



The Forests Dialogue

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Scoping Dialogue on Climate Positive Forest Products

CONVENED VIRTUALLY

26, 29 April, and 3 May 2021 | 10:00 – 13:00 ET

Focus: Potential Climate Benefits and Challenges Related to Scaling up Mass Timber Construction Practices

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

The Forests Dialogue (TFD) launched the Climate Positive Forest Products (CPFP) initiative in 2020. Using mass timber construction materials as an entry point, the Initiative aims to build understanding and agreement amongst stakeholders around the opportunities, challenges, and knowledge gaps related to utilizing forest products as a climate change mitigation tool. As an integral part of this initiative's development, TFD will co-convene a virtual "Scoping Dialogue" with the World Resources Institute (WRI), in partnership with the Climate Smart Forest Economy Program (CSFEP). The Scoping Dialogue will explore the range of stakeholder perspectives at the global scale and address questions about the impacts scaling up 'mass timber' construction practices might have on climate and forests. To help develop and implement this dialogue-based initiative, TFD has brought together a committee of advisors composed of actors representing the forest, building, and climate change mitigation sectors including, multinational organizations, companies, NGOs, academics, foundations, and civil society groups.

Why mass timber construction materials? And why the need for dialogue?

Research indicates that climate positive forest products have the potential to deliver significant climate change mitigation benefits when substituted for traditional resource-intensive inputs under specific conditions and with sustainable sourcing.^{1,2} Climate positive forest products are those that (1) provide net climate benefits through carbon sequestration, (2) carbon storage in woody biomass, and (3) carbon substitution benefits through avoided emissions. This could include mass timber construction materials if specific conditions are adopted and met. Buildings currently account for 39% of global GHG emissions, and of that the emissions associated with the material used in construction (building embodied carbon), accounts for

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28% of this sector. Maintaining business as usual practices will drive an increase in emissions from this sector given current estimates show that global building stock is expected to double by 2050, equivalent to adding a built area the size of Paris to the planet every week for the next 40 years.³ Limiting global warming to 1.5°C as set out by the Paris Climate Agreement will require a rapid transition towards low carbon construction.⁴

Increasingly, mass timber construction practices are attracting attention from the building sector, forest managers, academics, and those engaged in climate and forest policy because of the product's potential building performance, environmental, and climate benefits. Despite the promising potential, disagreements remain on key aspects. And knowledge gaps persist, especially when it comes to accounting for the impacts and unintended consequences an increase in demand for mass timber materials may have on forests.

FOCUS OF THE CLIMATE SMART FOREST PRODUCTS VIRTUAL SCOPING DIALOGUE

The CPFP Scoping Dialogue seeks to elevate stakeholder perspectives on the potential for mass timber materials to serve as a climate mitigation tool. This dialogue will help inform a wider programmatic effort with the CSFEP to identify areas of opportunity and concern, address knowledge gaps, and build a network of stakeholder to address potential unintended consequences to scaling up mass timber construction practices. Global in nature, the primary objective of the scoping dialogue is to identify and assess the main issues and areas of disagreement referred to as “fracture lines”, build trust amongst stakeholders and catalyze future collaborative action. Participants will be invited from regions with ongoing efforts to scale mass timber construction (Europe and North America) and regions where housing booms are predicted in the coming decades and mass timber construction practices have the potential to make significant impacts (India, Brazil, China, and a number of regions in Africa). Many of the themes explored will manifest differently depending on geographic context. As a result, there is potential for future action to include region-specific dialogues and research projects that will explore themes surfaced during the scoping dialogue in regions where a potential scaling up of mass timber materials stands to make a significant impact on forests, housing markets, economies, and people.

What does TFD bring to the conversation on mass timber construction materials?

TFD provides a tested methodology and neutral platform, refined over 20 years of successful dialogues, through which stakeholders will engage in the cross-disciplinary conversations around mass timber materials and climate positive forest products. As no single organization or stakeholder group controls the TFD dialogue process, stakeholders feel welcome and empowered, leading to outcomes that are made durable by the sense of ownership shared by all participants.

The TFD website provides more information about TFD's process and its past Initiatives (<http://theforestdialogue.org>).

PROCESS, DATES, AND OBJECTIVES

This virtual dialogue will bring together approximately 50 global actors to participate a series of three virtual meetings on 26 and 29 April, and 3 May between 10:00–14:00 Eastern US Time. Participants will take part in a facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogue that will build from a background paper (synthesized from the best available research, described below). This dialogue will be primarily discussion-based and stakeholder-driven, with a significant portion of time spent in breakout working groups. The process is about building a deeper understanding from disparate perspectives and creating action from that shared understanding. Each session will build on the last and participants are expected to attend all three in order to ensure continuity, trust is built amongst participants, and ownership in the results. Specific objectives include:

- ➔ **Build a collective understanding** of stakeholder perspectives and concerns; knowledge and research gaps; and priorities related to using ‘mass timber’ construction practices to mitigate climate change. And identify areas of disagreement and agreement, especially as these issues relate to forests.
- ➔ **Foster collaboration** across stakeholders that care about the mass timber value chain, allowing forest owners, timber producers, policy makers, NGOs, and architects/developers to learn from one another and a synthesis of the current scientific knowledge on the topic.
- ➔ **Co-create an actionable plan** that presents a path forward and will mobilize stakeholder networks.

OUTPUTS

1. A background paper has been commissioned to provide participants with a baseline understanding of the current state of knowledge and potential gaps. It synthesizes best available research and includes relevant information on the barriers to adoption, conflicting view points, and opportunities related to scaling up mass timber construction as a potential climate solution. The paper will be finalized and made publicly available after the dialogue.
2. The dialogue co-chairs will prepare an official meeting summary that captures major discussions and synthesizes learnings and actionable steps generated with broad stakeholder agreement. The summary report will be distributed widely. Key findings will be presented to the CSFEP to continue building connections and enact next steps.
3. The dialogue will also identify future collaborative research efforts that will enhance knowledge on this topic as well as potential thematic areas or key-regions where future, focused dialogue is needed. Future dialogues will allow stakeholder to explore themes uncovered during the Scoping Dialogue in more depth or in a region-specific context.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Churkina, G., Organschi, A., Reyer, C.P.O. et al. (2020) Buildings as a global carbon sink. *Nat Sustain* 3, 269–276 <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-019-0462-4>
- ² Chen, C., F. Pierobon, and I. Ganguly. (2019) Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) Produced in Western Washington: The Role of Logistics and Wood Species Mix. *Sustainability*. 11: 1278, doi:10.3390/su11051278
- ³ International Energy Agency, United Nations Environment Programme 2019 Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction: Towards a Zero-emissions, Efficient and Resilient Buildings and Construction Sector (Geneva: United Nations Environment Programme) p 325
- ⁴ Röck, M., Saade, M.R.M., Balouktsi, M., Rasmussen, F.N., Birgisdottir, H., Frischknecht, R., Habert, G., Lützkendorf, T. and Passer, A. (2020). Embodied GHG emissions of buildings – The hidden challenge for effective climate change mitigation. *Applied Energy*, 258