



Forum tackles critical financing issues

Asia-Pacific Tropical Forest Investment Forum

6–8 August 2007

Bangkok, Thailand

This forum was one of four that ITTO has convened throughout the tropics under its 2006–07 Work Program. The event, which was hosted by Thailand's Royal Forestry Department and organized in collaboration with its Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Food and Agriculture Organization's Regional Office for Asia-Pacific, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the World Bank, brought together over 100 participants to discuss issues critical to tropical forest finance.

The three-day session consisted of presentations and question and answer sessions on how investment in tropical plantation forests has outpaced investment in natural tropical forests and current forest investment trends in the Asia-Pacific region. Key themes from the forum related to public and private finance schemes, including those in conservation areas, carbon markets, community forestry and ecotourism. In particular, participants questioned how to strengthen dialogue between stakeholders on forest investment and how governments could restructure international policy guidelines to maximize investment opportunities while meeting conservation objectives. Participants also called for improving investment guidelines and methodologies for forest investing. Finally, they posed a number of ideas on how the region could benefit from payment for ecosystem services schemes and developments in carbon markets.

The event stimulated new ideas and will serve as a basis for future work by ITTO and its members on forest investment. In particular, forum attendees noted that tropical forest conservation and afforestation projects held promise for attracting greater finance. Some participants, however, queried whether such projects were compatible with measures to implement sustainable forest management over the last two decades. Participants will continue to develop these ideas and work toward financing solutions for SFM in the tropics at the upcoming 43rd Session of the International Tropical Timber Council meeting in Yokohama, Japan and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's 13th Conference of the Parties in Bali, Indonesia.

The report of the forum will be available on the ITTO website (www.itto.or.jp) in November.

Taking stock and moving forward

DENR/FAO/ITTO Regional Workshop on Improving Forest Law Compliance and Governance in Southeast Asia

11–13 September 2007

Manila, the Philippines

Organized by the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), a regional workshop was held during 11–13 September in Manila, Philippines, to promote multi-stakeholder dialogue and the exchange of views among countries in Southeast Asia on the challenges related to improving forest

law compliance and governance, and to agree on tangible and deliverable actions to enhance progress on the ground.

Some 50 representatives from concerned government agencies, NGOs and private sector in 10 countries as well as 14 regional/international organizations actively engaged in panel and plenary discussions and working group deliberations.

The workshop reiterated the aspirations and high-level commitment of the Bali Ministerial Declaration from September 2001 to address illegal logging and its associated trade, and took stock of the ongoing initiatives carried out, among others, by the East Asia Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (EA-FLEG) process, ASEAN Secretariat, Asia Forest Partnership, the EU-FLEGT Action Plan, FAO and ITTO.

Towards a holistic strategy and concrete actions

Any strategy aimed at addressing the problems of illegal logging must be holistic and include a wide range of policy, legal, institutional and technical options designed to: 1) rationalize the policy and legal framework; 2) build institutional capacity; and 3) improve knowledge and information about the forest resources and sector.

These three key elements of an integrated strategic approach to improve forest law compliance and governance formed the framework for the workshop structure and process. Accordingly, the participants were able to identify the major obstacles to improving compliance and governance, formulate concrete recommendations and next steps to surmount these barriers, and specify the roles of different stakeholders in implementing the recommended actions.

Effectively implementing these recommendations would have profound impacts in terms of delivering on the promise of the Bali Declaration and acting as an effective deterrent for future forest crimes. For example, the arrest, prosecution and conviction of major large-scale illegal loggers and/or corrupt government officials, along with seizure and forfeiture of all ill-gotten wealth, would be a major breakthrough for ongoing initiatives to curb illegal logging.

One critical action identified for all stakeholders is to develop strategic alliances for effective resource mobilization to support the implementation of future actions, which includes promoting corporate social responsibility approaches, securing government budget allocations, and obtaining supplementary donor support for transitional arrangements and capacity building.

The participants strongly urged governments to make explicit commitments to implement recommended actions and time-bound next steps at upcoming meetings regarding FLEG, including the 29th ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry Conference (Bangkok, September 2007), in which a ministerial declaration or statement on EA-FLEG is expected to be issued, and a possible second EA-FLEG Ministerial Meeting (anticipated sometime in 2008).

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