

SYNOPSIS

Building Momentum for Forestry in the Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development

Annual Meeting of MegaFlorestais
Vidsel, Sweden | June 26 – 29, 2018

Meeting at a Glance

The 2018 meeting of MegaFlorestais convened forest agency leaders from eight of the world's most forested countries—Brazil, Canada, China, Finland, India, Indonesia, Sweden, and the United States—for a series of meetings, exchanges, and field visits in northern Sweden.

As always, the meeting began with the host country describing their country's approach to forest management. Herman Sundqvist, Director General of the Swedish Forest Agency (SFA), presented the history of the "Swedish model of forestry" on the first evening after a short hike above Storforsen Falls. Private forests, specially "smallholders" (50%) and private sector industry (25%), constitute the vast majority of forest lands and contribute to the forest economy of Sweden. Smallholders are drivers of the local economies and their contributions are managed through Forest Owners Associations. Several outstanding presentations by associations, the industry, and agency representatives described this (see below).

Another tradition during the MegaFlorestais meetings is the sharing of important and consuming issues facing forestry in the various countries. Chatham House rules dictate that no attribution be made of comments to a specific person or country, but a very candid discussion included the following issues:

- Our countries are evermore polarized over how to manage forests.
- Cultural diversity and sexual harassment are very real and consuming issues for forest agencies, especially in light of the "#MeToo" movement, and must be addressed.
- Recognition of customary rights continues to be a challenge despite legal recognition by courts; governments have been slow to act.
- Undervaluing the importance of forests to society continues to result in rampant deforestation and conversion of forest land.
- There is a strong tie between a green economy (and the role of forests in that movement) and poverty alleviation, a tie that must be acknowledged and more fully understood.
- Gender should be included in an analysis of each major decision; and concerns over gender and Indigenous Peoples/local communities should be a criterion in allocating government funding.

The event focused on the theme of developing the bioeconomy through forestry, with an emphasis on examining the ways forests can contribute more broadly to sustainable development goals of each



country. The Swedish Forest Agency developed an agenda that suggested ways technology could contribute to this, as well as community collaboration among all stakeholders. Throughout the week, several reoccurring themes emerged from discussions, each of which created unique challenges to advancing the bioeconomy:

1. **Polarized perspectives on how forests should be managed**, how intensively, how much should be “set aside” from production, how much biological diversity should be provided, how forests can contribute to climate change concerns, etc., all within the context of political turbulence and polarized publics more broadly. **Larger issues that are polarizing in society are affecting forestry**, making it more difficult to find common ground and effectively engage citizens from various sectors and from outside forestry. Nearly every country gave examples of issues that are polarizing the political environment in which they manage forests—from land tenure reform, to climate change, to mining in rural areas, etc. The group felt that engaging more with youth, communicating more effectively with stakeholders, and working to realize common goals would be the most promising avenues to correct any negative outcomes relating to polarization. One concrete next step identified was to work with the next generation of forest leaders thru MegaFlorestais to continue engagement with the youth and build common ground, trust, and relationships within the sector.

2. **Gender equity, discrimination, and even harassment, within the forest sector and forest agencies**. Leaders and invitees identified a host of challenges related to women’s rights and gender inequality in forestry. One of the biggest constraints was limited inheritance rights for women in many countries which led to lack of recognition of their other rights over forestlands (i.e., management, ownership). Participants also discussed the issue of harassment and how their organizations could better recruit women in forestry and improve workplace culture while addressing insidious gender discrimination and sexual harassment. Addressing these issues will be key to ensure organizations’ resiliency in the upcoming decades. Unlike any previous



MegaFlorestais meeting, women were well represented in the leadership roles—from the US, Canada, China, and Finland.

3. **Understanding and acquiring the benefit of technology in supporting forest monitoring, planning, and land tenure reforms, while reducing costs and with increased transparency.** A presentation on use of drones in the field showed participants how forest owners could learn more about their forest and more efficiently use their time and resources to address the issue. Participants also learned about the new laser scanning technology being used in Sweden that will provide updated forest maps in higher resolution and facilitate forest planning. These examples demonstrated that there are multiple cost-effective technologies coming into deployment that are rapidly changing the nature of the forestry profession and sector. However, forest agencies must move quickly to stay on cutting edge of technological developments to better inform their decisions. Participants discussed the possibility of using the MegaFlorestais network and its convening power to hold an event on using technology to facilitate forest management.

4. **Recognizing land rights and forest tenure.** RRI researchⁱ has shown that while Indigenous Peoples and local communities customarily manage over half of the world's lands, they legally own only 10% of the world's total land, making the rest vulnerable to external pressure from extractives and agro-industrial development. This lack of secure property rights hampers the development of small- and medium-sized locally-controlled forest enterprises, as communities have less incentive to invest in the upkeep of their ancestral lands which provides key environmental benefits. In recent years, there has been a slowdown in recognition of indigenous and community land rights through legal reforms, but many changes have been made through court decisions, that have to be implemented by local forestry agencies. Participants discussed the forest agencies' ability to lead coordination with other ministries on this issue at a high level to better inform change on the ground. It was also suggested that MegaFlorestais might assist in establishing policy platforms.

