

Supporting to develop new forestry sector strategy and policy through consultation with local communities and civil society organizations

Summary of Major policy feedbacks submitted to MoFSC

Community Forestry should be the strategy and main approach of forest management in Nepal as it was already recognized by the MPFS, 1988. The new strategy for forestry sector should be crafted in a way that lessons coming from the community forestry could be scaled up and scaled out to other forest management regimes- government manage forest, conservation area, national, buffer zone etc. There is a mindset with the forestry organization that only the foresters and DFO could make the scientific forest management. This mindset needs to be changed a fact need to be established that the forest managed by the community is equally scientific.

The evolution and development of forestry institutions at local level and their networks at national level has proved that civil society in forestry sector could positively contribute to forest management. This fact needs to be realized and role for CSOs in new forest strategy should be explicitly mentioned. Forest management should be directly linked to the livelihoods of the local people. Enterprise, income and employment of the local people should be the focus of new strategy.

Vision:

Community based sustainable management of forests: Wealthy communities and prosperous people.

Goal: Sustainable management of community forest as well as other community based forest management regimes will enhance the community property rights, forestry governance, social justice, gender equality, creation of green jobs and ecological restoration.

Objectives

- To make Nepal model of community forestry and to enhance the community property rights in forest resource management.
- To establish community forestry and other community based forest management regimes as national priority program.
- To promote the community participation in protected area management.
- To promote social inclusion gender equality and good governance in forestry sector.
- To formulate conducive policies and promote enabling environment for investment in forestry sector.

Thematic Areas

Community Rights and Tenure

- Formulate and implement one and integrated forestry policy and Act and dissolve the provisions conflicting with community forestry rights.
- Manage and hand over 80 % of the total forest area as community forestry.
- Hand over community forests with land ownership to the users and ensure the provision of harit Purja (Green Certificate).
- Ensure the rights of local and indigenous people according to ILO 169 and convention on biological diversity.

Forestry sector governance and administration

- Re-organize MoFSC institutions to:
 - a. Better utilise the capacity and potential of non-government actors in the forest sector by promoting private-public-community partnerships.
 - b. Reduce the administrative burden on government forestry sector staff and focus more on technical part.
 - c. Enhance technical skills and management capabilities.
 - d. Minimise bureaucracy.
 - e. Bring better communication and management skills to enhance the image and performance of the forestry sector.
- Improve the gender and social balance within MoFSC institutions in accordance with GESI and institutionalise GESI within the new FSS.
- Align MoFSC institutions with local government (at different levels) thus reducing centralised control and improving linkages with accountable bodies.
- Draft new legislation to increase clarity, transparency, and consistency of legislation ensuring that it is unambiguous, based on tested approaches, and allows for minimal discretionary powers.
- Ensure the role of the private sector in the management of forests and the development of forest enterprises.
- Revisit the regulatory framework – especially government orders, circulars, and directives – with the aim of deregulating these and removing inconsistencies.
- The role and function of the MoFSC departments and divisions must be clarified. There is currently confusion as to whether departments should primarily implement the FSS or whether they should create and support an enabling environment for others to carry out implementation.
- The future role and function of DFRS and parastatals need to be clarified. The question of whether the DFRS can function as a semi-autonomous entity is an important one. The parastatals, especially TCN, HPPCL, and FPDB, must be dissolved.

Management of forest resources

- Implement only three types of forest management regimes namely community, private and government managed forests.
- Invest 50 % of the total budget to community based forest management annually.
- Manage 80 % of the total forest area as the community forestry.
- Develop a forest land-use strategy for Nepal to identify the most appropriate management modality for each patch of forest.
- Bring all forest areas under the remit of a management plan. Promote sustainable harvesting and management of forests in good condition to generate forest products for forest-based industries, both small and larger scale.
- Merge the pro-poor leasehold forestry with the community forestry program for administrative purposes. Nonetheless, the strategy must recognize the unique evolution and potential for both these models
- Strengthen the regulatory environment to enable patches of national forest not demanded by communities to be leased to private entrepreneurs, or managed under a PPP model for commercial sustainable utilisation.
- Identify appropriate forest management modalities for forests in the high mountains and Chure. A similar approach is needed for forests that are not community based or included in protected areas.

Forest sector contribution to economic development

- Place more emphasis on commercialisation of forest products. Develop strategies to support and foster forest-based enterprises, especially small-scale enterprises in rural areas. Focus on strategies to create sustainable jobs, cash incomes, and legitimate forest-based enterprise that will benefit poor people and disadvantaged groups.
- Work closely with the private sector to identify viable investment opportunities and sources of finance. Work with the private sector to provide a stimulating and supportive enabling environment for investment and growth in the forest sector.
- Take advantage of the high demand for forest product-based commodities to follow a more strongly commercial direction for the forest sector. At the same time, the FSS must recognise that many poor households are dependent on subsistence forest products for their livelihoods. Maintain a balance between local needs, commercial interest, and economic growth.
- Deregulate harvesting and transport of forest products and enterprise establishment rules to create a more supportive environment to enable private tree and forest owners and CFUGS to generate 'green jobs'.
- Promote Nepal's forest products internationally and remove barriers to the export of high value products to international markets.

- Promote the commercial cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants on private lands through extension and demonstration. This will reduce pressure on wild resources.
- Develop and manage information and monitoring systems for Nepal's forest-based industry sector.
- Forest products coming from private land or cultivated NTFPs/MAPs products must be exempt from paying VAT.
- Permit regimes for private forests and trees need to be simplified to stimulate greater levels of planting and management of forest and trees in private land.

Forestry sector contribution to social inclusion and poverty reduction

- Continue to support community forestry user groups in governance. Targeted actions are required to address the needs of the groups' poor and socially disadvantaged members. Enable the local forest groups to develop opportunities for jobs and cash incomes in rural areas.
- Strengthen necessary legal provisions by revising the Forest Act to ensure that the legal autonomy of local forest groups is strengthened and ensured.
- Ensure intellectual property rights, community property rights, patent rights, genetic resources, and other relevant knowledge is used to benefit poor people.

Bio-diversity and protected area management

- Engage and involve local communities in protected area management.
- Develop a scientific basis with participatory and open process for the establishment of new PAs and botanical gardens. While creating new protected areas, take into account local, national, and international needs of biodiversity conservation and community participation.
- Explore opportunities for biodiversity conservation outside formally protected areas through land-use management incentives and regulation.
- Develop a more fair and transparent compensation system for dealing with the aftermath of human-wildlife conflict.
- Work closely with the private sector to continue to promote Nepal's PAs as tourist destinations while at the same time spreading the pressure of visitors and infrastructure more widely and away from critical habitat areas. Rejuvenate critical habitats to reduce the pressure.
- Develop a workable mechanism for investing a part of hydro-power royalty for the conservation of concerned watersheds.
- Promote community based biodiversity conservation initiatives.

Climate change and REDD+

- Harmonize Nepal's REDD+ strategy fully into the framework of the new FSS. Ensure that REDD+ does not become separate from other forest sector strategies focusing on poverty alleviation, economic growth, or biodiversity conservation.
- Promote the use of local forest groups as implementers of LAPA. Build climate resilient actions into management plans for forests under all management modalities.
- Integrate adaptation actions defined in NAPA into forest sector planning and administration.
- Explore the future options for the compliance market for carbon in Nepal's forest sector – for example focusing more on other climate-related services such as water or biodiversity.
- Continue to pilot PES activities with a view to expanding this approach to financing for forest management and conservation in future (including carbon finance and other environmental services)

Proposed Institutional Setup for Forestry Sector Strategy

