



The Forests Dialogue

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The Forests Dialogue

Field Dialogue on Investing in Locally Controlled Forestry

16–19 April, 2012 | Växjö, Sweden
Co-Chairs' Summary Report

by Lennart Ackzell, Chris Buss and Kerstin Jonsson Cisse

INTRODUCTION

The Forests Dialogue (TFD)¹ held a four day multi-stakeholder Field Dialogue on Investing in Locally Controlled Forestry (ILCF) in Växjö, Sweden from 16th to 19th April, 2012. The dialogue was hosted by Södra,² Swedish Forest Agency (SFA),³ Federation of Swedish Family Forest Owners and Linnæus University, with the financial support from Growing Forest Partnership (GFP)⁴ and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).⁵ The dialogue was the final field dialogue in TFD's ILCF initiative⁶ which started in 2009. Previous dialogues and activities include a scoping dialogue in Brussels, six field dialogues (Panama, Nepal, Macedonia, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Indonesia), and investor dialogue and a writers' workshop in London.

It is estimated that locally controlled forests involve one billion people and one quarter of the world's forests, providing \$75–\$100 billion per year in goods and services and a broad range of other economic, environmental, social, cultural and spiritual benefits. Rights-holder organizations such as the Global Alliance of Community Forestry (GACF), the International Family Forest Alliance (IFFA) and the International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of Tropical Forests (IAITPTF), known collectively as the G3, define locally controlled forestry as follows: “The local right for forest owner 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”.⁷

Exactly what ILCF means in practice has been the subject of the TFD ILCF initiative. With about half of its forest land owned by family enterprises and a relatively long history of forestry cooperatives, Sweden's forestry model offers important lessons for establishing ILCF in other countries. Linking Sweden's forestry model and lessons learnt through other dialogues, the aims of the Sweden dialogue were to:

- ➔ Define key steps that are critical for successful deals for ILCF in Sweden;
- ➔ Identify concrete actions for developing new partnerships;
- ➔ Understand how to improve financing for LCF.

The dialogue brought together 20 international and 15 local stakeholders representing a wide spectrum of stakeholder groups, including Indigenous Peoples, local community, small land owners, forestry investors and companies, development assistance agencies, national governments, inter-governmental organizations, and international and national non-governmental organizations (see participant list starting on page 12).

This report summarizes key observations and discussions from the dialogue.

ILCF IN SWEDEN⁸

Sweden has a population of around 9.4 million and land cover of approximately 41 million hectares, of which 70 percent is covered by forest. Most Swedes lives closely relate to forests and forestry pursuits. With just under 1% of world's commercial forest area, Sweden provides 10% of the world's sawn timber, pulp and paper. This forestry model has been mainly shaped by the Sweden's natural conditions, history of land tenure and national policies, as well as forest ownership and income structure.

Natural Conditions:

Land in Sweden has a low productive capacity, with more fertile soil and favourable climatic conditions in the South than the North. The silvicultural rotation periods range from 60 years in southern Sweden to 110 years on poor sites in the north. Sweden's forests are growing on stony soil, which are unsuitable for agriculture. This has reduced the land-use conflicts between forestry and agriculture. Species distribution in the forest is simple with a predominance of coniferous forest: Norway Spruce (41%); Scots Pine (39%); Birch (13%). And Sweden's forest terrain is normally quite flat, which makes it easy to grow and harvest timber.

History: Land use and national policies

Before the 19th century: almost all forest land in Sweden was commonly owned, state owned or owned by elites of the society. This abundance of forest and woods had low economic value and there was no forestry practice regulation. In the early times, the forest land was used primarily for forest grazing, as well as for domestic fuelwood, cottage timber, hunting ground and various secondary uses (charcoal, tar and potash). Vast forest areas were inaccessible. Starting in thirteenth century, scattered utilization of forest resources for the mining in central Sweden and iron/steel industries in the south drove up demand for fuelwood and charcoal locally. Forest raw materials in the south were also used at limited scale for ship-building, glass-making, extraction of train-oil as well as for domestic needs.