Participants also discussed the potential role for the MegaFlorestais network in formulating policy proposals around some of these issues, and discussed the possibility of holding a forestry policy workshop convened by MegaFlorestais to advance and exchange ideas on innovations in forest policy around the world; for example, how might these types of questions be addressed?

- What are best practices for addressing polarized perspectives in forestry?
- How have forest agencies addressed gender equity in hiring staff, addressing agency cultures that allow for discrimination/harassment/inequities?
- How have agencies effectively incorporated and creatively used technology to improve management and transparency with the constituents and communities, as well as become more efficient with their resources (e.g., staff, time and money)?
- How and where have forest agencies been involved with resolution of tenure issues/land rights and what encouraged this?

Field visit

Participants traveled to three different forests in Norbotten county where representatives from the Swedish Forest Agency presented on the different models of forest ownership in Sweden and showcased different specificities and innovation of Swedish's forestry. First, they stopped in a forest owned by Sveaskog (the state-owned forestry company), where they



learned about their use of various innovations such as drones and laser scanning. Then they visited a reindeer husbandry and learned about some of the measures taken during harvesting to accommodate this important Saami tradition. Lastly, they stopped in a forest privately owned by a woman entrepreneur and learned about the challenges she faced and how she worked extensively with cooperative organizations of other women entrepreneurs and forest owners. This visit highlighted the importance of women's rights to forestlands.

The discussion following the field trip focused on two areas:

- First, the impression left by the forest land owner at our last stop, Elisabeth Sandberg, who demonstrated through her presentation the passion and commitment land owners have for the land and the critical role associations play in skill development and support to other owners.
- Second, how valuable and cost-effective new GIS and drone technologies are in facilitating good on the ground decisions.

Additionally, at each stop on this rainy, cool day, a crew of SFA staff made coffee, tea, and served snacks. This group of employees, as was learned throughout the day, were immigrants from other countries who were hired as part of a training and development plan of the Swedish government to incorporate immigrants into society there.

Keynote speech by Mr. Sven-Erik Bucht, Minister of Rural Affairs

Mr. Bucht noted some significant changes taking place in Swedish forestry:

- Since the 1980s, the Swedish forest policy places production and environmental sustainability on equal footing.
- 50% of forest lands are privately owned and 38% of private land owners are female, making women forest owner the fastest growing demographic of foresters.
- Forest owners are a driving force of the local economy. This was the result of clear land ownership rights, the establishment of strong forest owners' association, and a close partnership with the government and the industry.

At the conclusion of the presentation, each MegaFlorestais leader shared their impressions of the Swedish forestry model with the Minister. This candid dialogue pointed out that the role of women in forestry, as demonstrated on our field trip by Elisabeth Sandberg, was very impressive and something other countries could learn from. Others were impressed by Herman’s subtle and open leadership of the Swedish Forest Agency, promoting the role of youth, women and innovative ideas into the forest sector. Still, others offered some disappointment that the role of the Saami needs and issues were not more fully integrated into forest policy (or so demonstrated at the meeting in as robust a way as hoped). Finally, many were impressed that private forests, through powerful associations, could continue to contribute economically to Sweden and mused about how polarized views on forest management begin to change this.

Conclusion

Herman Sundqvist, who was endorsed as co-Chair of MegaFlorestais, summed up the value of the MegaFlorestais network and annual meeting, noting that “while polarization is a force in all of our societies, we also all face common challenges—and MegaFlorestais is a powerful and effective space for finding solutions to those issues.” He presented his “Co-Chair’s Statement” at the conclusion of the meeting, summarizing key areas of consensus reached during the week (see next page).

The meeting ended with a review of the proposals and commitments to follow up, including a possible policy-focused workshop, technical exchanges between forest agencies, and discussions over identifying a host country for the 2019 meeting.



Co-Chair's Statement by Herman Sundqvist

MegaFlorestais 2018

"When it comes to forests, you should listen to both your brain and your heart."

- ❖ Both logic and the heart tell us that bioeconomy is the way forward:
 - Our forests, their use and their sustainable management are essential if we want to mitigate climate change. Moreover, forests can be fundamental drivers of sustainable and equitable development.
 - Society realizes the need to move away from non-renewable resources.
 - Science and innovation will provide new production processes, new products and new opportunities for the oldest renewable material in the world.

- ❖ Bioeconomy is important in rural areas:
 - Bioeconomy can catalyze new forms of rural livelihoods, including tourism or locally-driven models for more sustainable conservation and development approaches that strengthen commitments to place and community.
 - Smallholder and community enterprises are significant contributors to rural development and the global economy, playing a crucial role in the sustainable management and conservation of forests. This role can be further strengthened by promoting the capacity of smallholders to organize themselves and their overall empowerment to manage and use forests sustainably.

