

## **Third Annual Meeting of APFNet Focal Points**

**APFNet secretariat, 6<sup>th</sup> floor, Baoneng Center  
Beijing, China 19 April 2012**

### **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Opening session**

Mr. Ab Rahim Nik, Deputy Secretary General in Malaysia's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, chaired the meeting, assisted by co-chair Ms. Teresa Zinovia McMaugh, Assistant Manager of International Forestry Policy in Australia's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Chair Ab Rahim Nik welcomed participants and thanked them for giving him the honour of chairing this third annual meeting of APFNet Focal Points. He then summarized the outcomes of discussions of the Interim Steering Committee which took place the previous day.

Firstly, he informed participants that ITTO became the committee's newest member, joining the two other members from international forestry related organizations (FAO and The Nature Conservancy).

With regard to the draft *APFNet Operational Framework*, it was agreed that further comments could be submitted to the Secretariat in writing by no later than 9 May. The Secretariat will then distribute another version and members will have 2 weeks after that to confirm their acceptance. Focal Points will be provided the same opportunity and timeframe to give feedback.

In terms of APFNet's annual work plan and budget for 2012, the Interim Steering Committee suggested only minor modifications which will be incorporated into the final version. Members of the Interim Steering Committee also noted the need to clarify text in the document which outlines the procedures for developing APFNet membership during its transitional period. Focal Points will review the latest changes and can offer further comments when this item is addressed in the afternoon session.

Mr. Qu Guilin, Executive Director of APFNet Secretariat, also offered his words of welcome and expressed his gratitude for the support that Focal Points are providing to his organization. He emphasized that they are a critical link between APFNet and regional economies, adding that the role they play in helping to improve forestry policies and practices is vital.

Chair Ab Rahim Nik then invited comments on the provisional agenda, which was adopted as presented. He also obtained the consent of members to have Ms. Rosalie McConnell, APFNet Senior International Consultant, act as facilitator of the meeting.

#### **Session 1: Update on APFNet Progress in 2011**

Mr. Qu Guilin reported on APFNet activities undertaken in 2011 and highlighted main achievements, including the following:

- Interim Steering Committee established
- Working Mechanism for APFNet Focal Points improved
- Operations of the Secretariat formalized
- Strategic Plan 2011-2015 finalized
- Interim governance structure put in place
- Training workshops held (31 participants from 15 developing economies)
- Scholarships offered to 8 additional students for postgraduate studies in forestry
- First APEC meeting of ministers responsible for forestry convened
- The ASEM Symposium on SFM and climate change organized
- Website revamped to include a learning hub
- Documentary filmed to showcase best practices
- Partnerships expanded
- Demonstration projects approved (6 implemented in 12 economies)

China, as host economy, expressed appreciation for the work of APFNet and fully endorsed the excellent report given by Mr. Qu. The Executive Director of RECOFTC also commended the organization for its accomplishments but noted the need to ensure that the new skills and knowledge acquired through training workshops and other capacity building initiatives were put to good use to make things happen on the ground. FAO underscored the added value that APFNet brought to the region and encouraged it to continue efforts to publicize best practices as a means not only to dispel bad media coverage but also to promote the good work being done. He mentioned that it has been more than 5 years since the publication of *In Search of Excellence* and that it might be a good opportunity for FAO to collaborate with APFNet to produce an update.

After a brief introduction of APFNet's capacity building program in 2011, the Chair invited representatives from select demonstration projects to present highlights of activities and outcomes achieved to date.

### **Sustainable upland agroforestry system in Chinese Taipei**

Ms. Fen-Hui Chen, Contract Researcher in the Silviculture Division of the Taiwan Forestry Research Institute, Council of Agriculture, informed participants of the background, objectives and outputs of the project since its inception in September 2011. She explained that the uplands, which consist of domestic forests, aboriginal reserves and private farms, are extremely vulnerable to soil erosion and landslides due to the rugged topography. Given that the people in these areas rely on agriculture for their livelihoods, it is essential to achieve sustainability. Agroforestry - because it provides farmers with income in the short term through agricultural crop production and in the long term through forestry activities - is a good solution to address both environmental and social issues.

Therefore, the project aims to develop and demonstrate sustainable agroforestry systems in Chinese Taipei's uplands in order to encourage mountain villages to engage in agroforestry as a

way to prevent destructive landslides and massive surface erosions as well as to improve livelihoods through increased income generation. Another key objective is to develop criteria and indicators for evaluating sustainability.

Three categories of stakeholders are involved in the project: 1) research organizations (Taiwan Forestry Research Institute - the Executing Agency; the Forestry Bureau of Chinese Taipei; and the Forestry Association of Chinese Taipei), 2) farmers and communities, and 3) industry.

