

Tropical forests give us clean water, hold soils firm (which helps to reduce landslides), take carbon dioxide out of the air, produce timber and provide habitats for millions of species of plants and animals to live. In addition, the people living in or near tropical forests can turn to this wealth of plants and animals for food, medicine, and materials with which to build their houses. These are all what are called 'forest goods and services'.

If tropical forests give us so many good things, why are they being cleared? In the last few centuries, people have demolished millions of hectares of the world's natural forests, and deforestation, particularly in the tropics, is still going on today. Why is this happening?

The answer is that the land on which natural forests stand is often needed for crops and minerals that produce more income. In many places, agriculture, mining and urban development simply replace the forests - despite their many benefits.



The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) believes that natural tropical forests can be sustained in the face of pressure to convert them to farmland, mines, and towns if the value of these forests is recognized by more people.

In particular, people all over the world need to be prepared to pay a fair price for all the important goods and services produced by tropical forests.

And the forests must be managed sustainably - meaning that production of timber and other goods and services doesn't damage the forest.

ITTO has adopted a clear strategy to promote the conservation and sustainable use of tropical forests. In particular, ITTO:

- ▶ assists tropical countries to manage their forests for the production of timber and other goods and services in a sustainable way - protecting the environment and, at the same time, helping economic and social development;
- ▶ works towards increasing the value of tropical timber and other forest goods and services in the international marketplace, so that forest owners and managers obtain more revenue - and will be encouraged to keep their forests instead of clearing them for agriculture, mining or urban development;
- ▶ assists tropical countries to create networks of protected tropical forest areas; and
- ▶ increases awareness about the importance of forests for the goods and services they provide.



## What is ITTO?

- ▶ ITTO is an intergovernmental organization promoting the conservation and sustainable management of tropical forest resources and the trade of timber legally produced in these forests.
- ▶ ITTO operates under the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA 2006).
- ▶ ITTO is governed by the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) which consists of representatives of all signatory countries of the ITTA.
- ▶ ITTO member countries account for a majority of the global tropical forest area and almost all trade in tropical forest products.
- ▶ ITTO's secretariat is located in Yokohama, Japan; the Government of Japan and Yokohama City have supported ITTO since it became operational in 1986.
- ▶ ITTO is the only United Nations treaty organization with its headquarters in Japan.

## What ITTO does

Highlights of ITTO's work with its members include:

- ▶ drafting and developing policies and policy instruments for sustainable tropical forest use and conservation (these include guidelines, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and other policy frameworks);
- ▶ promoting such policies through field projects, studies, training courses and other activities;
- ▶ funding projects and activities carried out by ITTO members - worth nearly US\$400 million since 1987 (these funds are provided as grants, not loans, so they don't add to the debts of countries);
- ▶ maintaining and improving relations between forest stakeholders, including indigenous and other local communities;
- ▶ collecting, analyzing and disseminating data on the production and trade of tropical timber; and
- ▶ implementing a fellowship program to help human resource development in member countries (more than 1200 fellows have received support for participation in conferences and short training courses, or for postgraduate studies).

## ITTO at work

ITTO formulates policies to achieve ITTA objectives and assists members through supporting projects carried out by the members, or scoping studies put into effect by ITTO. Most are implemented by national and local-level organizations, including those in government, civil society and the private sector. The ITTO Secretariat supervises, monitors and evaluates the field projects under the direction of the International Tropical Timber Council.

ITTO's strategic action plan covers a broad range of issues related to the conservation and management of tropical forests, promoting trade of tropical timber and other forest products, and improving efficiency of the tropical timber industry. For example, a number of projects have established or improved management of transboundary conservation areas, while others aim to undertake value-added timber processing; others are designed to increase the transparency of the tropical timber trade.

## Thematic Programmes

The ITTA 2006 formalized thematic programmes as a mechanism for prioritizing agreed work areas and established a new funding mechanism for these. In 2008, ITTO approved five thematic programmes under which many projects and activities have already been implemented. ITTO continues to undertake fundraising efforts for these thematic programmes and other approved activities to allow the Organization to achieve its objectives of sustaining tropical forests and promoting the timber trade arising from them. The approved thematic programmes are:

*Tropical Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (TFLET)*

*Reducing Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Enhancing Environmental Services in Tropical Forests (REDDES)*

*Community Forest Management and Enterprises (CFME)*

*Trade and Market Transparency (TMT)*

*Industry Development and Efficiency (IDE)*

### Get involved

ITTO's work is primarily funded through governmental agencies of member countries. However ITTO welcomes donations to support its work from all interested parties. Contact us (details below) to find out how to contribute.

## International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

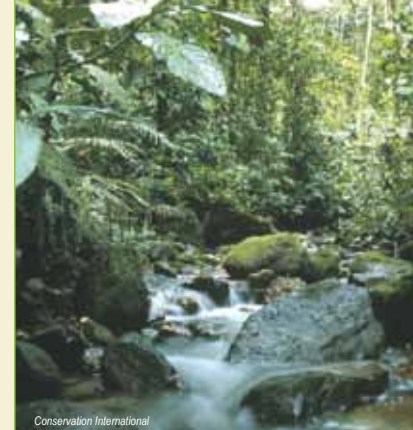
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# Sustaining tropical forests

Most of us take for granted the essentials of life that tropical forests supply. Yes, they give us timber - but also much more.



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