- ❖ Power, trust, passion, love and responsibility are key-factors for forestry and for generations to come:
 - Empowerment and organization of local peoples strengthens forest-based livelihoods.
 - A stronger sense of ownership promotes sustainable forest management and conservation efforts and effects.
 - Developing mutual trust and collaboration between government, smallholders, communities and industry actors is the foundation for good governance and the transfer to a bioeconomy.

- ❖ Polarization on production versus protection is a big challenge:
 - The recognition of ownership rights and the understanding of the value of the forests differs between stakeholders. There are many examples of dialogues where trust between these stakeholders is damaged and polarization increases. Developing "the missing middle", by bringing people with less categoric opinions to the table, can be a way forward when dealing with difficult issues.
 - Forest agencies need to continue to adhere to scientific evidence, openness and transparency.
 - Science itself can contribute to shedding light on the complexity of forest policy. Science-based decisions by policy makers and forest sector actors can alleviate polarization through interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge building and knowledge communication.

- ❖ Gender equality:
 - The education and empowerment of women and girls, and their access to land, forests, property, and decision-making responsibilities are fundamental to achieving sustainable land use and forest resource management.
 - In order to truly promote gender equality in the forest sector, government can take both internal and external responsibility, i.e. by having strong internal policies in place as well as by actively promoting the role of women in the forest sector at large. For example, gender equality should be defined within forest agencies. Here, MegaFlorestais could offer support.
 - Leadership commitment to a policy of inclusion will ensure the resilience of the whole organization. Communication on inclusivity needs to permeate the entire organization. It is often easier – and more effective – to focus on strong examples of gender equality.

- ❖ Technological creativity – the sky is the limit:
 - Technological innovation gives us opportunities to scale-up sustainable forest management practices and promote inclusive governance. Such innovation does not necessarily have to be very expensive, since use can be made of innovations in other parts of society. For example, foresters can use relatively cheap consumer drones for surveillance.
 - A coming MegaFlorestais meeting could include an open forum on technological development and lessons learned among MegaFlorestais members.



MEGAFLORESTAIS

Focusing on the twelve most forested countries in the world, MegaFlorestais is an informal network of public forest agency leaders dedicated to furthering leadership and fostering international dialogue and innovation on transitions in forest governance, the ecological and social value of forests, forest industry, and the roles of public forest agencies. It aims at building stronger relationships and collectively strengthening forest governance and sustainable forest management into the future.

The 2018 meeting of MegaFlorestais was funded by the Swedish Forest Agency and the Rights and Resources Initiative.

For more information, visit www.megaforestais.org.

RESOURCES FOR THE 2018 MEETING

- [Agenda](#)
- [List of participants](#)
- [Speakers biographies](#)

Presentations

- Herman Sundqvist and Sally Collins – [Welcome to MegaFlorestais](#)
- Marie Wickberg and Magnus Berg – [Smallholders as drivers of the local economy](#)
- Don Roberts – [Balancing environmental, economic, and social goals in the bio-economy](#)
- Juan Manuel Torres Rojo – [Bio-economy: Roles of and interactions between government and local communities.](#)
- Annika Nordin – [Forests' role in societies under pressure of climate change.](#)
- Samuel Nguiffo – [Creating opportunities to alleviate poverty and promote economic development.](#)
- Karoliina Lindroos – [Profitable and sustainable impact investing in developing countries.](#)
- Johan Lindman – [Sustainable wood value chains](#)
- Anton Holmstrom – [Possibilities of drones in forestry](#)
- Raimundo Deusdara Filho – [Implementing the Brazilian Forest Code](#)
- Svante Larsson – [New laser-scanning of Sweden's forest land](#)
- Andy White, Herman Sundqvist, and Sally Collins – [MegaFlorestais: Key themes and takeaways](#)
- Bambang Supriyanto – [Social Forestry Implementation in Indonesia](#)
- Siddhanta Das – [Forest solutions: Climate and water crisis in India](#)

Background publications

- MegaFlorestais, 10 Years of MegaFlorestais: A Public Forest Agency Leaders' Retrospective, 2016 (available in [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#), and [Chinese](#), read the [press release](#))
- MegaFlorestais, Public forest agencies in the twenty-first century: Driving change through transparency, tenure reform, citizen involvement and improved governance (available in [English](#) | [Spanish](#) | [French](#) | [Chinese](#) | [Portuguese](#) | [Bahasa](#))
- Rights and Resources Initiative, [What Future for Reform?](#) (also available in [French](#) and [Spanish](#))
- Rights and Resources Initiative, Who Owns the World's Land? A global baseline of formally recognized indigenous and community land rights, 2015 (available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#))
- Rights and Resources Initiative, Power and Potential: A Comparative Analysis of National Laws and Regulations Concerning Women's Rights to Community Forests ([English](#) | [Français](#) | [Español](#))

ⁱ Rights and Resources Initiative. 2015. Who Owns the World's Land? A global baseline of formally recognized indigenous and community land rights. Washington, DC: RRI.