



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

AGRICORD



# FOREST AND FARM PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS – OPERATING SYSTEMS FOR THE SDGs

**STRENGTH  
IN NUMBERS**



© FOREST AND FARM FACILITY

**FOREST AND FARM FACILITY**

# FOREST AND FARM PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS AND THE 17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



## THE 17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**GOAL 1:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere

**GOAL 2:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

**GOAL 3:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

**GOAL 4:** Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning

**GOAL 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

**GOAL 6:** Ensure access to water and sanitation for all

**GOAL 7:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

**GOAL 8:** Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all

**GOAL 9:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

**GOAL 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries

**GOAL 11:** Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

**GOAL 12:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

**GOAL 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

**GOAL 14:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources

**GOAL 15:** Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss

**GOAL 16:** Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies

**GOAL 17:** Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

# **FOREST AND FARM PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS – OPERATING SYSTEMS FOR THE SDGs**

Strength in Numbers

Published by  
the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
and  
AgriCord

Rome, 2016

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), or of AgriCord concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO or AgriCord in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned. The views expressed in this information product are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of FAO or AgriCord.

ISBN 978-92-5-109287-3 (FAO)

FAO encourages the use, reproduction and dissemination of material in this information product. Except where otherwise indicated, material may be copied, downloaded and printed for private study, research and teaching purposes, or for use in non-commercial products or services, provided that appropriate acknowledgement of FAO as the source and copyright holder is given and that FAO's endorsement of users' views, products or services is not implied in any way.

All requests for translation and adaptation rights, and for resale and other commercial use rights should be made via [www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request](http://www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request) or addressed to [copyright@fao.org](mailto:copyright@fao.org).

FAO information products are available on the FAO website ([www.fao.org/publications](http://www.fao.org/publications)) and can be purchased through [publications-sales@fao.org](mailto:publications-sales@fao.org)

© FAO and AgriCord, 2016

# Contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	iv
<b>PREFACE</b>	v
<b>FOREST AND FARM PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS FEATURED IN THE REPORT</b>	vi
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	viii
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
<b>THEME 1 • IMPROVING LIVES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING</b>	5
SDG 1: NO POVERTY	6
<i>Small plantations increase household income – UWAMIMA, Tanzania</i>	6
<i>Farmers grow acacia trees for revenue – TTHCA, QTCA and QNCA, Vietnam</i>	7
<i>Farm forestry for diversified enterprises – ZNFU, Zambia</i>	8
<i>Steady earnings from sustainable bitter bamboo production – LFN, Laos</i>	8
<i>Higher household income – MRDI, Zambia</i>	9
SDG 2: ZERO HUNGER	10
<i>Simple measures boost food production – NFPG, the Gambia</i>	10
SDG 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING	11
<i>Affordable healthcare for coop members – Fedecovera, Guatemala</i>	11
<i>Distilling essential oil for medicinal use – Thach Ngoa Star Anise Group, Vietnam</i>	12
SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	12
<i>Regulating the charcoal sector for sustainability – NACUL, Liberia</i>	13
<b>THEME 2 • STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP</b>	15
SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION	16
<i>Forest user group rewarded for restoring water table – DBCF, Nepal</i>	16
<i>Communities adapt to climate change – ACOFOP, Guatemala</i>	17
<i>Restoring forests to protect against climate-related erosion – ASEC, Nepal</i>	17
SDG 15: LIFE ON LAND	18
<i>Organic agro-forestry to safeguard dry tropical forest – MINGA, Bolivia</i>	19
<i>Eucalyptus trees can have environmental benefits – Zenbaba Union, Ethiopia</i>	19
<i>Biosphere reserve protected by community action – ACOFOP, Guatemala</i>	20
<i>Learning the environmental value of forest – TTHCA, QTCA and QNCA, Vietnam</i>	21
<i>Woodlots scheme for active management – SWA, Scotland</i>	21
<i>Agro-forestry for niche products protects hillsides – TKFPI, the Philippines</i>	22
<b>THEME 3 • DEVELOPING SOCIAL COHESION</b>	25
SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY	25
<i>Improving handicrafts for higher income – Mayangna women, Nicaragua</i>	26
<i>Women take more control – MVIWATA, Tanzania</i>	26
<i>Women process cashew nuts to add value – URCPA-A/D, Benin</i>	27
SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	28
<i>Securing commercial community land rights – KFUA, Myanmar</i>	28
<i>Supporting democracy and building peace – FECOFUN, Nepal</i>	29
<i>Small forest-owners defend their rights – LRF, Sweden</i>	30
<i>Lobbying for the right to cut trees – AFFON, Nepal</i>	30
<b>THEME 4 • FULFILLING HUMAN CAPABILITIES</b>	31
SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION	31
<i>Agro-forestry school to boost rural development – Fedecovera, Guatemala</i>	32
<i>Study circles for smallholder cotton farmers – CAZ, Zambia</i>	32
SDG 8: DECENT WORK	32
<i>Tree nurseries boost employment – NCTA, Kenya</i>	33
<i>New jobs as rice farmers diversify into honey – Hanjuang Cooperative, Indonesia</i>	33
SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES	34
<i>Investing in their own sawmill – Lem Village Acacia Group, Vietnam</i>	34
<i>Equality versus equity: how best to share benefits – VNFU, Vietnam</i>	35
<b>THEME 5 • PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</b>	37
SDG 17: REVITALIZE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	37
<i>Linking local voices to global processes – Apex organizations, global</i>	38
<i>Building networks of family forestry associations – IFFA, global</i>	38
<i>Private forestry supported by national forest service – FF-SPAK, Kenya</i>	39
<i>Beneficial government/civil society partnership – CONOSIL, Mexico</i>	40
<b>MESSAGE FOR ACTION</b>	41
<b>ANNEX – FFPOs INCLUDED IN THE REPORT, BY COUNTRY</b>	44
<b>ACRONYMS</b>	46