Co-Chair Chris Buss

19th century: In the beginning of 19th century, driven by the need to enhance the agriculture system, forest land was privatized: In the south where the land was mainly commonly owned, each landholder got its own part of commonly owned forest with marked and registered borders. The privatization process was first finished in 1850s in south and central Sweden. In the north where the State claimed ownership of the land, the process started in mid 19th century: the land value was so low that the state failed at their first attempt to sell land to farmers and had to more or less give land away to unwilling farmers. The parcels in the north are substantively bigger than in the south (a single property could get thousands of hectares of forest).



Family Forest Farm in southern Sweden

In the mid-1800s, industrialization fueled and led to the transformation of Sweden from an agrarian society to an industrialized nation. This included a growing forest sawmill industry, which was established near big waterways and the Balticsea. This generated a dramatic increasing demand for timber and, at the turn to 20th century, raw materials for pulp and paper production. This in turn led to more transportation infrastructure improvement in the area which drove up forest land price. Early in the process, industries easily persuaded farmers to sell their land at extremely low prices. From 1870 to 1906, companies bought millions of hectares of forest land from farmers.



Duncan Macqueen

20th century: The poor state of Sweden’s forests at the end of 19th century became a burning political issue. Led by public demand, parliament, in 1903, made a historic decision to formulate a special forest policy. Forestry legislation, focusing initially on reforestation, was introduced and, two years later, forestry authorities were established in each county. In 1906, a law was passed banning industrial forest enterprises from purchasing private owned forest holdings. It was also decided that selling and heritage of family forests to other private persons should be free, but with a limitation for forest companies to a total cap of the present level of 25% of the total Swedish forest land. Government regulation of the forestry sector was intensified after the Second World War, culminating during the 1980s in extensive and detailed regulations. An important regulation from the 70-ties is that forest estates cannot generally be divided when sold or inherited if the yearly growth falls below 200 m³/year. A forestry deregulation process started in 1990 when the forest policy was reviewed by a committee comprising a broad range of expertise and stakeholder groups. A new forest policy, which took effect in 1994, is based on the principle of “freedom under responsibility” and “management by objectives” instead of “imposition of regulations”. Two overarching objectives of equal importance were formulated: production and safeguarding biodiversity.



Vislanda Sawmill, Sweden

Thanks to the effective implementation of those policies, the forestry sector was able to expand production to meet the growing demand for timber through a large increase in annual harvest while nearly doubling Sweden’s standing timber nearly doubled from the level in 1923.

Today: In recent years, forestry in Sweden has been increasingly influenced by environmental policies and international agreements to ensure sustainable development. Therefore a widespread use of forest certification such as PEFC and FSC is in place. In 2004, forest policy was reviewed again and the result was a continuation of the existing policy with a stronger emphasis on climate issues. In the last few years, there is also increasing pressure from environmental groups for Sweden to establish more conservation areas.

Forest Owners:

A small number of large industrial forest enterprises own 25% of all forest land in Sweden; another 25% is public owned, among which more than half is managed by Sveaskog a state-owned company.

Private family forest owners hold the remaining 50%, with an average holding of 50 ha. The total number of forest owners is more than 330,000, out of a total population of 9 million, of which 125,000 are women. Four decades ago, the majority of the private forest owners lived on their land and worked as farmers. Today, this connection is weaker with at least one third of forestry owners living outside their holdings, often in urban areas.

Forest smallholders associations were initiated spontaneously at village level together with raising timber demand and mistreatment of smallholders by forestry companies. The associations grow and developed into forestry cooperatives during the 1930s to give smallholders a stronger negotiating position and a better chance to get fair market prices. During the World War II, the associations were given the task to provide the urban parts of Sweden with firewood which formed an economic basis for some associations to grow in the years to follow. The associations are all democratic organizations ruled by their members. Today, around 110,000 family enterprises (roughly half of all family enterprise forests), belong to four regional family forest cooperatives covering entire Sweden (see table 1).

