thereby contributing to the sustainable management of tropical forests.

Steve Johnson
 Editor



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 International Day of Forests