## Acknowledgments

This document is based on a range of sources of the experiences of forest and farm producer organizations. Thanks go out to all those who were involved in data collection, including the FFF country facilitators: Vu Le Y Voan (Vietnam), Racchya Shah (Nepal), Aung Thant Zin (Myanmar), Kanimang Camara (The Gambia), Kolly Soko Allison (Liberia), Vincent Ziba (Zambia), Philip Kisoyan (Kenya), Ogden Rodas (Guatemala), Boris Fernandez (Bolivia) and Leonardo Chavez (Nicaragua). Also to Katja Vuori for work on material from AgriCord.

The publication has been overseen and coordinated by Paula Hokkanen (AgriCord), Erik Andervad and Sophie Grouwels (FAO/FFF). A wealth of useful feedback and ideas were provided by Pauline Buffle (IUCN/FFF) and Duncan Macqueen (IIED/FFF).

Helpful comments during the drafting process were contributed by Jeffrey Campbell and Jhony Zapata (FAO/FFF), Peter deMarsh (IFFA), Ignace Coussement and Hannelore Beerlandt (AgriCord) and Anna Bolin (IIED), and Marguerite FranceLanord (FAO/FFF) advised on communications. Thanks are due to the committed writer, Julie Harrod, for bringing the source material together.

Finally, a special thanks to all the producer organizations that are featured, who took time to respond to requests for data and whose answers make up large parts of the case studies.

The production of this publication has been supported by official development aid from Finland, Sweden, Germany and the USA.

## Preface

By supporting smallholder foresters and farmers through their organizations, the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) continues a long-running collaboration between FAO and AgriCord. Now, together with the International Family Forestry Alliance (IFFA), we have made this compilation of cases that highlight how forest and farm producer organizations (FFPOs) are vital operating systems for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our aim is to raise awareness of the ways in which effective FFPOs can bring rural populations into the global agenda for development. And we invite governments, development partners, civil society and the private sector to help channel further support to FFPOs in their critical role as effective local actors for sustainable global development.

---

AgriCord is an alliance of development agencies set up by professional farmers' organizations in Europe, Canada, Africa and Asia. Through its Farmers Fighting Poverty programme, AgriCord supports organized farmers in developing countries. Its work is based on two major convictions: that collective action of producers aligns growth with poverty reduction, because it ensures that producers have a fair share of the value of farm and forest (timber and non-timber); and that organizations foster entrepreneurship, especially smallholder entrepreneurship, that contributes to vibrant rural communities.

