

# ITTO Tropical Forest

## UPDATE

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



## Regeneration

Just as tropical forests renew themselves, so has ITTO. On 7 December 2011, the International Tropical Timber Agreement 2006 entered into force, ushering in a new era for ITTO. This issue of the *TFU*, the first to be published after the entry into force of the ITTA 2006, celebrates this new beginning. It highlights examples of the types of work that have helped to make ITTO a leader in the promotion of sustainable tropical forest management and that feature prominently in the objectives of the new agreement.

The ITTA 2006 contains several changes that are likely to lead to significant improvements in ITTO's work. The Organization's longstanding philosophy of using tropical forests in a sustainable way for economic

development is stated explicitly in the new agreement. Its two key objectives are to promote:

- the expansion and diversification of international trade in tropical timber from sustainably managed and legally harvested forests; and
- the sustainable management of tropical timber producing forests.

Related to the first objective, the Organization will, among other things, help improve the competitiveness of wood products relative to other materials, boost the marketing of tropical



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**Images:** Mahogany seedling emerging from forest floor (cover); Mahogany sapling in forest clearing (above). *Photos: J. Grogan*

timber from sustainably managed and legally harvested sources, and share information on certification and other aspects of the international timber market.

In pursuit of the second key objective, the Organization will help countries to improve forest law enforcement and governance, address illegal logging and related trade in tropical timber, and undertake sustainable forest management and forest restoration. It will also strengthen the capacity of countries to gather and report data on the tropical timber trade and forest management. The ITTA 2006 also acknowledges the role of ITTO in assisting countries to pursue sustainable development and alleviate poverty and encourages forest-dependent indigenous and local communities to achieve sustainable forest management.

ITTO relies for much of its work on funds contributed on a voluntary basis, up to now mostly by the governments of Japan, Switzerland, the United States, Norway and the European Union. To help boost such contributions the new agreement creates a sub-account for thematic programs, which, some donors say, will lead to increased funding for specific areas of work. The Organization has been implementing four thematic programs on a pilot basis over the past several years, with mixed levels of support from donors. It is hoped that funding for these and new thematic programs will increase under the ITTA 2006.

The ITTA 2006 will help ITTO build on its past sustainable development successes. ITTO believes that natural tropical forests can be both conserved for future generations and put to economic use to alleviate poverty and contribute to national development. The new agreement articulates this belief and gives material support to it through innovative funding mechanisms. While many people think that conservation of tropical forests and the development of the tropical forest products trade are mutually exclusive, each is in fact essential for the other. Without conservation there can be no long-term trade; without trade, the forests will be cleared for agriculture because, one way or another, the people living in tropical countries will continue to demand

economic development. ITTO's role has been, and will continue to be, to help governments, companies and communities to improve the management of their forests and the marketing of their products to achieve a sustainable balance between conservation and development.

ITTO and its members will face many challenges in implementing the ITTA 2006. Although membership in the Organization has grown under the new agreement, several key tropical forest countries have yet to complete membership procedures (although most important countries have indicated they intend to join the Organization). Adequate funding for the Organization's work also remains a serious concern: ITTO's Strategic Action Plan for 2013-2018 includes fund mobilization targets of nearly \$35 million per year over its 6-year duration to meet the Plan's ambitious goals, four times the average annual voluntary funding to ITTO in recent years. The issue of funding (both multilateral and bilateral development assistance, as well as domestic resources) will be a key determinant of the progress that ITTO and partners can make towards sustainable tropical forest management. The ITTA 2006 will operate for a period of ten years, with the possibility of extensions of up to eight years. The extended duration (more than double that of previous ITTAs) will give the Organization time to work with member countries and other partners to meet these challenges and others that will inevitably arise during the life of the agreement.

This is also a regeneration of sorts for the *TFU*, publication of which ceased during 2012 due to a lack of funding. ITTO is pleased to re-launch its flagship quarterly newsletter with this issue. The *TFU*'s future is now guaranteed with funding from the Organization's administrative budget. The editorial team has been strengthened with the inclusion of former editor Alastair Sarre on a consulting basis and ITTO's new Communications and Outreach Officer, Ramon Carrillo. We look forward to working together to inform our readership and the world of the important work being undertaken by ITTO and others to sustain tropical forests.

Steve Johnson  
 Editor