

Role of local cooperatives, associations,
and federations in enabling
sustainable management
of family forests:
perspective of the
International Family Forestry Alliance

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Equivalent Terms:

- family forest owner
- small forest farmer
- forest small-holder
- woodlot owner
- non-industrial private forest owner

International Family Forestry Alliance

- formed in 2002 to represent national associations of family forest owners in international discussions on the future of the world's forests
- 23 members: Europe, also US, Mexico, Kenya, Australia, and Canada
- participates in UN Forum on Forests, Conventions on Climate and Biodiversity, and the Forest and Farm Facility
- contributes to national consultations

IFFA

- is a network for exchange of experience between member associations
- in partnership with
Global Alliance for Community Forestry
International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of Tropical Forests
(together known as the
Three Rights-Holders Groups, “the G3”)
- ongoing collaboration with IIED, IUCN, RRI

Why is sustainable development of family and community forests difficult?

Two opinions:

1. Inherent weaknesses

- impossible to manage small forests with many owners for good landscape results
- very difficult to organize large volumes of timber from small producers
- poverty is the main cause of deforestation; protecting forests and improving incomes is a trade-off: one or the other is possible but not both
- improved incomes from small forests requires big Increase in productivity with consolidation and mechanization

2. Weak policies and distorted markets

- tenure and property rights are insecure
- regulation of forest management makes it unprofitable
- poor market access:
weak infrastructure,
control of timber market by large industry
- limited or non-existent support services
(education, credit...)

Result: no confidence to invest in forest management: risks too high

Answer offered by IFFA and the G3:
Livelihoods can improve AND forests
can be protected(including water supply,
carbon storage, biodiversity) when
four enabling conditions are in place:

1. secure tenure and property rights
2. access to markets on fair terms
3. good quality extension and technical
support services
4. effective associations

The “four pillars”: when they are in place, livelihoods improve AND forests are protected.

This is not a nice theory.

There are good examples:

Nepal: 30 years ago, worst deforestation in the world;

deforestation reversed, poverty reduced.

Sweden: 100 years ago, same problem of deforestation and poverty; today, with Finland and Norway, world leaders in sustainable management over several generations, and have built world-class lumber and paper industries

The four pillars are a package, not a menu:
All four are needed; if any are missing the others
don't work as well.

“If you plant this new type of tree,
it will change your life.”

Farmers ask four questions:

1. will I own the trees when they're ready to harvest?
2. will I be able to sell them on fair terms?
3. do I have access to the information I need to plant
and tend them properly, and protect them
from insects and disease?

If the answer to even one of these questions is
“maybe no”, The farmer's risk goes up.

Associations: question 4

“Do I have an effective association to represent me, to work to make sure that the answers to questions 1,2, and 3, are “yes”, and stay “yes”?”

“Effective”:

- democratic control by the individual members
- regular and transparent financial reporting
- staff are accountable to the membership
- respected by government agencies as a reliable partner

Association functions

1. Advocacy: allows members to speak with one voice on a wide range of policy issues
2. Service provider
Examples:
 - extension services
(May be in partnership with government)
 - market access, to aggregate volumes of timber or other products
3. Develop processing enterprises

Federations of associations

Example from province of New Brunswick, Canada:

- county associations:

Market timber, provide education service and administer a government funded silviculture subsidy program

- provincial federation of county associations

Works with government of province to ensure good market access, and budgets for the silviculture program

- national association of provincial associations

Works with the national government on national issues: tax policy, certification, carbon:
Our member in IFFA

Effective relationships between associations and government agencies:

- a challenge, requires careful attention and a long-term commitment to building trust
- clear boundaries, respect for autonomy;
Forming associations: importance of both encouragement and space; choosing representatives (who and how many)
- understand the strengths and weaknesses each brings to the table: emphasize the complementarities; openness
Invest in preparation for big meetings
- learn to disagree “productively”

Goal: to see each other as essential assets, not obstacles to be out-manoeuvred