



THE FORESTS DIALOGUE

TFD STEERING COMMITTEE 2006

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Scoping Dialogue on Intensively Managed Planted Forests

21-22 June 2005 - IUCN Headquarters, Gland, Switzerland

Co-Chairs' Summary Report

Stewart Maginnis and Sharon Haines

The Forests Dialogue (TFD) convened 22 international leaders from the forest products industry, NGOs and civil society, and forest owners at the Headquarters of the World Conservation Union -IUCN for a scoping dialogue to discuss the environmental, social, and economic factors critical to the management of intensively managed planted forests (plantations).

The shift from natural forest management to intensively managed planted forests (IMPFs) is one of the most pressing issues facing those concerned with sustainable forestry today. IMPFs contribute one-third of the world's industrial wood supply, with technological change and increasing global demand for forest products projected to favor IMPFs over alternative forest resources in the future. While IMPFs have significantly increased the efficiency of timber production and reduced costs per unit volume, they have also a historic reputation for imposing additional environmental and social costs, particularly on local communities. The current challenge is to optimise the future economic, social and environmental contributions from IMPFs while mitigating associated negative impacts.

This dialogue was the first in a proposed series of multi-stakeholder meetings to explore management strategies and provide greater clarity on the requirements for increasing consensus and future cooperation between all stakeholders.

Agenda

The first day was devoted to presentation of the issue and updates on related initiatives. Peter Kanowski's keynote paper on the social, environmental, and economic issues related to planted forests opened the session and was followed by presentations by representatives of the FAO, FSC, UNFF/NZ, and WWF. A session to identify key issues and stakeholder perspectives relating to IMPFs followed. Stakeholders then met in small groups to converge on key issues and present recommendations. Finally, all participants met to define an action plan to address the role of IMPFs in the future.

Key Themes

The dialogue was structured as an open investigation to determine and clarify individual stakeholder perceptions of the environmental, social, and economic issues surrounding IMPFs and to explore the key elements that the group commonly held to be important for sustainable and equitable production of forest products from IMPFs. The following key themes emerged:

1. Under the right conditions, planted forests can provide a range of important benefits

There was consensus among participants that external drivers shape IMPF design, implementation and management and thus determine the social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts of IMPFs. Participants identified societal change, governance, markets, and spatial scale as some of those determinants; they also noted that only some of these drivers lie within the control of forest managers. There was general if not unanimous agreement that that well designed and well managed planted forests could play an important role in diversified landscapes and provide renewable, efficient, and environmentally friendly (compared to competing non-renewable alternatives) goods and services. Equally there was general recognition that poorly managed planted forests did indeed impose significant social and environmental costs, particularly on local communities. Primary areas of concern are the consequences of large-scale land use change and wood fiber-based industrialization.

2. There is a need for clear definitions of planted forests

Stakeholders agreed that the lack of clear definitions for planted forests has led to misunderstandings and limited a comprehensive exploration of the potential benefits that IMPFs can offer. Changing stakeholder expectations and technological uses over time have led to constantly-evolving definitions of planted forests. Participants agreed that this lack of clarity, in addition to insufficient knowledge about the drivers of past success and failure in planted forest development, has contributed to the negative reputation of IMPFs. This has resulted in international campaigns against IMPFs and strong resistance from civil society and impacted communities. There was strong support among participants for clarification of definitions and a closer investigation into past planted forest development models.

Discussion of definitions took place following Peter Kanowski's identification of the stages of plantation development: 1st-generation (softwood on medium rotation for solid wood production starting in the 1920s); 2nd-generation (short rotation exotics/hardwoods for industrial production, particularly pulp and paper, starting in the 1980s); and 3rd-generation (species originally planted for non-wood products but also now available for wood production). There was general agreement that the meeting should focus on the next (4th) generation of planted forests. Most participants offered some qualified support for planted forests, based on their particular vision of sustainability. Other key points raised during discussion of definitions included the need to make IMPF a sustainable technology to meet human needs; the role of subsidies in driving IMPFs; and carbon sequestration opportunities provided by planted forests.

3. There is a need for further dialogue regarding IMPFs

Stakeholder presentations and individual leader perspectives on IMPFs provided an overview of current international initiatives and attitudes on where the greatest potential for positive change exists. There was agreement on the need to meet global needs for wood, fiber and energy, whether through natural forests, planted forests or alternative products. Many participants felt that comparative advantage, international trade, concentration, and technology will favor IMPFs over natural forests. It was agreed that economic, social, and environmental sustainability standards are essential if planted forests are to emerge as the preferred way to meet global demand. Participants agreed on scale, composition, and quality as factors to be considered in determining standards.

It became clear through stakeholder discussions that many aspects of IMPF management are still in need of review, despite the existence of review processes established to optimize the social and environmental benefits of planted forests. One issue of particular concern to

stakeholders was outsourcing and the use of contract labor. Additionally, there was discussion of the policy implications of best practices on governance and human rights, with case studies from Brazil and New Zealand presented to address the impacts of planted forests on indigenous communities. Other issues of concern to stakeholders include the role of corporations in human rights, and the impacts of scale and agriculture. There was no clear consensus on whether planted forests increase or decrease native forest deforestation.

The sheer breadth of issues and divergent perspectives highlighted the need for further dialogue and a more in-depth investigation of the issues. Areas identified as critical for further research include subsidies, bio-security, contractors, property rights, standards, and gaps in participation.

Recommendations

Stakeholders agreed that consensus between different stakeholder groups is essential to defining the development of the 4th generation of planted forests and identified several models as useful to promote further dialogue development. These include the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil, outcomes from the New Zealand meeting, and scenario work conducted by CIFOR and Forest Trends in China and Indonesia.

There was strong support for continued exploration of IMPF issues through follow-up reports and regionally-based meetings. Participants suggested a re-meeting in early 2006, with the potential of a formal dialogue in 2007, as deemed necessary.

Priority actions agreed to include:

- Preparation of an issues paper to highlight the major planted forests issues identified during the dialogue: the role of planted forests and other land uses, land tenure and reforms, trade-offs (social, cultural, environmental, and economic), mechanisms for decisions, and trends among major players (governments, private companies, small holders, and others). Potential date for production in December or January.
- Field-oriented meetings and study tours on planted forests on regionally-important themes. Possibilities:
 - Brazil: corporate/smallholder partnerships, landscape management
 - South Africa: water, smallholders, corporate/smallholder partnerships
 - China: corporate investments, smallholders, desertification and land rehabilitation, phytosanitary issues
 - India: smallholders
 - New Zealand, Canada, United States

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