Key Messages and Guidance for Action

Third IUFRO Latin American Congress

12-15 June 2013, San José, Costa Rica

Forests, Competitiveness and Sustainable Landscapes

SUMMARY

This Congress was jointly organized by CATIE and IUFRO as one of the major regional activities of IUFRO. The sponsors of this event were: GIZ/BMZ, RIABM, CUSO, World Bank, CIFOR, FAO, IUCN, and the Finnfor Project of CATIE. Thank you for this support!

IUFROLAT 2013 was a wonderful experience as it brought together a unique range of actors from the natural resources sector of Latin America. The numbers speak for themselves:

- Around 600 participants
- Four keynote addresses
- Approx. 300 scientific papers presented in 53 technical sessions
- Some 182 posters

The type of presentations can be categorized according to the different technical sessions to which they were allocated. These cover a wide array of themes – from the gene to the globe - and give good evidence of what scientists and experts in and outside the Region are currently doing at diverse levels, from land owners and communities to landscapes, countries and the world. Presentations focused on forests in the first place, but landscapes and value chains followed suite. Quite surprisingly, neither climate change nor protected areas were central topics.

Science has been growing over time, and IUFRO World Congresses give us a good idea of its development. More than 30 years ago, for example, congress themes focused on sectorial research and basically covered genetics, silviculture, forest management, forest products and policies. The emphasis then was more on national than on global issues and addressed the individual owners rather than larger groups. As we can now see from the thematic profile of IUFROLAT III, although it is a Latin American event, a great part of the issues that arose were of an international or even global dimension.

IUFROLAT is a milestone as regards the participation of Latin American scientists in IUFRO and its Divisions, Research Groups and Working Parties. It attracted actors from many universities and research centres etc. from within and outside the Region and provided a platform for intensive dialogue during and in between sessions. Agreements were reached and proposals made for a more integral cooperation with partners from both within the Region and other parts of the world.

IUFROLAT 2013 has been a learning event for all. Hundreds of scientists, decision-makers, professionals and students seized the opportunity to participate and learn about latest developments in science, and so did community leaders, managers and forest owners. IUFROLAT

has been a demonstration of the power of international cooperation in all directions: between North and North, North and South, South and North and South and South, all at the same time.

From all this, a series of key messages and guidance for action can be derived:

KEY MESSAGES

- Latin America needs a stronger and more permanent discussion about forests, especially with a view to sustainable development and the importance of forests on a global scale. Forests cannot be seen as islands isolated from the needs of sustainable human development.

- In the Latin American Region, forests are facing major challenges related to deforestation (with record highs in the Region), forest degradation, climate change, poverty, and food security. Further challenges are the loss of genetic resources as well as the loss of irreplaceable social and cultural attributes.

- These problems call for technical, economic, social and political solutions. Therefore it is necessary to improve the science base for decision making. This does not mean that there is not enough science; it is the messages that are not being transmitted well. Development policies need to address the forest-related challenges and require investments into forest research and education as well as international cooperation and networking.

- Statistics (the major reference figures on global, regional and national levels) that are used in the discourse urgently need to be adapted. Year after year, figures are being used the origin of which is often unknown, as is the case with the number of forest dependent people or the rate of species extinction, to name but a few.

- There are clear examples of countries that have managed to achieve substantive objectives by creating a considerable base of renewable natural resources, especially forests that have facilitated important steps of development (Korea, Finland, Costa Rica, Chile and many other countries). This is the result of long-term governmental policies.

- The landscape approach is gaining in importance in the course of time and coincides with the concept of the adaptive mosaic of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and also with another topic of worldwide priority: human security on the basis of building socio-ecological systems.

- This approach has many consequences on the type of actions and, althouhg bidirectional, it should rather be a bottom-up than a top-down approach where local governance is at the centre of landscape organization.

- In the above context, the landscape vision has become stronger both on the global and the regional levels as is demonstrated by concepts such as adaptive watershed management, biological corridors, model forests and other actions that add to traditional land management and less integral or holistic methods. They can be summed up under the

concept of climate-smart landscapes. This is a way of giving an analytical framework to the progress towards the integration of landscapes in an "Adaptive Mosaic" strategy.

- In view of the evident climate change, there are challenges of providing wood and non-wood forest products and meeting growing demands of these products as they are considered to be climate and carbon positive, and their consumption will therefore further rise, and so will the profitability of management actions related to forests and trees.

- The Congress recaptures one message: forest management and wood production from natural forests have taken a prominent position in the congress presentations. This shows that sustainable forest management is being recognized as an excellent way of conservation. However, in the Region there are considerable discrepancies between "rules on paper" and "rules in use"; governance tends to stick to the philosophy of "command and control" which implies high costs of transaction.

- The Congress has demonstrated that the challenges facing forests and landscapes have trans-boundary effects. It has also become evident that there is a high quantity of scientific knowledge available in the Region. However, more than ever before, scientists need to get involved in networking activities across disciplines and borders. The Congress has therefore highlighted networking organizations such as IUFRO and CATIE.