For various reasons, the other fifty percent of private forest owners in Sweden chose not to join Associations. As the background paper argue that “tradition is perhaps the strongest influence” for their decisions for not joining any associations. Some bigger estates want to keep market independence but many non-members also consist of the smallest forest farms which seldom put their wood on the market.

Forestry income usually serves as a secondary income for most forest owners: a balanced age-distribution stand can generate annual mean net revenue ranging from SEK 500 to SEK 1,000 per hectare. (a manual labor earns around SEK 300,000 per year in Sweden). On average, around 60% revenue comes from sawlog production, 35–40% from pulpwood. There is also a rapidly rising demand for biomass energy in Sweden as a result of national policy for cleaner energy, which may change sales strategies and market prices in the future



Ingeborg Bromée



Hasse Bengtsson



ILCF Sweden field trip



Co-Chair Lennart Ackzell

TABLE 1: FOREST ASSOCIATIONS IN SWEDEN

Family forest association	No. of members	Forest area owned by members, million hectares	Industries
Södra Skogsägarna	51,300	2.4	5 pulpmills, 8 sawmills and owner of Södra Interior, a chain for processed wood products
Mellanskog	32,000	1.7	Partner in Setra, Sweden's biggest sawmill group
Norrskog	13,000	1.0	3 sawmills
Norra skogsägarna	16,000	1.2	2 sawmills, 1 pole mill, 1 component factory for joineries
TOTAL	110,300	6.2	

KEY LEARNING FROM FIELD TRIP

The field trip started at the birth place of Carl von Linnæus⁹ where participants were taken down the history lane to understand the history of land-use, forestry legislation and Södra, the biggest forest family associations today. To gain a more comprehensive picture of the current forestry model, especially the family forestry association model in Sweden, participants also visited members of Södra, independent small forestland owners, local sawmill, Södra nursery and a logging operation site as well as Växjö biomass power plant. Some of the key reflections from the field visits are summarized below:

Strong local control on forest land enhances better management practices: With clearly registered borders of properties forestland owners in Sweden enjoy secure long-term rights to cut and sell trees on a free market, and right to hunt.

Landowners also have a lot of freedom to choose how to manage their forests: The Forest Act only lays out the basic requirements that should be met by land owners for sustainable forest management and to include key environmental considerations. Forest management planning is voluntary in Sweden, but majority of the forest owners have a management plan and around 75% forest land is certified by PEFC or/and FSC. This drive towards certification has mainly been driven by market demand and strong public environment awareness. Though there are certain limitations imposed by the need to provide “public good” and respect Indigenous Peoples’ rights: “the right of public access” entitles people to pick berries, gather mushrooms or pursue outdoor activities on privately owned forestland. And in Northern Sweden, the indigenous Sami people have the right to herd and graze their reindeer on forestland and forest owners are obliged to consider the needs of reindeer husbandry when undertaking forest management.

Forestry practices of smallholders are also enhanced through generations: Thanks to the secure long-term rights, forestland usually is inherited through generations thus giving landowners good incentives to make a sustainable long-term management plan despite the long rotation time. However, urbanization, lifestyle change and the rising price of forest properties, driven by vacation-home seeker, may lead to demographic shifts of ownership which may undermine the family forestry tradition and the strong ties to the land. Educating the young generation and involving youth in family tradition thus has become quite important to keep the forestry practice legacy.

A supportive and regulation-light government facilitates local control: The state has created enabling policies for local control including a secure tenure system for small holders, deregulated forestry policy to allow forest owners fully exercise their rights over forest management and a limit on land purchasing from private companies. The State has also heavily invested in infrastructure such as subsidized road constructions. The main focus of activities of the SFA is policy implementation, especially regarding reforestation and environmental care requirements but this is combined by dissemination of information, education of public on the importance of forests, organization of information sharing and learning activities, surveys and occasionally contractual services—this is in contrast to many other state forest institutions which see enforcement and implementation of policy as their main focus and to protect state forest land from locals. Through those activities conducted by SFA, the state has also fostered a good relationship with landowners and maintains a good understanding of local realities. There is also a minimum amount of procedure to go through to get approval for forest management activities: the landowner is required to notify government about forest management activities but government only intervenes when reported activities do not meet requirements.

