

FAO Press Release <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1103556/icode/>  
on CPF conference in Rome, 20-22 February 2018: <http://www.cpfweb.org/93859/en/>

Find out about IUFRO activities at the CPF conference:

<https://www.iufro.org/science-for-policy/article/2018/02/19/working-across-sectors-to-halt-deforestation-and-increase-forest-area-from-aspiration-to-action/>

## Productive and healthy forests are crucial for meeting sustainable development, climate, land and biodiversity goals

Political will and concerted action is needed across all relevant sectors to halt deforestation and increase forest area, says international conference



*Agroforestry system combining trees, pasturage and buffalo in Yanamono, Peru.*

**22 February 2018, Rome** - Maintaining productive, diverse and healthy forests is crucial for achieving [the Sustainable Development Goals](#). However, this can only be accomplished through political will and concerted action across sectors, stakeholders and institutions at all levels.

This is the key takeaway message from [the international conference on halting deforestation](#) and increasing forest area, held by [the Collaborative Partnership on Forests](#) and hosted by FAO, in Rome this week (20-22 February).

Over the course of a three-day discussion 300 participants representing a wide range of government institutions from forestry, agriculture, livestock and environment, as well as the private sector, small producer organizations, civil society, indigenous peoples groups, and research, highlighted the urgency of taking action to accelerate progress towards achieving global development goals and targets related to forests.

## **Integrating forests and agricultural activities**

While global rates of deforestation have halved over the last two decades - from a net annual forest area loss of 7.3 million hectares in 2000 to 3.3 million hectares in 2015 - deforestation and forest degradation still continue at alarming rates, with an estimated 80 percent of forest loss being driven by conversion of forest to agricultural land. Participants highlighted the need to address the drivers of deforestation and degradation while providing sustainable alternatives to local communities for fuel, fiber, fresh water, and food.

Participants stressed that land-use competition between forests and agriculture could be solved by introducing diversified agricultural production systems that integrate trees, crops and livestock with a landscape approach. Restoring landscapes that have become degraded offers such opportunities in addition to responding to challenges such as meeting the food production needs of growing populations. It further ensures sufficient supply of wood fibre to meet the needs of predicted increased demand from a growing global population, where it is critical to stimulate the sustainable production and consumption of forest products, providing value to forests.

Examples include agroforestry systems in which harvestable trees or shrubs are grown among or around crops or in silvo-pastoral systems, combining agriculture, forestry and grazing of domesticated animals in a mutually beneficial way.

Doing so will increase agricultural productivity and resilience, food security and nutrition support incomes of small farmers and improve sustainable management of forests.

The participants also highlighted the need to underpin the stability of livelihoods and the role of forests as providers of ecosystem services by recognizing the many "hidden" values of forests, such as pollination, and by enhancing simple and direct systems of payments for ecosystem services.

## **Enhancing the role of the private sector and youth**

In the final outcome document, experts stressed that the corporate responsibility of agri-business plays a vital role in halting deforestation, which should be supported by international trade instruments favouring deforestation-free commodities. Small producers would also need better access to services, finance and markets.

In this context, the Conference noted that scaling-up finance and investment for sustainable land use and forests requires positive incentives, improved governance, public-private partnerships, innovative financing instruments.

The indispensable role of youth as agents of change was highlighted, and participants underlined the need to strengthen education at all levels as an essential component of building capacity to halt deforestation and increase forest area.

## **The way forward**

The International Conference on Working across Sectors to Halt Deforestation and Increase Forest Area - from Aspiration to Action is the first major technical conference on forests since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the first-ever United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF).

The outcomes of the conference will be channeled to the UN Forum on Forests taking place in May this year, and through it, to [the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#)

that will review progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 15 - Life on Land in July this year.

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