



## Restoration Roundtable

Enhancing the forest-sector's engagement in ecosystem restoration

*2 October 2022 – FAO HQ Rome, Italy*

### Roundtable Summary Report

#### Introduction

The Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries (ACSF) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and The Forests Dialogue (TFD) convened a roundtable on enhancing the forest sector's engagement in ecosystem restoration on October 2, 2022 as a satellite event of FAO's 26<sup>th</sup> session of its Committee on Forestry<sup>1</sup>. Twenty participants, including representatives of forest industry associations, forest product companies, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society, sought to explore how forest-based industries can scale up ecosystem restoration efforts, enhance overall impact, share best practices, and examine strategic benefits they can derive individually as well as collectively from ecosystem restoration. The roundtable was organized around the following objectives:

- Build trust and understanding through sharing experiences, questions, challenges and best practices for forest restoration;
- Discuss a vision and plan forward for forest-based industries;
- Scope opportunities and needs for further dialogue to drive understanding and action in specific contexts and contribute to global learnings.

During the roundtable, participants shared experiences, motivations, questions, challenges, and best practices for forest, landscape, and ecosystem restoration. Discussions illuminated the significant commitment and active investment being made by forest sector companies to conserve and restore ecosystems in different locations around the world, with much more expertise and technical capacity to share. The dialogue also acknowledged that the sector's contribution and representation is often overlooked in UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration related collaboration. Participants discussed opportunities to close this gap, including more active engagement in national-level action plans and global level-taskforces where the private sector could share expertise and explore new business cases to scale ecosystem restoration.

#### Primary Roundtable Conclusions

Participants identified six priority strategies to better understand and increase forest-based industries' contributions to restoration efforts moving forward, which are highlighted below and further detailed in the discussion synthesis:

- 1) **Build unity within the forest sector** through a shared ecosystem restoration vision, simple key messages, and identifying champions to motivate and share learnings.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fao.org/events/detail/cofo-26/en>

- 2) **Develop good metrics** to facilitate goal setting and measurement of outcomes from restoration.
- 3) **Collaborate with other stakeholder groups** in restoration activities to build understanding and to enhance impact.
- 4) **Understand how degraded land and forest sector capacity aligns.**
- 5) **Establish new business cases for ecosystem restoration** based on research and practice.
- 6) **Identify and build understanding about business and financial models** that enhance shared value and deliver multiple outcomes.

All materials related to the “Restoration Roundtable,” including a background briefing paper and Concept Note can be found at: [theforestdialogue.org](http://theforestdialogue.org)

### Discussion synthesis

The roundtable started with a discussion of current restoration approaches—where participants see the most potential to scale up and the biggest gaps in current knowledge and actions. Discussions then progressed to identify key strategies to guide private sector actions and form coalitions with other stakeholder groups. The day closed by identifying specific next steps and actions to operationalize the identified strategies.

### *Restoration Actions, Drivers, and Gaps*

In breakout discussions, participants discussed the private sector’s various modes of engagement to achieve landscape restoration, the restoration approaches with the most potential, and the current barriers to implementation and private sector participation. Participants identified different scopes for restoration in company-managed lands, procurement areas, and the wider landscape in which companies operate. Participants noted that the mode of engagement and restoration depends on the company’s method for wood procurement and the type of value chain it is participating in.

Within land under their direct management, companies are well invested in conservation and restoration practices with many lessons to share. Many roundtable participants shared their company’s practices managing areas for conservation or restoration, while acknowledging an evolving framework to contribute toward nature positive outcomes. Current restoration actions are driven by ecological needs, company commitments, certification, and national policies. Participants noted that new standards and requirements related to EU policy, net zero commitments, and biodiversity conservation will drive restoration and conservation practices in coming years and are a key opportunity for coordination and collaboration. Participants discussed the restoration opportunities within their own lands because it is where they have direct influence, but, depending on the state of the land, restoration may not be needed, especially when forests and lands are already being managed sustainably.

The second scope with the most restoration action potential is through existing relationships beyond their own land. This includes the lands of individuals, communities, and organizations who companies source wood from or are involved in some other partnership with (e.g., neighboring properties). Actions include collaborating on direct restoration, developing partnerships, and sharing knowledge and resources. Participants shared examples of outgrower schemes, sharing technical capacity and knowledge with those they are sourcing material from, supporting silvopasture and agroforestry, or providing tree nursery materials to surrounding

communities. These actions align with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and philanthropy and are also driven by certification requirements and the local social history and context.

The third scope of private sector engagement in restoration actions is at the landscape level. Participants discussed the importance and opportunities related to landscape restoration while acknowledging that it requires long-term relationships and financing. While there are many ways the private sector can contribute to landscape restoration efforts, such as contributing technical capacity and leveraging investment, many reflected that to go beyond their own land holdings requires incentives and a positive business case. Participants shared where they see potential to scale up landscape engagements in blended financial mechanisms, coalitions to deliver on national restoration commitments, markets for ecosystem services, and innovative multi-stakeholder coalitions such as New Generations Plantations landscape partnerships. It is in this space where more global coordination and cooperation could really enhance the forest-sector's contribution to the global restoration agenda.