Strong partnerships with differentiated roles promote investment: In Sweden, the government, associations, independent measuring bodies and private sectors all have contributed to the creation of a successful investment model for LCF by taking on different roles to support ILCF. Government takes on the role of enabler by creating supportive governance structure, infrastructure and providing information and education. Whilst membership to associations is voluntary family forestry associations like Södra assist its members to access market, gain competitive edge to obtain fair price, offset risks by diversifying members' assets and lobby government on members' behalf. Private forest companies help provide a free and transparent market for small forest enterprises to compete in. Cooperatives and private companies alike value the relationship with their timber suppliers and devote time and energy to build a strong social network with small forestland owners to secure supply and enhance partnership. An independent timber measurement system that both sellers and buyers can trust also contributes significantly to ensuring the trust among partners. The synergies created by this organically formed partnership with distinct roles for each party contributed largely to the continuous investment streams going into LCF in Sweden.

For LCF to be successful sufficient time and organization is required: Creating LCF is a process and the process took over 100 years in Sweden. Sweden's forest resources were exploited unsustainably for centuries before the crisis hit in 1900s when extensive forest areas were in extremely poor conditions.



Thorsten Celanders

The crisis in forestry, coupled with the land privatization in 1800s, led to the forestry governance revolution initiated by small forestland owners and, latter, the formation of Family Forestry Associations. Over those 100 years the conditions for successful LCF were driven by a social movement towards cooperative establishment, national inheritance norms ensuring long term planning, securing of rights and an enabling policy. The continuing recognition of the history has nurtured forest owners' awareness for sustainability and some members' loyalty to Family Forestry Associations.



Flåboda Forest Nursery, Sweden

LCF is part of a livelihood package and helps diversify risk: It is a common pattern that in many countries that rights holders can't live on forestry alone. Designing a business model that help rights holders get different incomes streams can help maintain rights holder's livelihood and reduce the risks of forestry businesses. Although many farmers are reliant on the land for their sole income there is still a diversification of risk between agriculture and forest income. Even those now residing in urban areas have the benefit of income (in some cases estimated to be 30–40%) from their forest resource whilst still being able to diversify risk from other income sources. For example, Södra designed different incomes streams by building other industries and sharing dividend for its members so they don't need to only rely on the delivery of wood to obtain income. In developing countries where land is more productive, business models that can help smallholders to get income from agriculture, Non-Timber Forest Products, eco-tourisms etc. can be devised. Investment in the education for farmers can also open up more job possibilities for them. The term "hobby farming" is misleading as in most cases LCF in Sweden is seen as a micro business whether it is providing fuelwood for the home or direct income from the sale of timber.



James Mayers

LCF provides a platform to respond to global challenges: In face of changing climate, forest owners are responding actively by adapting forest management (e.g., planting more broadleaved trees that are less susceptible to storm) and improving the insurance policies for their land. To deal with decreasing timber price and raising environment concerns, Södra has become a net biofuel energy provider and started researching the future forest fiber market for its members. However, a future challenge will be how these forests can meet local, national and international biomass energy needs, as well as timber, and pulp and paper demands.



Joe Lawson

Efficient forestry practices need sufficient investment: Logging today in Sweden is fully mechanized and almost all forest owners leave harvesting to a Family Forest Association or a purchasing company, who in turn hire contractors to perform required silviculture practices. Those activities can be carried out year-round. Besides logging practices, sawmills, pulp/paper factories, as well as biomass power plants are also highly capital-intensive and efficient. Computerized systems effectively reduce wastes to minimum through the supply chain and can be adjusted easily to meet requirements

of the market. The industry has also been shaped to maximize profitability of the entire supply chain: wood harvested from thinning are sold as pulpwood and small-dimension sawn logs; woodchips from saw mills are sold for pulp and paper industry; saw dusts and woodchips are also further utilized for biomass energy production; and ash from biomass energy production is sold back to the forestland to increase soil fertility.

