

Do National Forest Programmes benefit from inter-sectoral co-ordination?

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Abstract

An increasing number of sectors outside forestry have an affect on the performance of the forestry sector. Therefore, large organisations like FAO and EU emphasise in their policy strategies the need for inter-sectoral co-ordination in the development of (national) forest strategies in order to achieve sustainable managed forests. However, both in theory and in practice, there is no clear understanding of ‘inter-sectoral co-ordination’ and therefore the implications of inter-sectoral co-ordination for National Forest Programmes remains also unclear. The term inter-sectoral co-ordination makes the promise to co-ordinate activities/plans of two or more sectors that are for some reason dependent. But both terms ‘sector’ and ‘co-ordination’ are ill-defined concepts itself.

Sectors are usually approached as a section of economic life or society or as a mere analytical concept using an actor-oriented definition. But because these approaches leave out essential characteristics of sectors, we make use of a boundary-approach: providing structure for orientation, comparison and positioning of sectors. But boundaries do not only separate sectors; when boundaries are permeable they also provide linkages to other sectors. Making use of these linkages supposes some form of interaction, ranging from conflicts, pure exchange, co-ordination to (maybe) collaboration.

But is inter-sectoral co-ordination only the outcome of the interaction between sectors? Understanding inter-sectoral co-ordination in that way means it is unmanaged and therefore unpredictable and does not contribute to forest policy making that aims to ensure sustainable managed forests. But if inter-sectoral co-ordination involves managed co-ordination the whole arrangement can look different. Co-ordination between sectors must be seen in the shadows of hierarchy and market and can be used as a third ‘management tool’ by the sector in order to reach their goals. Moreover it is important to explain the level of co-ordination for that can range from the exchange of information to fully integrated policy plans.