



MAKING LATIN AMERICAN FORESTS WORK FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

Essential forest policies for Latin America

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These policy recommendations are based on extensive scientific evidence compiled by the authors and co-authors, and were selected as a result of a long and creative discussion involving 18 researchers from 11 countries of this region at the end of March 2007 in Turrialba, Costa Rica. The Policy Brief was subsequently prepared by seven authors and was reviewed by numerous specialists in forest issues including the co-authors.

Even though Latin America has a vast forest area of 860 million ha – which represents 25% of the world forest resources, and 50% of the tropical forests of our planet – an alarming rate of deforestation and degradation (4.48 million ha per year for the period 2000-2005) is threatening this rich asset with serious social and

environmental consequences. The contribution of forest resources to the economic development and poverty alleviation in the Latin American countries is modest.

This publication emphasizes the need to adopt and implement forest policies for reversing the current negative trends and for taking advantage of existing opportunities. Thereby we may create a better future for Latin America's forests and make use of the valuable goods and services they provide to the region. The policies that seem to be particularly vital and whose design and implementation are of great urgency are briefly presented in four chapters. The key messages of the chapters are:

KEY MESSAGES

Chapter I. Promoting the conservation and sustainable use of forests for the well-being of society.

Drastically reduce deforestation and degradation of forest resources in order to conserve biodiversity and other environmental services while at the same time strengthening the effective application of sustainable forest management to achieve a harmonious balance between forest use and conservation.

Chapter II. Enhancing the beneficial role of forests in the context of climate change.

Minimizing the negative impacts of climate change, promoting measures to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from forests, particularly those related to deforestation and degradation (REDD), and implementing activities that promote and support the capacity of societies and ecosystems to adapt to this phenomenon.

Chapter III. Improving governance of forest resources.

Improve forest governance by decentralizing decision making, achieving effective social participation and empowering marginalized stakeholders. It is also essential to guarantee equitable access to forest resources by regulating their ownership, tenure and usufruct.

Chapter IV. Increasing the competitiveness of the forest sector.

Strengthen the contribution of forestry programs and activities to poverty reduction, by supporting the development of small and medium-size forest enterprises (SMEs), increasing their productivity and competitiveness, incorporating these businesses into value chains and promoting partnerships between local public and private stakeholders for the efficient generation of forest products and services. Reinforcing compliance with laws and regulations and combating illegal logging.

You may access the full policy brief at:

www.iufro.org/science/special/wfse

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