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MAKING SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN FORESTS WORK FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

- Policy approaches in a changing global environment

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However diverse the forests and people of sub-Saharan Africa may be, they share many commonalities. They all face the challenges of alleviating poverty, limiting deforestation and the degradation of forest and tree resources, reversing land degradation, coping with water scarcity, and restraining desertification. Many of these problems are aggravated by climate change and the global economic crisis, as reflected in rising food and energy prices. At the same time, tremendous opportunities exist in the form of growing markets for bioenergy and such environmental services as carbon sequestration and protecting water resources and biodiversity.

KEY MESSAGES

I. The new drivers of change require new, innovative approaches to local forest and landscape management

- The three global drivers of change — climate change and emerging markets for environmental services and markets for bioenergy — challenge Africa to ensure that forests and woodlands continue to support and diversify livelihoods options and create new opportunities for long-term human development.

2. Since most impacts on forests, including deforestation and forest degradation, emanate from outside the sector, intervention requires cross-sectoral and integrated approaches

- Long-term strategic thinking must look beyond immediate needs. The many trade-offs, such as between food and fuel and between energy supply and climate change mitigation, need to be addressed through clear cross-sectoral policy frameworks to minimize damage to the poor and the environment.

3. To succeed, any proposed energy strategy must bring African livelihoods to the fore

- Population growth without accompanying growth in affordable and clean energy supplies — and/or without improved agricultural productivity — means continued pressure on tree resources for wood fuel, particularly in dry forests and open woodlands.
- Policy incentives are needed for investments in alternative energy production.
- Markets and production chains must be reformed to strengthen value addition.

4. Emerging environmental services markets and trends in energy markets present opportunities to diversify livelihoods, but leveraging them requires long-term strategies

- Collaborative efforts need to be supported on Payments for Environmental Services (PES) research, capacity building and sharing experiences on best practices.
- Carbon, water and biodiversity and/or any other of the diverse environmental services can be bundled to enhance PES profitability and viability. Mechanisms for investments in PES need to be facilitated.

5. National policies and institutions need to be reformed to respond to the complex challenges of these dynamic times

- An early and strategic multisectoral approach to bio-energy development is needed.
- Policy and legal frameworks must be developed to enhance environmental services markets, as well as institutions need to be reformed and rebuilt.
- Regional collaboration would promote bio-energy development, technology and research.

6. Urgent policy and development responses are needed to adapt to climate change

- Mechanisms to reduce vulnerability need to be developed.
- Regional collaboration need to be encouraged in adaptation to climate change, and also specifically in UNFCCC post-2012 negotiations and processes.
- Strategic initiatives, studies and decision-support systems on climate change issues need to be developed and also implemented.
- Focus should be on capacity and awareness building.

You may access the full policy brief at:
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