

Forest reform needed in the Philippines

Philippine Forestry Development Forum

2–3 June 2005

Mandaluyong City, the Philippines

This gathering was organised by the Philippine Wood Producers' Association together with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Asian Development Bank, the University of the Philippines at Los Baños College of Forestry and Natural Resources, and the Society of Filipino Foresters, Inc. It comprised a broad cross-section of people from the private sector, national and local government, the scientific and academic communities, and non-government organisations and special-interest groups. The 360 participants came from as far as Kalinga and Apayao in the north, and Davao, Zamboanga and Cotabato in the south. Foreign dignitaries, legislators, and executives of the World Bank and local government banks also made it to the summit.

The forum's theme, 'sustainable forest management: a holistic path to national development', set the tone for an objective and scientifically based discussion of issues affecting the forestry sector. It also emphasised the importance of the sector in national development.

"Sustainable forest management continues to be a key program in the country's journey to protect its precious natural resources," said Michael T. Defensor, Secretary of DENR.

"While helping alleviate poverty and generate employment in far-flung rural areas, it is also a new way of looking at how business may participate in commercial forestry without compromising the environment."

"Forestry remains a vital component in our blueprint for national development, ... playing a significant role in our road to economic recovery," said DENR Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita during the opening plenary.

Interesting and educational scientific, research and best practices papers dominated the two-day conference. Dr Manoel Sobral Filho, ITTO's Executive Director, presented a paper on the role of the timber trade in sustainable forest management, and FAO's Patrick Durst discussed the impacts and effectiveness of logging bans in natural forests in Asia Pacific.

Professor Rex Victor Cruz of the University of the Philippines College of Forestry and Natural Resources presented studies conducted in the Tignoan and Agos watersheds in northern Quezon and Dingalan watershed in Aurora to explain the occurrence of floods and landslides in those provinces. Dr Priscila Dolom, Director of the Forestry Development Center, analysed the economic contribution of the wood industry to sustainable development.

Former DENR Undersecretary Ricardo Umali, CEO of Sustainable Ecosystems International Corporation and president of the Society of Filipino Foresters, presented a paper on the forest-management experiences of the Surigao Development Corporation (SUDECOR), a current holder of a timber licence agreement.

Former Forest Management Bureau director Romeo Acosta updated participants on the latest assessment of Philippine forest resources, while Science and Technology Undersecretary Florentine Tosoro talked about what he called the "urgent need for a road map to forest management and renewal".

Participants at the forum made a number of resolutions, including on the need for comprehensive forestry laws, the categorisation of forest lands into specific production and protection areas, the delineation of forest boundaries and their complete demarcation on the ground, and "the adoption and enforcement of measures to resolve the logging ban issues". The resolutions were to be presented to the President of the Republic of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and other high-level politicians.

The importance of permanent sample plots

International Workshop on Promoting Permanent Sample Plots in Asia and the Pacific Region: The Role of Field Data to Support Silvicultural System and Carbon Sequestration Study in Natural Managed Forests in Asia and The Pacific Region toward Sustainable Forest Management

3–5 August 2005

Bogor, Indonesia

Permanent sample plots (PSPs) play an important role in the monitoring of forest dynamics and long-term growth and yield, and in providing data for the evaluation of ecological models. For silvicultural purposes, PSPs supply data on diameter and volume increment as well as stand structure dynamics. These data are very useful for calculating annual allowable cut (AAC) in a forest management unit. In addition, there has been increasing demand for data and information collected from PSPs for accounting purposes in carbon-sequestration projects; the use of long-term measurements provided by PSPs would increase the profile and credibility of such projects.

These issues were widely discussed at this workshop, which was co-funded by ITTO PROJECT PD 39/00 REV.3 (F) and two CIFOR programs ('forests and livelihoods' and 'environmental services and sustainable use').

The workshop brought together about 60 participants from Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Lao PDR, Japan, Indonesia, France and the Netherlands, including experts from universities, research institutions, NGOs, international projects, private companies, foresters and governmental agencies. Fifteen presentations were delivered.

At the opening ceremony the Indonesian Minister of Forestry, His Excellency M.S. Kaban, stressed that the government's 'soft-landing' policy issued in 2002 was aimed at saving the remaining natural forests by reducing the national AAC. When it came to implementation, however, the policy could not be implemented as it was really intended, partly because of the scarcity of growth data needed to determine the correct AAC. In the absence of these critical data, the policy was implemented in a modified fashion. Ideally, the AAC of each single management unit would be calculated and used in deriving the national AAC.

