

Information Note

ITTO Tropical Forest Fire Expert Group Meeting

- Date:** Thursday, 25 July 2024 (a satellite event of FAO COFO 27)
- Time:** 10:00 am – 5:00 pm CET
- Venue:** Nigeria Room (C215), FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy
- Organizers:** International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), in collaboration with FAO

Background

Wildfire in tropical forests face specific risks and challenges. The shortening of shifting-cultivation cycles, the rise in land-use fires fueled by increased demand for commodities, urban sprawl, and climate change have significantly exacerbated fire risk in the tropics. Fire has always played a natural role in a landscape's ecology, and fire has been used as tool for sustainable land management for centuries by humans. However, the increased severity and incidence of wildfires over the past few decades have caused severe damage to timber, non-timber resources and ecosystem services, biodiversity loss, and resulted in negative impacts on the environment, economies, and human health. Enhanced collaboration and action at both local and global levels are urgently needed to mitigate the impacts of fires in tropical regions. This includes effective capacity building, knowledge exchange, and the development of robust strategies for integrated landscape fire management.

Since the 1980s, ITTO has actively addressed tropical forest fire challenges. Initially focusing on damage assessment and rehabilitation, ITTO later developed and published comprehensive guidance on different aspects of fire management in 1997 through the ITTO Guidelines for Fire Management in Tropical Forests, for use at national and international levels. These guidelines were developed with insights and contributions from experts such as Dr. Johann Goldammer from the Global Fire Monitoring Centre (GFMC) in Germany and Prof. Manan from Indonesia.

Since the development of the guidelines, ITTO has implemented multiple projects on fire in the tropics, in collaboration with country partners, including most recently "Capacity Building on Forest and Land Fire Management in Indonesia," in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, and "Forest Fire Prevention and Response in Tropical Forests and Forest Plantations in Peru," in collaboration with SERFOR. Each project was funded through the generosity of Japan. Evaluations of ITTO fire projects have provided invaluable insights over the past three decades.

Building on this experience, ITTO is collaborating with FAO and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) on a Joint Initiative to promote integrated landscape fire management. Within this framework, ITTO is revising its Guidelines for Fire Management in Tropical Forests (1997) to address new developments in fire prevention, mitigation, suppression, and restoration, as well as changing factors driving fire incidence and behavior in tropical forests, including climate change.

The revised ITTO Guidelines on Fire Management in Tropical Forests will integrate scientific insights, and fire management techniques derived from guidelines and policy frameworks developed after the ITTO Guidelines, notably the WHO/WMO Health Guidelines for Vegetation Fire Events (1999), the FAO Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines (2005) and the Guiding Principles for Adjusting Strategies, Policies, and Management to Global Change presented at the 8th International Wildland Fire Conference in May 2023, as well as those of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Principles of Ecosystem Restoration to Guide the UN Decade 2021-2030.

Objective

Effectively managing landscape fire requires integrated approaches, including robust policies, institutional arrangements, legal frameworks, and stakeholder incentives. These strategies are crucial for preserving ecosystems while addressing the social, economic, and health needs of communities. Additionally, exploring innovative technologies to detect, monitor, and manage fires is imperative.

Specifically, the Tropical Forest Fire Expert Group Meeting aims to:

- Share enabling policies, strategies, best practices, and lessons learned from the implementation of integrated landscape fire management in the tropics.
- Identify the changing drivers of forest fire and factors influencing fire behavior in the different regions of the tropics, as well as challenges specific to the tropics in implementing integrated fire management.
- Review and gather feedback on the implementation of the ITTO Guidelines for Fire Management in Tropical Forests (1997).
- Provide input and discuss key guiding policies, principles, and recommended actions leading to an updated revision of the ITTO Guidelines for Fire Management in Tropical Forests.
- Enhance knowledge and partnerships between existing fire initiatives, including on the FAO-UNEP Global Fire Management Hub.

To ensure productive discussions during the Expert Group Meeting, participants are kindly encouraged to become familiar with the following supporting documents prior to the meeting, particularly the **ITTO Guidelines for Fire Management in Tropical Forests**.

References

1. [ITTO Guidelines for Fire Management in Tropical Forests \(1997\)](#)
2. [ITTO Overview: Voluntary Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forests \(2015\)](#)
3. [ITTO Policy Brief: Guidelines for Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics \(2020\)](#)
4. [FAO Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines: Principles and strategic actions \(2006\)](#)
5. [WHO/WMO Health Guidelines for Vegetation Fire Events \(1999\)](#)
6. [World Bank Policy Note: Managing Wildfires in a Changing Climate \(2020\)](#)
7. [The 8th International Wildland Fire Conference: Landscape Fire Governance Framework \(2022\)](#)
8. [APEC: Prevention of Forest Fires in the Wildland-Urban Interface. Good Practices Guide for Government Institutions \(2023\)](#)