International Conference

LINKAGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION TO SUSTAINABLE FOREST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND BIOECONOMICS

1. Background

Over the past 55 years, the Vietnam National University of Forestry (VNUF) conducted many activities and events seeking to bring together perspectives and knowledge, to encourage international discussions and cooperation on forestry education and capacity building, to identify respective gaps and to improve related research and academic mobility and opportunities.

Vietnam’s forests provide the bio-economy sector with its most important, versatile and affordable renewable raw material: wood. In 2018, the value of exported wood and forest products reached USD 9.4 billion. This was actually 2 years ahead of the target of the National Target Program on Forest Development. The Government strives to reach USD 11.0 billion by 2019, equal to 133% of the program target. The Export of forest products account for 28% of the total export value of the agricultural and rural development sector, ranking it 6th in the export sectors of our country. Vietnam became the leading country in ASEAN, the second in Asia and the fifth in the world of forest product exports, behind only China, Germany, Italy and Poland. Vietnam's market share of forest products accounts for about 6.0% of the total value of the world’s forest product market. A revised model of profitability and sustainability in forestry is needed to support long-term investment in forests and encourage political and societal appreciations for forest ecosystem services. The demands on Vietnam’s forests for wood and bioenergy production will increase in the future, eventually depleting resources. Additionally, climate change projections indicate that frequency of extreme weather events like storms, heavy rainfall and droughts will increase, thus putting additional pressure on forest resources.

Vietnam currently has over 14 million hectares of forest area, of which over 10 million hectares are natural forests mainly distributed in five ecological regions with a coverage of 41.45% (VNFOREST, 2018). Currently, there are only about 240,000 ha of forest certified FSC. This figure generates big concerns regarding the sustainable high-quality wood supply to secure the fast development of the wood industry, especially for exporting its products to US, EU and Japan.

Education develops a country’s economy and society. Therefore, it is the foundation of a nation’s development. Education provides knowledge and skills to the population, as well as shaping the personality of the youth of a nation. Quality education plays a critical role in ensuring that the next generations of foresters are well equipped to deal with the
above-mentioned problems, to face the multitude of other challenges that a dynamic society and changing forest landscape will inevitably entail, and to be able to handle new approaches.

The necessity of bioeconomics in Vietnam comes from environmental issues and current economic development trends. Recently, the Government of Vietnam has issued important policies, which are considered an important legal basis for forest-based bioeconomy development such as National Green Growth Strategy, especially the process of restructuring the forestry sector towards diversifying and increasing the added value of forest products.

This opens up many opportunities for cooperation between universities and research institutes in Vietnam and overseas. VNUF is the leading national university in the field of tropical forestry education and research, wood and other forest products processing technology, afforestation and agroforestry, forest and natural resource management, and biodiversity conservation and ecotourism. The new direction in forestry policy will contribute significantly to the process of developing forest-based bioeconomics in Vietnam and will demand appropriate research and educational approaches. VNUF and other universities in the world as well as the private sector are very interested in these areas and finding collaboration opportunities among them is essential in this context.

2. Objectives

The international conference on Linkage of Higher Education, Research and International Integration to Sustainable Forest Resources Management and Bioeconomics which will be held in VNUF is dedicated to the improvement and dissemination of knowledge and understanding on methods, policies and technologies for increasing the sustainable forest resources management and bio-economy development. The lessons and experiences of forestry education from international institutions are also expected to be shared to help VNUF create a better link between research and education aiming to improve its training programs to meet society’s demands and labour market requirements. Another objective is to promote the achievements and products of VNUF. The conference will also encourage regional and international communication and collaboration in the focus areas among institutions in Vietnam and the world.

3. Expected deliveries

The deliverables from the conference are expected to include:

- A clear understanding of current emerging priorities for research and training in sustainable forest resources management, including forests and bio-economy in Vietnam and other regions;
• A mutual understanding of opportunities and challenges of sustainable forest management and forest-based bio-economy development in Vietnam and other countries;
• Identified opportunities for collaboration among participating partners in multidisciplinary research and international education in sustainable forest resources management and bio-economy development.
• “Matchmaking” opportunities for forest product producers, researchers, technology developers, and the marketing and trading sector
• Fostered contact and initiation of active cooperation among international DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) alumni in the Natural Resources and Forestry sectors as a base for initiating collaborations in the above-mentioned fields,

4. Discussion topics and themes

*Sustainable Forest Resource Management:*
- Climate change impact on forests and biodiversity;
- Adapting natural resources management to a changing climate;
- Sustainable forest management and forest certification;
- Biodiversity conservation and management;
- Water resources and sustainable watershed management.
- Carbon measurement and management.

*Forest-based Economy and Bio-economy Development:*
- Wood and forest product industry development;
- Impact of the logging ban on forest-based economy and forest resources
- Silviculture and biotechnology for forest plantation;
- NTFPs, agroforestry and value chain development;
- PES and Payments for forest environmental services (PFES);
- REDD+ implementation and finance opportunities;
- Forest based eco-tourism development and protected areas management;
- Forest- based bio-energy;
- Forest and bio-economy development policy and governance.

*International Lessons and Experiences on Forestry Education Development:*
- Challenges of forestry education in the changing world and 4.0 technology;
- Lessons and experiences on forestry education development of international universities.
- Trends of forestry and bio-economy related careers.
International collaboration opportunities:

- North - South and South - South collaboration opportunities in sustainable forest resource management and bio-economy development;
- DAAD alumni: roles of members and opportunities in international cooperation and networking


6. Time: The conference will be held for 2 days, tentatively 12-13 November 2019

7. Organizer: Vietnam National University of Forestry.

- Proposed Sponsors: DAAD, GIZ, JICA, IUFRO......

8. Proposed speakers and participants:

- Number of participants: About 300 participants
- Academics in the fields of forestry, natural resource management and techniques, forest policy and governance from Germany, Finland, Spain, USA, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, China, Taiwan...
- Scientists from related professional fields and representatives from international organizations and projects/programs in Vietnam such as DAAD, GIZ, JICA, CIFOR, ICRAF, SNV, UNEP, VFD...
- DAAD alumni from SE Asia and Germany
- Participants from Vietnamese government organizations, research institutes and academic institutions such as VNFOREST, MARD, MONRE, MOET, Vietnam Academy of Forest Science, VNU University of Science, Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, Bac Giang University of Agriculture and Forestry, Nong Lam University, Tay Nguyen University, Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry, VNUF...
- MSc and BSc students from VNUFs’ International Tropical Forestry and Natural Resources Management programs.
- Private sector representatives (forest product producers, processing companies, trading and marketing sector).

9. Tentative Program (to be elaborated in detail)

- Day 1:
  - Opening, keynotes and presentations covering the key topics and themes, discussion (conference hall)
  - Parallel special subject sessions (presentations, discussions and working groups)
  - DAAD alumni meeting (working group)
 Exhibition of forest products and technologies (entrance area of conference hall)
 Group presentations to the auditorium
 General discussions
 Synthesis and closing

• Day 2:
   Fieldtrip to a National Park (locations to be defined later): On-site presentations and discussions led by park representatives:
   Forest protection and biodiversity conservation issues
   Hotspot areas and threats
   Needs for cooperation with academic institutions in research and education