



PRESS RELEASE

New report calls for better forest education to safeguard natural resources

- *Forest education needs to be improved to be able to fulfil local, national and global needs*
- *There is an urgent need for locally relevant, appropriate and inclusive solutions that take into account digital divides, language barriers and a gender and racial/ethnic balance in forest education*
- *Students at all levels need to have better access to forests and outdoor training experience*

ROME, ITALY, 4 October 2022: Education is essential for safeguarding natural resources, including forests, for future generations. This is one of the key messages of a new and comprehensive “Global Assessment of Forest Education” that examines the status of forest education and identifies much needed actions. The assessment, which was jointly carried out by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), was presented on 4 October 2022 in the framework of the 26th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry in Rome, Italy.

The role of forests and trees in countries’ efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is widely recognized, but there is a need for well-trained forest sector workers, entrepreneurs, practitioners, researchers, professionals and policy makers and a well-informed public to maximize the contribution of forests to the SDGs. “Forest education may be a tiny sector among educational branches, but it has the potential to play a much larger role. With a better understanding and alignment among forest-related stakeholders, it can make a difference in attaining the SDGs,” said Alexander Buck, Executive Director, IUFRO.

However, recent literature highlights concerns, that forest education is often not meeting the needs of local communities, the fast-changing labor market, and the importance of forests and of forest managers and policymakers is often under-appreciated. “Our hope is that this report will inform future action to strengthen forest education to the benefit of forests and trees and contribute to the wellbeing of forest-dependent peoples, global society and the planet,” said Gerardo Segura Warnholtz, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO.

The study addresses education and training related to forests, trees outside forests and other wooded land and covers all levels of formal education: primary, secondary, technical and vocational education and training, universities and colleges. It identifies an urgent need for locally relevant, appropriate and inclusive solutions that take into account digital divides, language barriers and a gender and racial/ethnic balance in forest education programs and the workforce. One of the main areas for improvement is to ensure students at all levels better access to forests and outdoor training experience. “High quality and widely available forest education that also includes indigenous and traditional forest-related knowledge is essential for enabling forests and trees to fulfil many of the societal and environmental functions, a key element being ‘fit-for-purpose’ in the forestry sector,” says Sheam Satkuru, ITTO Executive Director.

The report is based on the results of the 2020 Global Forest Education Survey, supplemented by findings of six regional assessment reports on forest education, carried out under the project, “Creation of a Global Forest Education Platform and Launch of a Joint Initiative under the Aegis of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)”, with funding support from the German Federal Ministry for Food & Agriculture (BMEL).

Citation:

Mika Rekola and Terry L. Sharik 2022. *Global Assessment of Forest Education*. Forestry Working Paper No. 32. Rome. FAO



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NOTES TO EDITORS

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The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) is an intergovernmental organization promoting the sustainable management and conservation of tropical forests and the expansion and diversification of international trade in tropical timber from sustainably managed and legally harvested forests. For more information contact itto@itto.int or visit www.itto.int.