



## **International Council of Forest and Paper Associations Statement on Forest Plantations**

The members of the International Council of Forest and Paper Associations (ICFPA) are committed to sustainable forest management and sustainable production of forest products across a range of forest types and landscapes to meet the growing needs of society. The purpose of this statement is to outline ICFPA support for, and advocacy of, the role of forest plantations for commercial purposes in providing sustainable raw materials for the growing demand for fuel, fibres and timber.

### **Forest Plantations are Important**

Forest plantations contribute to meeting the world's increasing demand for forest goods and environmental services. Depending on particular circumstances and management regimes, forest plantations provide a range of economic, social and environmental benefits, including:

- An array of renewable products derived from industrial wood, fuelwood, non timber forest products and other residual materials;
- Forest products that are biodegradable, reusable and, when managed sustainably, renewable;
- Regional clusters of forest industries that generate jobs, income, skills transfer and social development on a sustainable basis, often in rural communities and particularly in remote and economically depressed areas;
- Prevention of soil degradation and erosion, protection against wind, recuperation of degraded areas by restoring soil fertility, sequestering carbon and enhancing water and air quality;
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity of plants, animals and ecological communities by providing habitat, shade and shelter for domestic animals, wildlife and other living organisms, especially when established on previously degraded or deforested land;
- Mitigation of the pressure on other types of forests and contributing to land use efficiency, particularly in tropical countries;
- Additional income opportunities derived from agroforestry practices, recreational activities and multiple uses; and
- Social inclusion through partnership with small holders.

The ability of plantations to produce goods and services efficiently from relatively small areas of land under regimes of variable intensity makes them vital in reducing human pressure on the natural environment. Currently, forest plantations occupy only 7% of global forest cover (264 million hectares) yet they contribute 50% of global roundwood supply. In many countries, forest plantations are the basis for world-scale forest products industries.

## **Forest Plantations are an Efficient Land Use**

The growth and expansion of the human population and people's legitimate expectations of better living conditions have resulted in demands that can only be met by a paradigm shift in consumption patterns and sustainable production systems. Forest plantations constitute an efficient system for producing considerable amounts of high quality, renewable and recyclable natural products in a relatively short periods of time and allow flexible interplay between various land uses.

Well managed plantations – taking into account local circumstances, needs and expectations – contribute to rural development and to a wide range of environmental, economic and social outcomes. Depending on the intensity of management regimes and the application of sound and ambitious management standards (e.g., multi-species plantations, landscape management, the production of indigenous species that suit the needs of local populations, efficient harvesting and transportation systems), forest plantations can play an important role in meeting growing demand for fibre, wood and other forest goods and services, that are in harmony with and complement other forest management regimes and land uses.

## **A Role for the Industry**

Demand for forest based products will likely grow with the rising population and income, particularly in developing countries. Eco-efficiency is critical in responding to this growing demand. Forest industries have invested heavily in developing sustainable forest management practices, taking environmental and social aspects into account, protecting native forests and incorporating valuable environmental assets in plantation areas. Forest plantations incorporate the results of research and development activities carried out over the years by corporations, research institutions and universities. Through appropriate management practices – individually or in association with other institutions and organizations – forest-based industries are effectively transferring valuable skills and know-how to communities, landowners and growers who can then benefit from improved knowledge and understanding. At the same time, plantations must be commercially viable for their environmental and socio-economic benefits to be realized.

Plantations play a critical role in supporting sustainable forest management and international processes, including the United Nations Forum on Forests. Sustainably managed plantations, like sustainably managed natural forests, have to compete with illegally harvested, environmentally damaging, and unsustainably produced wood. In addition, wood now competes with non-renewable and less energy efficient materials such as metal, plastic and concrete, which all have much higher environmental foot prints than wood, a material engineered and synthesized by nature that is biodegradable and renewable.

## **Future Perspectives for Forest Plantations**

- Plantations have an important role in reducing the pressure on natural intact forests in tropical countries. Models predict that around 250 million additional

hectares of forest plantations would be needed by 2050 to reach the zero deforestation while responding to global demand for forest products;

- Forest plantations are expected to continue to play an important role in meeting the world's demand for fuel, fibres and timber and to recover degraded or deforested lands, supporting maintenance and restoration of natural ecosystems in the surrounding landscape and safeguarding the rights and livelihoods of local communities;
- Biotechnology – whether through conventional plant breeding or genetic modification – can improve plantation yields, grow disease-, insect- and temperature-resistant trees, and reduce globally the need for land dedicated to forest-based products;
- In addition to the ecosystem services that forest plantations can provide, trees can be the source for thousands of products – from traditional products such as timber, pulp and paper and biomass energy to liquid biofuels, biochemicals, biomaterials, nanofibers or nanocrystals of cellulose to improve products used in such applications as automobiles, aerospace, defense, etc.

### **Key Figures on Forest Plantations**

- World land area 13,064 million hectares
- World forest area 4,033 million hectares<sup>1</sup>
- Total area of planted forests 264 million hectares<sup>1</sup>
- Forest plantations represent 7% of the world forest area; 2.02% of world land area<sup>1</sup>
- The world's total area of industrial fast-growing forest plantations is 54.3 million hectares, which is about 20% of the total area of planted forests<sup>2</sup>
- More than 10 million hectares of forests are afforested or reforested every year<sup>3</sup>
- Contribution to global roundwood supply 50%<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FAO Planted forests, accessed on <http://www.fao.org/forestry/plantedforests/en/>

<sup>2</sup> Indufor: Strategic Review on the Future of Forest Plantations. October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Study ordered by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

<sup>3</sup> FAO: Global Forest Resource Assessment, 2010