#### *Forest-based industry strategies to scale-up restoration action*

Following the discussion on the needs and barriers to increasing and scaling up ecosystem actions on the ground, participants identified the following six priority strategies to unlock barriers and encourage restoration actions by forest-based industries.

→ **Build unity within the forest sector** through a shared ecosystem restoration vision, simple key messages, and identifying champions to motivate and share learnings.

The lack of unity within the forest sector and negative public perception of production forestry cuts across many challenges faced by forest-based industries. There is a clear need for a compelling message on the nature-positive role many forest-based industry actors play in sustainable land management, conservation, and restoration. To do this, the forest sector must come together to agree on key simple messages and to identify champions to motivate, share learnings, and represent the sector globally.

For restoration in particular, there is a need for agreement and consistent communications about the roles, opportunities, and impacts of forest-based industries and the need for ecosystem restoration to protect the future of/and expand the bioeconomy. For example, despite the efforts of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, there is currently not yet a clear understanding of under what circumstances it is appropriate to include commercial forestry within the spectrum of restoration activities. A common vision for the forest sector's role in ecosystem restoration could be to build unity, clarify definitions, and mobilize other actors to engage in restoration.

→ **Develop good metrics** to facilitate goal setting and measuring the outcomes of restoration.

A key need for understanding the impact of forest-based industries' contribution to restoration is good metrics that allows companies to track and communicate the change in an ecosystem's state, including social, environmental, biodiversity, and climate values. These metrics should be commonly adopted across forest-based industries. This is a key barrier to overcome in order to catalyze action both internally within a company and across the sector. It will also be a mechanism to channel investment, give value to nature-positive actions, and incentivize sustainable practices.

→ **Collaborate with other stakeholder groups** in restoration activities to build understanding and to enhance impact.

Participants identified the need to collaborate with a wide range of actors including NGOS, academia, government agencies, IGOs, multi-laterals, other private-sector actors, and multi-stakeholder engagement platforms. Identified collaboration priorities have multiple scales from a global collaboration agenda to engage multiple points in supply chains, to landscape level collaborations based in the local ecological and social needs and context. Participants expressed strong interest in engaging with other private-sector actors especially agriculture. Additionally, engaging with multi-laterals can facilitate investment and alignment with national commitments. Dialogue can be a key mechanism to bring in additional perspectives, identify opportunities, and catalyze collaboration.

→ **Understand how degraded land and forest sector capacity aligns.**

While there is a general understanding of the global need for ecosystem restoration, there is also a need to map specific degraded land in need of restoration and the feasibility of forest-based industry involvement. Feasibility will be shaped by the local ecological and social context including land tenure, land use history, interest of other landscape stakeholder and rights holders, and company capacities. There is a potential for further engagement by the private sector by facilitating the link between on-the-ground capacities and business cases with global and national restoration commitments under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and related initiatives.

→ **Establish new business cases for ecosystem restoration** based on research and practice.

Understanding and demonstrating the value proposition of engaging in ecosystem restoration at multiple scales is necessary to scale-up forest-based industry engagement. Business cases based in research and practical experiences are essential to demonstrate to companies how restoration on their lands, sourcing lands, and adjacent areas can benefit production areas. There is also a business case needed for contributing to actions and demonstrating leadership at global scales. Research can build sectoral growth strategies that expand landscape restoration and demonstrate the relationship between restoration and the bioeconomy.

→ **Identify and build understanding about business and financial models** that enhance shared value and deliver multiple outcomes.

Many of the approaches to ecosystem restoration require new business and financial models that deliver multiple outcomes and shared value. These include social bonds, green bonds, payment for ecosystem services, carbon finance, CSR commitments, impact funds/blended finance and Ecosystem Restoration Concessions. As these green and blended finance models and investment platforms are developed and trialed, the sector needs to understand how to access emerging opportunities and learn from successful cases. For example, if philanthropic finance is out of sync with local livelihood needs, the approach will fail.

## Next Steps

To close the roundtable, participants discussed how to progress strategies. Global organizations including the International Council of Forest and Paper Associations (ICPFA), the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries (ACSF) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), and The Forests Dialogue will continue to discuss taking forward global-level action items including facilitating unity in the sector and contributing to UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration task forces. Based on the outcomes from this roundtable, TFD's Steering Committee will consider the development of a Restoration Initiative to scale up restoration actions and drive solutions for identified challenges through a multi-stakeholder engagement process at the global level as well as in specific locations via field dialogues and country-level roundtables.

### **PARTICIPANTS AND CONVENERs**

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## PARTNERS

### *Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries of the FAO*

ACSMFI is a statutory body that guides FAO on issues concerning the sustainable consumption and production of forest products. It also provides a forum for dialogue between FAO and the forest-based industries, with a view to identifying strategic actions that promote sustainable forest management.

### *The Forests Dialogue*

The Forests Dialogue (TFD) is a neutral, international, multi-stakeholder platform established in 2000 to help address conflicts and challenges related to important forest related issues. TFD has developed and facilitated more than 15 dialogue initiatives, comprising more than 60 country-level and international dialogues involving over 3,000 individuals. The Restoration Roundtable is part of TFD's Forest and Climate Initiative.