Activities to date include the selection of sites and establishment of experimental plots; data collection on tree growth, cash crops, biodiversity indexes and environmental factors; simulation of agroforestry models; establishment of demonstration sites for soil and water conservation; analysis of incomes and evaluation of land productivity as part of the development of criteria and indicators to assess sustainability; interviews with farmers; seminars and workshops on technical aspects; and village teams to disseminate technical knowledge and practices.

### **Forest cover and carbon mapping in the Greater Mekong Subregion and Malaysia**

Mr. Li Zengyuan from the Chinese Academy of Forestry noted that the project runs from September 2011 until August 2013 and that 7 economies are involved (Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam), in addition to the University of Maryland in the United States and the Global Observation of Forest and Land Cover Dynamics. Population in the area numbers 348 million over 317,242,000 ha, of which 148,128,000 ha is forest. An inception workshop was convened to provide information on work plans, forest cover mapping and sub-contracts. It also provided a venue to share experiences, practices, knowledge and lessons among the twenty-six technical staff from forestry departments, research institutes, and universities who attended the meeting.

The project is expected to achieve the following outputs and outcomes:

A remote sensing database will be made available to different users and include previous and current land cover maps, field measurements and forest inventories. This database will be distributed to each economy with the same structure and access portal in order to provide training and validation data for remote sensing products.

Annual forest maps will be produced at both coarse (300-500m) and fine (30-100m) resolution for the period between 2005 and 2010. The former type of map is expected to show forest change and to identify significant forest events which took place in the GMS and Malaysia during this time. The latter type will detail information on classes of land cover to help identify the forces driving change and to support domestic and regional policy decisions.

Forest carbon storage will be mapped at coarse resolution and this baseline data will be used to analyze forest quality and the distribution of forest carbon in participating economies.

Workshops and study tours on processing remote sensing data, on mapping forests and on estimating forest biomass/carbon will be conducted for both individuals and communities.

## **Community participation in sustainable forest management in Nepal**

Mr. Ram Prasad Lamsal, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, updated participants on the progress of this project. He stated that it aimed to improve the livelihood of forest dependent poor people through participatory forest management, community forest enterprises and green jobs; develop criteria and indicators to assess forest management and good governance in community forestry; document best practices to inform sustainable forest management policies and to promote community forest enterprises; and build human capacity to achieve these objectives.

With regard to outputs, he noted that the concept of sustainable forest management and good governance was introduced to 104 community forestry user groups (CFUGs) which represented 25,422 households over an area of 28,622 ha. Since the project began, the involvement of women and minority groups in decision making has increased; transparency and accountability within CFUGs have improved; local capacity has been strengthened; stakeholders are collaborating more closely; and 11 enterprises are in the process of being registered and preparing business plans.

Findings from a mid-term evaluation emphasized the need to provide additional support to both forest development and communities; focus on fewer activities and revise the budget accordingly; increase the range of stakeholders; and publicize the project more widely. Future activities should provide more technical input to communities, engage in forest rehabilitation, reduce deforestation and forest degradation, and commission a study on forest policy.

Planned interventions in the next phase are to test criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and the multiple uses of forests in 5 sites; develop operational plans for the demonstration sites under CFUGs; continue to support the establishment of enterprises and cooperatives; and document/disseminate best practices and lessons learned.

## **Forest restoration and sustainable forest management in Viet Nam**

Mr. Luu Tien Dat, Official in the Department of Science, Technology and International Cooperation of the Forestry Administration, stated the objectives of this project are to:

- increase and diversify forest products by planting non-timber species
- increase the economic value of natural forests by improving timber composition
- improve livelihoods by enhancing local capacity to produce forest goods for the market
- provide local people with equal access to technical forestry services and markets
- enhance ecological services by practicing sustainable forest management
- strengthen the capacity of local institutions
- increase farmer understanding of forest restoration, management and NTFP processing

To date, the project planted 50 ha of NTFP species in forests and 500 culms of bamboo around forest stands and foothills. In addition, 50 ha of forests have been restored through thinning and enrichment planting of high value timber species. Fifteen leaflets have also been produced and distributed within and outside the project area, along with four technical handbooks on

rehabilitation of secondary forests; prevention of forest pests and diseases; nursery techniques; and harvesting/processing of forest products.

Other achievements are the development of regulations on forest protection and on benefit sharing in two villages which have also each established a forestry development fund from household contributions, fines and donations. In terms of capacity building, ten training courses and study tours have been offered to farmers and local staff in such areas as restoration techniques, enrichment planting, forest protection and processing of NTFPs. Activities to be completed consist of planting the remainder of the sites, conducting the first and second thinning, disseminating the handbooks and leaflets more widely, and introducing the pilot model at future training courses and study tours.

### **Making forestry work for the poor in Asia and the Pacific**

Mr. Patrick Durst, Senior Forestry Officer with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, presented the final outcomes of the above-noted project which ran from March 2010 to December 2011. He noted that the Asia Forest Network assisted with implementation and 11 economies participated: Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. The project focused on three areas and produced the following findings:

*Community forestry:* This approach may provide safety nets but rarely eliminates poverty. Often, other livelihood options generate more income and resource exploitation increases poverty and conflict in rural areas if not well planned or managed. In addition, rights allocated to people are often short-term, resources are degraded and support is insufficient to meet needs.