[www.agricord.org](http://www.agricord.org)

---

The Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) is a partnership between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and AgriCord. FFF works with and provides resources directly to organizations of forest and farm producers – smallholders, communities, indigenous peoples and women's groups – and governments in 10 countries. FFF responds to local needs, adapts to country context, and finds synergies with other ongoing initiatives. FFF's regional and global work helps to link national, regional and international networks representing forest and farm producers and forest rights-holders so that they can pursue shared agendas and strengthen their advocacy strategies.

[www.fao.org/partnerships/forest-farm-facility/en](http://www.fao.org/partnerships/forest-farm-facility/en)

---

The International Family Forestry Alliance (IFFA) is a network of national forest owners' organizations. Representing more than 25 million forest owners worldwide, IFFA provides a common voice for family forestry at the global level. Its objectives are to promote the development of family forestry and advocate supportive policies. IFFA provides a family forestry perspective in international forest policy processes and a forum for exchange of experience, ideas and information among its member organizations and with the Alliances representing community and indigenous peoples' forestry.

[www.familyforestry.net](http://www.familyforestry.net)

# Forest and farm producer organizations featured in the report



**MEXICO**

- CONOSIL  
600 000 families  
[PAGE 40](#)

**NICARAGUA**

- MAYANGNA  
[PAGE 26](#)

**GUATEMALA**

- ACOFOP  
1 645 membergroups  
[PAGE 17, 20](#)
- FEDECOVERA  
25 000 members  
[PAGE 11, 32](#)