Participants also noted that the conditions in Sweden today are drastically different from the realities in developing countries: LCF enterprises in developing countries are still labor-intensive; there is a lack of enabling political environment and generally a mistrust between government and civil society. But looking back in history, there were quite a lot similarities and Sweden's history of over-exploitation of forest resources is repeating itself in other developing countries. The question is how Sweden's model can be used to help advance LCF in other developing countries without going through centuries of mistakes and pains.

HOW TO ADVANCE LCF BUILT ON EXPERIENCES FROM SWEDEN?

Building on the observations from the field and participants' own experiences and expertise, participants also discussed how to use lessons learnt from Sweden to help advance LCF in other parts of the world.

What are the drivers for scaling up ILCF?

Participants reflected back in history to analyze why the forestry crisis in early 20th century led to the rise of LCF in Sweden? What are the drivers for this change? Whether those drivers can be created elsewhere in the world to scale up LCF?

Participants identified the following critical elements in history that set the scene for the rise of LCF in Sweden:

Sweden enjoyed a society with flat hierarchy, a government that was democratic and little corporate control. Such a democratic society nurtured a good understanding of rights and social responsibilities among citizens. And this sense of rights and obligations was reinforced by good education policies oriented towards cooperation and building trust between land owners and governments, hence the development of conditions for successful LCF. Swedes also had a long history working with farms and forestry land which nurtured a strong bond between people and the land. Building on this social capital, facing the declining farm land productivity in 19th century, government decide to privatize land and mobilize local farmers to improve productivity which reinforced local control on land.

With reinforced local control, when the perceived common crisis in forestry (devastated forestland and low return from timber, etc.) happened, small landowners were quickly mobilized at a large scale to lobby government for change and have taken actions themselves to address the issue. Some strong local champions also have emerged to lead the fight and movement towards change. The new Forestry Act born out of public demand, policy that capped corporate land and effective law enforce-



Leif Jougda

ment all contributed to saving Sweden forestry from the crisis and provided a foundation for healthy forestry market for smallholders. In seek of business of scale and efficiency, smallholders got together and formed Family Forestry Associations. Government was very supportive of the associations and small holders, who were pivotal in meeting the increasing demand driven by industrial development and World War II. Also a banking system was established to support those small businesses to invest and scale up.



Steven Johnson

Many developing countries share the same crisis of overexploitation of natural resources, but by reflecting and learning from the history of LCF in Sweden, there are existing opportunities to induce more driving forces that are needed to create pathway towards LCF in a similar fashion elsewhere. However, in the ever-more-globalized society, concentration of corporate power is much greater and reaches much further: capping corporate power in favor for smallholders may be a much harder battle to fight today. Today's society is also more individualized. Furthermore, in developing countries where there is a larger population, less homogeneous and organized civil society, it will be harder to reach the critical mass that is needed for similar revolution that happened in Sweden.



Ghan Shyam Pandey

The general lesson learnt through the Sweden's path is that scaling up ILCF can be a very long process of social mobilization: the more organized stakeholders are, the better the chance of success. It is also of crucial importance to promote the general belief that locally controlled forestry can develop business sophistication over time to contribute to economic development significantly and meeting global demand for forestry goods, as demonstrated by Sweden's case.

How to build partnerships that can bring about profitable smallholder production with good social & environmental outcomes?

The general principles for a successful partnership hold the same everywhere: common objectives, trust, mutual respect, mutual benefits, equality and understanding of each other's values. But within different local realities, different efforts thus different utilities of partnerships are needed to create or improve enabling environment for ILCF.



Co-Chair Kerstin Jonsson Cisse

Where there is still a need to reinforce local control, partnerships are needed within a rights holders' group to create community leadership; between rights holders' groups to scale up smallholders' voices and influence (e.g. association can be used to form this type of partnership); between rights holder and NGOs to help capacity building; between rights holders and industries to start building up business. Hence, the partnership between rights holder and government may only be emerging and third party facilitation may be needed to build trust.

