Building the capacity for SFM

An ITTO project has initiated a process to provide more information and training on sustainable forest management in the Peruvian Amazon

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Informed: stakeholders living on the banks of the Amazon and its tributaries should be better equipped to support and implement SFM after training and information provided by an ITTO project.

PERU'S FOREST LAW, which was passed by the country's national congress in 2000, is designed to improve the sustainability of forest management as well as its profitability. One of its key elements is the introduction of forest concessions, which involves the granting of harvesting rights over forests up to 50 000 hectares in size to forest producers for renewable periods of up to 40 years (see *TFU* 13/3 for a detailed examination of the law).

The concession system has been implemented progressively in the Amazon since 2002, with calls for tender having been made in the departments of Madre de Dios, Ucayali, San Martin, Huanuco and, more recently (2004), Loreto. To date, 560 concessions have been granted, covering about 7.5 million hectares.

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However, the process of concession allocation and the subsequent implementation of sustainable forest management (SFM) lacks mechanisms by which users can obtain reliable information on an ongoing basis. Although efforts have been made throughout the country to disseminate and systematize statistical information about the sector through, for example, the Strategic Forest Information Centre (*Centro de Información Estratégico*—CIEF), which was created under INRENA/ITTO PROJECT 27/95 (M), accessibility is still insufficient. Similarly, the country still has much work to do to ensure the availability of people with the required education and training to implement SFM according to standards and guidelines established by law.

Building an information system

ITTO PROJECT PD 178/02 (F): 'Information and training program for sustainable forest management in the Peruvian Amazon region', dubbed SIMFOS, was implemented by the Peruvian Amazon Research Institute (*Instituto de Investigaciones de la Amazonia Peruana*—IIAP). Its aim was to increase the availability of information and training on SFM in the Peruvian Amazon. Specifically, it was to provide specialized tools and information to facilitate the exchange of experiences among key forest stakeholders in the region, and to strengthen human resource capacity in the administration and operation of SFM in Amazonian forests.

The project's organizational structure was based on two major components: forest information and forest training.

SIFORESTAL

The main output of the project's forest information component was the design and implementation of the Peruvian Amazon Forest Information System (*Sistema de Información Forestal de la Amazonia Peruana*—SIFORESTAL), with the cooperation of other institutions, including the European Union and Innovation and Competitiveness for

Agriculture Peru (*Innovación y Competitividad para el Agro Peruano*). The objective of this system is to promote, foster and meet the information needs of the forest sector at the national and international levels through the integration of information systems and sources.

The system comprises three information components—SIFORESTAL itself, SFM, and marketing. Each of these components contains several thematic areas: SIFORESTAL addresses forest resources, diversity and natural heritage, the protection and environmental functions of forests, production function, economic contribution, social dimensions, SFM policies and methods, and SFM processes. The SFM component addresses the potential of the Amazon region, markets and marketing, basic forest management principles, legal aspects, SFM consultants and advisors, national and international organizations, SFM criteria and indicators, and voluntary forest certification; and the markets component contains information on companies, legal requirements, markets, prices, products, publications and human resources.

During the initial phase, the system is promoting forest management via the worldwide web. As it is extended to the Loreto region it will use other methods to disseminate market-related information, including radio broadcasting, noticeboards, publications in newspapers and specialized journals, and posters or bulletins. In subsequent project phases, the aim is to reach the whole of the Amazon region through the use of all available media. SIFORESTAL's website can be accessed at www.siforestal.org.pe.

Software for forest surveys and inventories

The project has developed a free software package known as AMAZON FOREST to help forest professionals to process their forest survey and inventory data. The versatility of this program allows statistical information to be transferred to the Arc View software program, which has applications in geographic information systems. It is expected that the system will save a lot of time and money in the processing of statistical information and that these benefits will flow on to users requiring these services.

Training in SFM

The project organized training events that benefited a total of 203 individuals. The first workshop/course on SFM administration was divided into two training modules and held on 24–29 May 2004 in Jenaro Herrera, Iquitos. The target beneficiaries of this workshop were 135 forest managers, concessionaires and forest permit- and contract-holders, and 36 forest professionals responsible for the formulation of forest management plans. The second event was a one-week workshop on reduced impact logging held in Pucallpa. This was attended by 32 forest professionals, concessionaires and mid-level technicians (operators, tractor drivers and chainsaw operators). The topics covered included forest harvest planning, the opening of roads and tracks, directional felling techniques, log skidding, recording systems, yields, costs, the maintenance of logging equipment and machinery, and work safety procedures. One of the important outputs of these events has been the identification of unsatisfied training needs and the lack of institutions with the capacity to provide training courses on an ongoing basis and, in particular, to monitor the impacts of such activities.

Technical mission to Bolivia

Another project output was the implementation of a technical mission to Bolivia on 4–8 October 2004, with the participation of 15 entrepreneurs (concessionaires) and professionals from the private and public sectors from five Amazonian departments. The aim of the mission was to observe the achievements and progress made in the forest concessions of Bolivia—several of which are independently certified—and to use these as a benchmark to consolidate the concessions process in Peru. The result of this visit was the submission of proposals aimed at improving the management of Peru's forest administration.

Technical publications

The project produced several technical documents that will be very useful to the managers of our Amazonian forests. These have been distributed in print form and can also be obtained from the SIFORESTAL website.

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The immediate agenda

The project has made a start in meeting the great demand for information on and training in the management and utilization of forest resources in the Peruvian Amazon. However, these efforts are not sufficient for achieving SFM throughout the Amazon. The project implementing agency—IIAP—has undertaken to ensure the sustainability of the forest information system developed by the project, and this will be further strengthened by the establishment and operationalization of the Forest Training and Research Centre of the Peruvian Amazon Region (*Centro de Investigación y Capacitación Forestal de la Amazonia Peruana*—CICAFOR). It is hoped that the Peruvian forest sector can thus establish the basis for achieving sustainable development in the medium and long terms. However, the continued support of responsive financing bodies such as ITTO is essential to ensure the sustainability of forest management in the Peruvian Amazon.