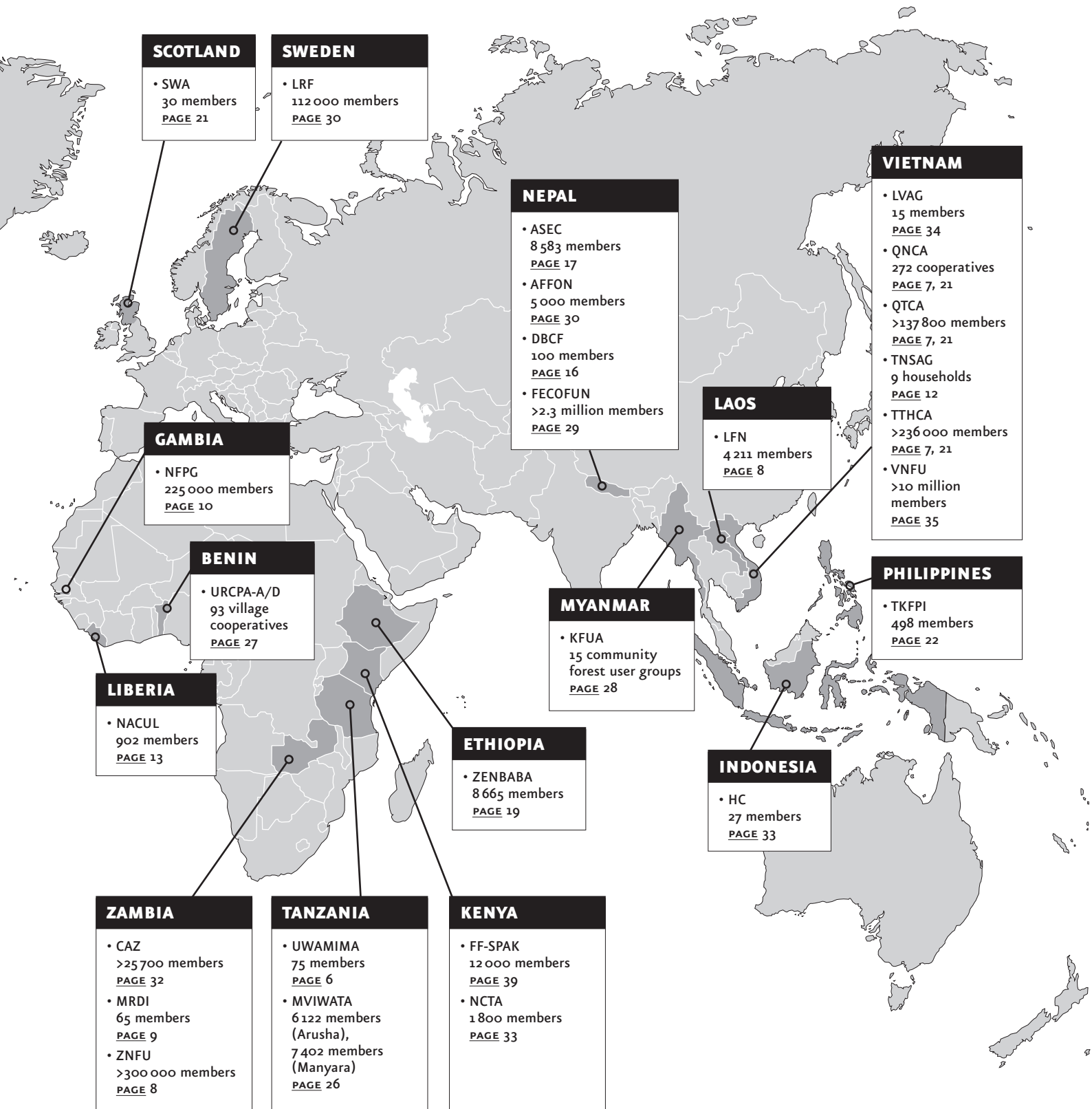
**BOLIVIA**

- MINGA  
>1 500 families  
[PAGE 19](#)

**GLOBAL**

- AFA, AMPB, COICA, AIDSESP, AMAN  
[PAGE 38](#)
- IFFA  
>25 million members  
[PAGE 38](#)





# Executive summary

Responding to the new global development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this publication argues that forest and farm producer organizations (FFPOs) are effective operating systems to deliver the SDGs. In fact it may be difficult to reach the most marginalised and excluded people at scale without them. Agriculture and forestry have links to all 17 of the SDGs, and smallholder producers control a significant proportion of the world's farm and forest resources, so FFPOs are a vital part of the sustainability equation. As the first *Strength in Numbers*<sup>1</sup> explained, individual producers can overcome isolation by forming self-governing groups; their concerted action has benefits across the globe.

Examples are arranged under five themes – the first four cover key aspects of FFPO activities; the fifth looks at partnerships.

## 1 Improving lives and economic wellbeing

SDGs 1 (no poverty); 2 (zero hunger); 3 (good health and wellbeing); 7 (affordable clean energy)

Poverty and hunger are closely linked, and widespread in many rural areas of the developing world. Improving livelihoods involves action to remedy both issues, and well-run producer organizations are ideally placed to take such action. In supporting their members to become more productive, to achieve economies of scale by working together and to formalise the farm forest sector, producer groups contribute to the increased productivity urgently needed to feed the growing world population. Agro-forestry has the potential to produce a diverse range of food and other crops, often with environmental and health benefits. Smallholder producer groups, with their local knowledge, are well placed to optimise productivity if they can access extension and financial services. But forest groups in particular need support and an enabling environment, because of the waiting time between investment and financial return.

The other issue covered here is biomass fuel, poor people's mainstay for cooking and heating across the world. Through group action and planning to manage local resources, smallholders can have ready access to

this renewable form of energy without damaging the environment.

### Poverty (SDG 1)

One of the main contributing factors to poverty is a lack of access to land, technology and finance. By coming together in formal organizations, smallholder farmers can gain joint access to resources, set up small enterprises and work their way out of poverty. Cases from Laos, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zambia show FFPOs earning income from diversified production systems that include trees. Trees are seen to offer the prospect of long-term income and an economic safety net; they act as a store of potential (and increasing) wealth. Growing crops alongside young trees provides an income stream until trees are ready for sale.

### Hunger (SDG 2)

A growing world population demands that we make better use of land and water resources: small-scale food producers need to double their productivity to meet SDG targets. FFPOs are a good conduit for support, as shown by a case from the Gambia, where low-tech improvements to crop diversity and post-harvest handling have made small farms more productive.

### Health (SDG 3)

FFPOs have several means by which they improve members' health, including broadening the range of food crops for better diets and the provision of healthcare. By ensuring that the non-wood forest products are harvested sustainably and biodiversity is preserved, plants with medicinal properties are conserved for future generations. Examples here show an FFPO in Guatemala providing healthcare for members and a producer group in Vietnam extracting an essential oil for medicinal use.