In context where local control is strong, more types of partnerships can be explored, for example, partnership with researchers, market access partners like forest certification bodies, independent measurement organizations, banks and other extension services providers. At this stage, rights holders may form a stronger partnership with government: for example, government can create favorable business environment for small holders and small holders can provide services and goods that government need.

There is no blueprint that everyone can follow and more partnerships are not always better. The key is to have informed decisions based on the needs of local rights holders and the governance context (no government interventions, strong interventions or light interventions). Therefore some participants suggested that the first step towards a constructive partnership is to conduct a stakeholder analysis and understand what is the local capacity and needs, what is the political context, who are the stakeholders involved, what are the common interests shared by the stakeholders and what type of mechanisms can be used to form partnership and facilitate discussions among stakeholders.

How to build successful business model for smallholder forestry?

Understanding the whole value chain: Investments need to understand and consider the whole value chain of LCF. Sometimes the best point of entry for investments may not be on forestry itself but on other driving forces that can help scale up the demand for LCF products: for example, sawmills, paper and pulp factories. Södra not only invest in saw mills but also pulp, biofuel, forest fiber and nurseries to stay competitive in various links of the value chain and to provide its members stable demand for their forest products.

Business mindset: Rights holders must perceive themselves as entrepreneurs/investors and understand that they need to be professional and competitive in the market. Rights holders must actively organize themselves to function as a business, take active ownership of their business and ensure profitability first and foremost to sustain LCF. Outside help is needed in some countries for capacity building and empowerment but it is the rights holders themselves who need to understand and take on the obligations and risks associated with their businesses. Södra is a perfect case to showcase the importance of being business-oriented: Södra is limited company 100% owned by members of Södra Association. Södra runs its nursery, saw mills, pulp and biofuel factory as businesses independently from its association functions and actively reinvest in its own growth as a company to generate more profits for its members in the long-term.

Trust instilled into the business model: to build trust between investors and rights holders. Investors must be willing to share profits fairly, interact with rights holders directly and frequently over a long period of time; partnerships with other trusted third parties can also help build trust. Rights holders must be willing to meet their parts of agreement through responsible forest stewardship and meeting supply requirements. Transparent and free market can help ensure trust among all market players, whilst schemes such as fair trade, PEFC and FSC, can help build trust between LCF businesses and consumers.

How to demonstrate the business case for ILCF?

There needs to be a business plan or feasibility study that clearly demonstrates financial returns of ILCF. To that end, there should be a clear understanding of different values of the land, costs of running the business, market price of the products and an inventory of resources on land which shows the location of high value areas. The business plan should also demonstrate continuity of supply, organizational structure, benefit sharing mechanism and a thorough risk analysis. Both investors and rights holders need to go through a due diligence process to demonstrate their capability to support such a business plan. Participants suggested that a trusted third party may be needed to conduct such a due diligence process to ensure integrity and fairness. Rights holders often have to provide collaterals to raise capital for their business. In many cases, it is difficult for rights holders to provide traditional collaterals (e.g. land titles). Successful models where non-traditional collaterals have been used are thus needed to explore other means to raise capital for ILCF.

In developing countries, right holders will need other partners to help demonstrate the business case by, for example, legitimizing their rights over the land where is needed, building relationship with investors and consumers, as well as understanding the value chains of businesses. But it is important to let the rights holders take full ownership of the process.

Participants also suggested that more successful cases of ILCF should be gathered to showcase the importance of ILCF. And the Sweden model can be piloted in some other developing countries.

NEXT STEPS

The inputs from Sweden dialogue will be reflected in 2 major publications of the ILCF initiative: *Guide to Investing in Locally Controlled Forests* and the *TFD Review on ILCF*. Both publications will be released and distributed widely in September 2012. TFD and its partners will actively promote the key learning from this initiative through its networks, link the lessons learnt with other projects/initiatives and seek opportunities to further implement key suggestions on the ground.

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ENDNOTES

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