



IFFA messages during the UN International Year of Forests

Forests for people – people for forests

Forests mean different things for different people. For a large group of world's rural poor forests mean life, providing them with a place to live and a source of wood, fuel and water. For many others, forests are a place for recreation, an opportunity for livelihood and employment and a large part of people's cultural identity. For our planet, forests mean life, being a renewable and indispensable resource in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Forests also prevent erosion and protect people and settlements against avalanches, mud flows, floods and rockslides.

Without forests all these meanings, functions and services disappear. Without sustainable forest management, forests disappear.

Family forest owners are one of the most critical groups for the implementation of sustainable forest management. They are at the receiving end of policies developed in global and national policy forums, while being the ones responsible for policy implementation on the ground.

Intergenerational experience in management of natural resources has enabled family forest owners to acquire a wealth of practical knowledge and know-how of sustainable management of forests. Through their day-to-day work with forests, family forest owners are in a unique position to learn continuously and understand the complex dynamics of forest management.

This valuable experience should be taken into account and utilised in political forums. Family forest owners should be encouraged to make a significant contribution to the development of the long-term perspective needed for sustainable forest management.

On the occasion of United Nations International Year of Forests, the International Family Forest Alliance (IFFA) wants to present the following considerations as essential elements needed to pave the way for sustainable management of the world's forests:

1. Give forests back to people

Ownership creates value. The basis for sustainable forest management is secure land tenure and ownership rights. Without such basic rights, neither a sense of responsibility nor an interest in sustainable, generations-bridging management can be developed.

When families and communities receive secure rights of ownership and thus the right to use and manage the multiple products and benefits that forests produce the result is a strong sense of responsibility for their forests, based on confidence in the future. When this ownership exists on a broad scale, the result is the protection and sustainable management of the natural heritage for the entire society.

At the same time, the different aims and concepts of individual families and communities will lead to a variety in forest structure and tree composition which, in turn, will enhance stability and biodiversity.

2. Give livelihood a chance

Economic viability is a second absolute prerequisite for sustainable forest management. Financial security is needed for the enhancement of social and cultural values and for good management of forests that also takes into account ecological values.

The financial security and income provided by forests have enabled the social development of rural areas in many parts of the world. Multiple products and benefits from forests have provided a diversified source of employment and income in rural areas where other options are often scarce.

Valuation and compensation of all products and services of forests, fair market conditions and tax policies as well as a long-term reliable legal framework are central factors for economically viable forest management and viable rural communities.

3. Let forest owners have a say

According to the Rio Declaration and its principle 22, "local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices." Family forest owners are the guardians of traditional forest-related knowledge that has grown and been safeguarded from generation to generation over centuries.

Due to the unique position of family forest owners as implementers of policy decisions and commitments on the ground, they should be closely linked to the decision-making processes relating to sustainable management of forests. To respect the great variety of circumstances and forest diversity, local and regional levels should be favored in forest policy and decision-making processes. Local decision-making enables more active and diversified participation of the most involved and directly concerned parties and strengthens the commitment to and implementation of decisions.

4. Help forest owners to help themselves

One of the best ways to ensure that family forest owners and forest reliant communities can articulate their positions and contribute to the broader forestry dialogue within society is through strong family forest owners' associations. Family forest owners' associations are vital in enabling the small and medium-sized properties to be economically viable and sustainably managed, thus contributing to local livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. Family forest owner associations are, in addition, key agents for the dissemination and successful implementation of national and global policies.

Family forest owners must be enabled to organise themselves and to avoid being organised by others. This can be promoted by enhancing their capacity to organise public participation processes themselves, as well as through other options such as partnerships, selective working groups, and others. Also institutional and technical support may be necessary, particularly in countries in transition where family forest ownership is new and growing.

5. Use more wood

One of the main benefits of sustainable forest management is the production of wood. Wood is both the oldest and the most modern renewable material used by humanity. Wood is still used in much of the world to meet the basic requirements for survival, including heat, cooking and shelter.

At the same time wood and wood-based products are regarded as high-tech materials with almost no technical barriers to their application. All products made from oil can be produced from wood in the future.

In a world where the use of non-renewable natural resources and climate change will be threatening the very existence of humanity, the use of wood from sustainably managed forests should be regarded and rewarded as a major environmental contribution.

International Family Forestry Alliance (IFFA)

The International Family Forestry Alliance, IFFA, is the global voice of family forestry, representing more than 25 million forest owners worldwide. The organisation was founded as an informal network between national forest owners' organisations. In addition to IFFA's founder organisations in Europe and North America, IFFA covers nowadays members from all over the world i.e. Central America, Africa and Australia. IFFA's objective is to promote the development of family forestry and advocate supportive policies. IFFA now has a formal governance structure, and has status at a number of international forums. IFFA provides recommendations to international forest policy processes and provide a forum for exchange of experience, ideas and information.

Three Rights Holders Group (G3)

The Three Rights Holders Group is a network for collaboration between family forest owners, community forestry and tribal and indigenous peoples of the tropical forest. The group was created in 2009 when the International Family Forestry Alliance (IFFA), the Global Alliance of Community Forestry (GACF) and the International Alliance of Alliance of Tribal and Indigenous Peoples of the Tropical Forest (IAITPTF) joined forces in order to promote locally controlled forestry and sustainable forest management worldwide. Respect for forest and land tenure rights, improved livelihoods and sustainable management of forest resources are the corner stones of the common value base of the three alliances. G3 is supported by The Growing Forest Partnership - a partnership between the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the International Institute for Environment and Development, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, and the World Bank.

Locally controlled forestry means the local right for forest owning families and communities to make decisions on commercial forest management and land use, with secure tenure rights, freedom of association and access to markets and technology. Locally controlled forestry leads to responsible, long term sustainable forest management, including protection of biodiversity, improved livelihoods, multiple forest products and services, local enterprises and benefits to society. Locally controlled forestry requires respect for communities, families and peoples and their customary use and traditional and local knowledge.



**INTERNATIONAL YEAR
OF FORESTS • 2011**