GUIDANCE FOR ACTION

From the keynote speeches, which were all of a high standard, and the approximately 300 papers, certain guidance for action has been deducted. In summing up the more than 50 pages of notes that have been taken throughout the sessions, omissions will have happened. However, we have tried to set priorities where generalization was possible, and we ask to accept our apologies for not fully meeting everybody's expectations.

- Information and knowledge shall serve to inform decision-makers in the Region; political and forest sciences shall work together to improve regional participation in international forest governance by means of a mixture of environmental policy instruments. This includes the revision of market strategies to solve the problems of forest resources.

- Research shall deliver information and produce results the application of which enables the attribution of value to the forest for the people, the landscapes, the countries and the global community. It is important to both invest money in knowledge and to invest knowledge in the production of value.

- The Region shall avoid the risk of research fragmentation and its loss of effectiveness; emphasis shall be placed on the present but also, fundamentally, on the future, in order to be able to be ahead of the problems and opportunities and offer timely solutions.

- Research results shall be integrated into development processes, especially in landscape processes and, consequently, point to results and impacts that permit a multiplication of sustainable management of forests and related resources. One way of doing this is using knowledge and information platforms. Thus, their value for society will become evident.

There will always be different or individual approaches to landscape topics; for example, the ecosystem restoration on a landscape scale, which ranges from social aspects (productivity, ethnobotany, active participation, knowledge and community participation) to technical and ecological aspects (resilience, regulatory functions, silviculture, etc.).

- Science shall step up efforts with regard to the adaptation to climate change and the political reforms that need to come into effect towards this end. The impacts of climate change are already visible and adaptation requires research into genetics, pests and diseases, fire, reversing desertification, species migration, etc.

- Research shall be multi-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary and consider multiple scales to ensure that research results can be integrated into the various contexts. We can use existing methods and new ones, such as platforms of databases and online storage of relevant research results. There are structures in place that can be used such as information on forest area and condition, but we also need economic and market information.

- Trans-disciplinarity implies interaction with popular, local and traditional knowledge, which requires recognition of the rights of rural inhabitants and indigenous peoples. Therefore, interaction between the results of good science, the experience of experts (at different scales), and the social needs and preferences, especially at the landscape level, is essential

- Good science shall reach society with messages on the value of forests and approaches of active conservation. Diverging trends with little scientific foundation shall be brought together and informed on the meaning of sustainable forest management (wood, non-wood forest products, biodiversity, source of food, source of income, poverty reduction, supply of ecosystem services).

- Science shall be communicated in order to serve as a basis for political decision-making at all necessary levels. Therefore, it is important that scientists come out of their labs, experimental fields, measuring plots, and from behind their computers and actively communicate their messages to politicians, to the mayors, ministers, presidents and international bodies as well as to the media (there has been considerable interest on the part of the press, radio, television and social media in IUFROLAT, for example).

- The aim is to integrate scientific efforts into concrete landscapes addressing the whole range of current and future questions. The adaptive mosaic is a target to be reached (for example, by striving for the establishment of climate-smart landscapes), but it is also important to think ahead and anticipate future scenarios. Science is a catalyst of integration.

- Social problems related to forestry activities shall be urgently addressed and, in addition to describing them, more emphasis shall be placed on participation, governance, and the delimitation of public authorities.

- Science shall provide information which will serve as a basis to reduce current costs of transaction in forest production and, thus, makes forest management more profitable (in

a wide sense), and the markets more dynamic at various scales. Science must produce messages that show the value of forest genetic resources in particular and forests in general.

- Research and experiments shall contribute to firmly anchoring forest management and silviculture to ecology, economy and the latest tools and methods of precision imaging. It is necessary to work in the areas of life that are relevant in the Region. The development of forest management and silviculture shall be applied in an adaptive way to the different social contexts and levels (small and medium-scale owners and communities). More or less fundamental changes of policy are necessary (including laws, regulations and official attitudes) in order to create conditions that enable good forest management. In this sense, the adaptive approach applies, which is based on the evidence of forestry practice.

- On this note, topics such as payment of environmental services shall be evaluated and new schemes shall be proposed that do not only focus on carbon economy but also serve as facilitators for sustainable forest production and the human development that can be derived from them.

- Research data shall be of utmost quality and to this end it is important that they are representative, can be aggregated, provide clear definitions, are up-to-date, policy relevant and suited for answering correct social and political questions.

- The forestry profession (even if it is necessary to do without its attribute) needs profound changes in order to be able to work in the new multi- and trans-disciplinary contexts of scale and time and to link up with development processes, enhance critical thinking and improve international exposure. There is also the need for practical training at all necessary levels in order to touch down on reality and redesign forestry extension as a means of disseminating practical knowledge.

- It shall be a high priority of research to look for technological, economic and political solutions for wood to turn into a material of fundamental importance for society and replace other products of high energy consumption. The forest serves as durable carbon sink also through its products and the supply of fuel that substitutes other energy sources. Consequently, it is important to adequately disseminate research results on and experiences with sustainable forest management.

- Finally, all that has been said above emphasizes the fact that communicating scientific results is a major pending task. Negative opinions about the intelligent use of forest resources shall be counteracted by means of science-based communication. We must learn how to communicate or seek the support of those who know.

San José , 14 June 2013