

ITTO to convene plywood conference

As part of its ongoing work to study and promote policies and other measures to increase the competitiveness of the tropical timber industry, ITTO will convene an international conference on tropical plywood in Beijing, China on 26–28 September 2005.

In close collaboration with the private sector, national and regional plywood associations and relevant international organisations, there is a need to assess:

- markets and market share for tropical plywood;
- processing productivity and the profitability of tropical plywood manufacturing;
- marketing knowledge, trade efficiency and transparency in the tropical plywood trade; and
- awareness of the tropical plywood sector regarding the environmental and social responsibilities of their activities.

The conference will tackle these issues through keynote addresses and presentations in four sessions relating to opportunities and challenges of tropical plywood markets, manufacturing, raw-material supply and corporate social and environmental responsibilities.

The conference is open to all interested parties and there are no fees for registration.

More details will be made available on the ITTO website in due course, or contact Mr Paul Vantomme, ITTO Secretariat, itto@itto.or.jp; www.itto.or.jp/live/PageDisplayHandler?pageId=223&id=909

Study tour offered

The Regional Community Forestry Training Centre (RECOFTC) is offering a study tour on 'sustainable livelihoods and community forestry'. The tour, which will take place on 16–23 August 2005 in Thailand, will cost US\$990. Participants can expect to gain real insights into the relationships between people, forests and livelihoods and how local communities are benefiting from forests and forests from people. It will provide an opportunity to explore sustainability in a very practical and 'hands-on' manner and to see how forest-dependent communities utilise forest resources to build resources that allow them to deal with exposure to outside pressures and shocks. The outcomes of the tour will be experiences and knowledge to improve the implementation of community forestry programs in the participants' own countries. Participants will:

- see how community forestry contributes to rural livelihoods;
- learn how local forest management systems have developed to support local livelihoods;

- gain a better understanding of the relationship between people, forests and livelihoods;
- discover how forest management policies and other institutional arrangements can influence community forestry and local livelihood outcomes; and
- be challenged to develop systems for sustainable forests and sustainable livelihoods.

If you're interested contact: *Leela Wuttikraibundit, Capacity Building Program, RECOFTC, Kasetsart University, PO Box 1111, Bangkok 10903, Thailand; Tel 66-2-940 5700; Fax 66-2-561 4880; contact@recoftc.org; www.recoftc.org*

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ITTO was created to assist tropical countries to maintain and improve benefits for their economies and people from the sale of tropical wood in world markets. The Organization has endeavoured to do this in the context of environmentally compatible forest policies. Over the years, environmental considerations have been very much in the forefront of ITTO's work.

For developing nations, the export flow of tropical wood and wood products is an important contributor to national economies in terms of revenues and jobs, and a catalyst for other beneficial services. However, it is not easy to see significant long-term increases in the volumes of tropical wood traded internationally. In quite contrary ways, sustainable forest management and uncontrolled logging mitigate against global increases in tropical log extraction. The fundamental driving force is, of course, the appreciation of the usefulness and versatility of wood in its many forms, to the extent that some tropical countries which once exported timber now have to import some of their needs. Wood has to come from somewhere. Ensuring adequate wood supply is an essential part of ITTO's work.

Strengthening and maintaining ITTO strategies (I believe the adjective 'overarching' is used in ITTO circles) which assist in the creation, management and initial cycle funding of industrial wood plantations would be of benefit to producer member countries. This would reinstate the earnings from timber which some countries have lost. Tree-planting and harvesting would alleviate pressure on natural forest and forest systems. There would be timber to meet internal domestic demand and development as well as provide fuelwood.

A final comment: there is international debate about climate change, and prospects for offsetting atmospheric pollution by carbon-emitting activities through the absorption of carbon dioxide by trees during their early growth. Whatever views are held as to the effectiveness of this carbon equation, it is an avenue which some carbon-emitting organisations wish to follow and which can only be good news for those who want to grow trees. Tree-farming for future wood supply should now rank high among the objectives of ITTO.

Geoffrey Pleydell

Surrey, UK

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