*Commercial/industrial forestry:* Generally, poor people lack the resources to engage in commercial forestry. When hired as unskilled workers, their wages are low, employment conditions can be dangerous and benefits are often not shared equitably. However, demand for forest products is increasing, value addition through processing increases profits and investment in afforestation and reforestation creates jobs.

*Payment for ecological services:* This concept is still in the initial stages and many unknowns are associated with its implementation, especially at the local level. Although transaction costs are high at present, they may fall over time and markets for forest carbon may expand.

In addition to 11 reports on forestry and poverty alleviation, a regional synthesis, proceedings of a regional workshop, a summary of workshops, and reports on 2 short courses on forest policy, 8 policy briefs on the following topics were published:

- forests for a greener future
- back to basics: field-level forestry
- the forest biodiversity challenge
- reinventing forest policies and institutions
- learning for the future: forestry training and education
- better governance, better forestry
- making forestry work for the poor

forests and gender in a changing environment

### **Session 2: Review of the APFNet Operational Framework**

Given that Focal Points have an opportunity to provide comments in writing to the Secretariat by 9 May, no detailed discussion of the document took place.

### **Session 3: Annual work plan 2012**

Focal Points were informed of the suggestions made by the Interim Steering Committee the previous day and offered additional comments. With regard to the scholarship program, a proposal was made to give priority to people who were actually working in the forestry sector. In response to questions about the possibility of increasing the number of scholarships and demonstration projects, the point was made that much depends on how successful APFNet is in raising funds from other sources, especially the private sector. With regard to the partners listed in the document, Mr. Qu made it clear that they were examples only and that the list was not exhaustive.

### **Session 4: Procedures for the development of APFNet membership**

Again, Focal Points were informed of the suggestions made by the Interim Steering Committee the previous day and did not request additional changes. However, a question was raised about the possibility of collecting membership dues in the future but it was felt that, if such a proposal were made, the matter would need further discussion.

### **Session 5: Open discussion**

#### *Priorities of regional economies and potential opportunities for cooperation with APFNet*

At the invitation of the chair, the facilitator explained that the objective of this session was to explore ways and identify opportunities to strengthen cooperation between regional economies and APFNet, consistent with the *Strategic Plan 2011-2015*. In this regard, she emphasized that Focal Points were not being asked to make decisions at this time. Rather, the session was more of a brainstorming exercise.

Several representatives expressed interest in activities related to carbon credits and trade. Capacity building in the context of REDD+ was also mentioned, including in terms of forest conservation, reduced logging and satellite imaging to assess forest change. In addition, assistance to establish certification and timber legality assurance schemes was important to some people in the group. Other possible areas are watershed management, improved ways to measure forest quality, the search for more best practices and good policies, and emphasis on the quality rather than quantity of training to maximize impact.

Given that resources are limited, the importance of being selective and catalytic was noted. One representative suggested that the number of priorities identified in the work plan be limited to those related to increasing forest cover by 20 million ha by 2020.

### *The role of Focal Points in providing forestry updates and information on best practices*

Since information sharing is one of the four pillars of APFNet, this session was meant to brainstorm ways that Focal Points could make better use of available tools, including the APFNet website, to publicize important events, announce forest policy changes, share successful practices and projects, post publications of interest, and update findings of the latest forest resources assessments. As an example of a possible initiative on which Focal Points may wish to collaborate with APFNet, a preview was shown of a documentary being produced on the successful Three-North Shelterbelt Program.

During discussion, the importance of keeping an up-to-date list of Focal Points and of naming alternates was emphasized. Otherwise, it was felt that communication becomes very difficult. Many representatives suggested that APFNet initiate requests for information on a regular basis. They added that these should be focused and to the point, requiring perhaps that inputs not exceed one page. Additional proposals were for APFNet to explore the feasibility of linking its website to others and to look into the possibility of establishing a clearinghouse mechanism. Lastly, FAO invited APFNet to become involved in a working group that the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission is establishing on forestry communications.

### *Other matters*

No other matters were raised.

### **Session 6: Organization of work**

It was agreed that Viet Nam would chair the next meeting and that Malaysia would act as co-chair.

The Chair then invited representatives to consider hosting the next meeting in about a year. He indicated that if no offer was received within a reasonable timeframe, China would be pleased to again host the event, either in Beijing or at another location to be determined.

### **Closing remarks**

Mr. Ab Rahim Nik thanked the Focal Points for their active participation in discussions and expressed his appreciation to Ms. Teresa Zinovia McMaugh for assisting him to conduct the meeting. He also acknowledged the good work of the facilitator and closed the session by wishing the participants a safe journey home.