Also speaking at the opening, CIFOR's Director of Environmental Services and Sustainable Use of Forests, Dr Markku Kanninen, said that other aspects related to PSPs will become more important in the future, including measures to indicate forest health, for instance, and those related to the services provided by forests, such as the provision of water and carbon storage. One of the reasons for convening the workshop was to strengthen collaboration between institutions already working with PSPs with the aim of building a network in Southeast Asia and beyond.

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The buzz on plywood

ITTO/FAO International Conference on Tropical Plywood

26–28 September 2005

Beijing, China

This conference, which was followed by field visits to industrial sites in Beijing and Hangzhou, was attended by close to 200 participants—the vast majority business people—from 31 countries around the world. It proved a great opportunity to make new business contacts and to get updated on the latest trends in tropical plywood production and trade worldwide, with a particular focus on the emerging role of China and why it is competing so effectively. Key presentations were made and panel discussions held on global issues affecting the tropical plywood sector, including production and trade data, emerging trade barriers (including non-tariff trade barriers—NTTBs), technology developments, the raw-material outlook, and the challenging corporate responsibilities of plywood manufacturing.

Conference participants agreed to a series of recommendations that were made in the conference's final statement. It urged ITTO, in collaboration with its member countries, tropical plywood producer and trade associations and relevant national and international agencies, to:

- prepare and help implement national strategies to strengthen the development of tropical plywood industries by, for example, reviewing sustainable sources of wood supply, including from natural forests, plantations and imports from other tropical timber producers, and analysing the private sector's investment opportunities for improving tropical plywood manufacturing and trade;
- enhance the capacities of tropical plywood-producing countries in:
 - implementing sustainable forest management in natural tropical forests and developing appropriate policies/incentives for plantation development
 - developing and providing relevant incentives for increasing product quality and for producing more added-value products
 - knowledge of and compliance with market requirements, such as quality standards, NTTBs, procurement policies and other market access impediment mechanisms
 - promoting the use, image and sustainable trade of tropical plywood;
- assist tropical plywood producer and traders' associations to strengthen their ability to service their members by:
 - improved information-sharing and training on appropriate processing technologies and market information and intelligence
 - helping tropical producers' associations to increase their lobbying capacity and strategies to advance sustainable forest industry development
 - promoting initiatives, such as the development of appropriate codes of conduct, to help tropical plywood producer and trading companies to participate actively on the international stage in meeting their environmental and social corporate responsibilities;

- promote tropical plywood produced from sustainable sources in the international markets, through, among other things:
 - the review of procurement policies and the facilitation of mutual recognition and market access considering discussions under the Doha Agenda of the World Trade Organization
 - in collaboration with other agencies and tropical plywood trade associations, assisting and facilitating discussions and initiatives between tropical plywood producers and consumers to address price volatility, price insurance options and to remediate the lack of market transparency. One option would be to evaluate and reactivate, as appropriate, the listing of tropical plywood on the Shanghai Futures Exchange
 - supporting producer countries to combat illegal logging and its related trade
 - supporting the harmonisation of grading standards of tropical plywood among the markets;
- enhance exchange of information at national, regional and global levels on tropical plywood production and trade between producers, traders and consumers by, among other things:
 - strengthening ITTO's Market Information Service
 - convening at regular intervals (every four years) an international conference on tropical plywood
 - convening expert meetings on specific technical issues
 - conducting in-depth market studies on tropical plywood in major consumer markets
 - conducting comparative studies on the production costs and technologies of tropical and non-tropical plywood in the major producer countries
 - undertaking projects, supporting national seminars and training sessions, and developing relevant publications in ITTO's technical series, etc;
- analyse and promote appropriate financing systems and ways of increasing (private-sector) conditional investment in tropical forests and tropical plywood production;
- in collaboration with the World Customs Organization and relevant trade associations, review the Harmonized System Chapter 44.12 with the aim of revising the listing of tropical species and better defining tropical plywood so as to improve trade statistics;
- in collaboration with relevant agencies (including FAO) and countries, support and improve ongoing forest resource assessment and forest management assessments, especially to qualify and quantify the available timber supply for industrial uses and future trends; and
- make the materials presented at the conference and its proceedings (including translations of a summary of the conference and its recommendations in Chinese, Spanish and French) widely available.

Proceedings of the conference are under preparation and will be published soon. In the meantime, the conference program, presentations and the summary and conclusions are available at www.itto.or.jp. For more information or to receive a copy of the proceedings contact: Paul Vantomme, Assistant Director Forest Industries, ITTO Secretariat, vantomme@itto.or.jp or fi@itto.or.jp; fax 81-45-223 1111