### Affordable clean energy (SDG 7)

Biomass energy is the biggest source of renewables and the most significant use of forests by value globally, and rural smallholders depend on it daily. Regulating the use of wood and encouraging smallholders to establish their own community supplies are important tasks of most FFPOs, even those that deal principally with other products. The case here shows a national union in Liberia working to organize charcoal producers throughout the country to improve their lives and guarantee future supplies.

<sup>1</sup> AgriCord and FAO (2012). *Strength in Numbers. Effective forest producer organizations*. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/ap452e/ap452e00.pdf>

## 2 Strengthening environmental stewardship

*SDG 13 (climate action); SDG 15 (life on land)*

Forests provide vital global environmental services, particularly in terms of climate change. Woodland absorbs carbon emissions, and wood fuel (if sustainably produced) is a carbon-lean renewable source of energy. Conversely, forest degradation is a significant contributor to rising global CO<sub>2</sub> levels. Maintaining and restoring forest cover are vital for the planet, and the 1.6 billion people who depend on forests for shelter, jobs and security must be part of the sustainable forest management process: extreme weather events have particularly serious consequences for poor people. Keeping the world's forests in good order for climate change reasons is also part of the wider responsibilities involved in living from the land. Here again, producer groups are proving themselves to be the operating systems of the SDGs, as they help their members take on these global stewardship responsibilities.

*Climate action (SDG 13)*

Producer groups are responding in various ways to the extreme weather related to climate change. Strategies include adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction, and groups may adopt elements of all three approaches. Examples from Guatemala and Nepal show FFPOs members maintaining vegetation cover and altering seasonal activities to protect the soil and their livelihoods.

*Life on land (SDG 15)*

Forests remain supremely important for the health of the planet and as a source of raw materials. Sustainable forest management underpins the whole sustainable development agenda, and cases in this section, from Bolivia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, the Philippines, Scotland and Vietnam, show FFPOs managing forests to provide income without compromising future potential. Within this common thread we find a diversity of products and management systems.

## 3 Developing social cohesion

*SDGs 5 (gender equality); 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions)*

The strength in numbers fostered by well-run producer groups makes them effective agents of social development. FFPOs can be seen as a microcosm of a fair society where women and minority groups are properly represented, and where members can fulfil their

potential. Cases under this theme illustrate how women benefit from adapted methods and targeted support, and how FFPOs have contributed to society at large.

*Gender (SDG 5)*

Women in developing countries often carry the triple burden of economic, reproductive and domestic work. They provide a substantial part of the agricultural and forest labour force and their potential contribution to sustainable development is significant. Cases from Benin, Nicaragua and Tanzania show how, through their organizations, women can gain autonomy and financial rewards for their efforts.

*Peace and justice (SDG 16)*

Social development is a slow process, but membership-based producer organizations have proved themselves to be strong builders of democracy. They also foster economic growth and fair income distribution. Examples in this section, from Myanmar, Nepal and Sweden, show how the inclusive nature of a well-structured organization can have repercussions in wider society, and how the ability to speak out on behalf of members can lead to improvements in legislation and government priorities.

## 4 Fulfilling human capabilities

*SDGs 4 (quality education); 8 (decent work); 10 (reduced inequalities)*

Humans have vast capabilities that are only properly fulfilled when people have access to education and employment. Education does not end with school (for some it does not even start there), and producer organizations are some of the most active providers of vocational training in rural areas. Self-determination is an important part of good-quality jobs, and the enterprises set up by rural producer groups are characterised by (self)-ownership and empowerment of group members. In the long term, the education and employment provided through FFPOs reduces inequalities.

*Quality education (SDG 4)*

Education is a life-long process. For people (often women) who have missed out on childhood education, it is still possible to study and learn skills that improve quality of life and productive capacity. Stories from Guatemala and Zambia show FFPOs providing educational support tailored to particular needs and age groups.

*Decent work (SDG 8); reduced inequalities (SDG 10)*

Smallholder farmers are no strangers to hard work. When they organize themselves into groups to benefit from economies of scale and better access to markets, they often set up successful small enterprises. Employment in such group-owned, self-determining businesses is a world away from low-paid wage labour and goes some way to reducing power inequalities between rich and poor. Cases from Indonesia, Kenya and Vietnam show that FFPOs are creating decent jobs in rural communities and that smallholders will invest their own assets in joint ventures.

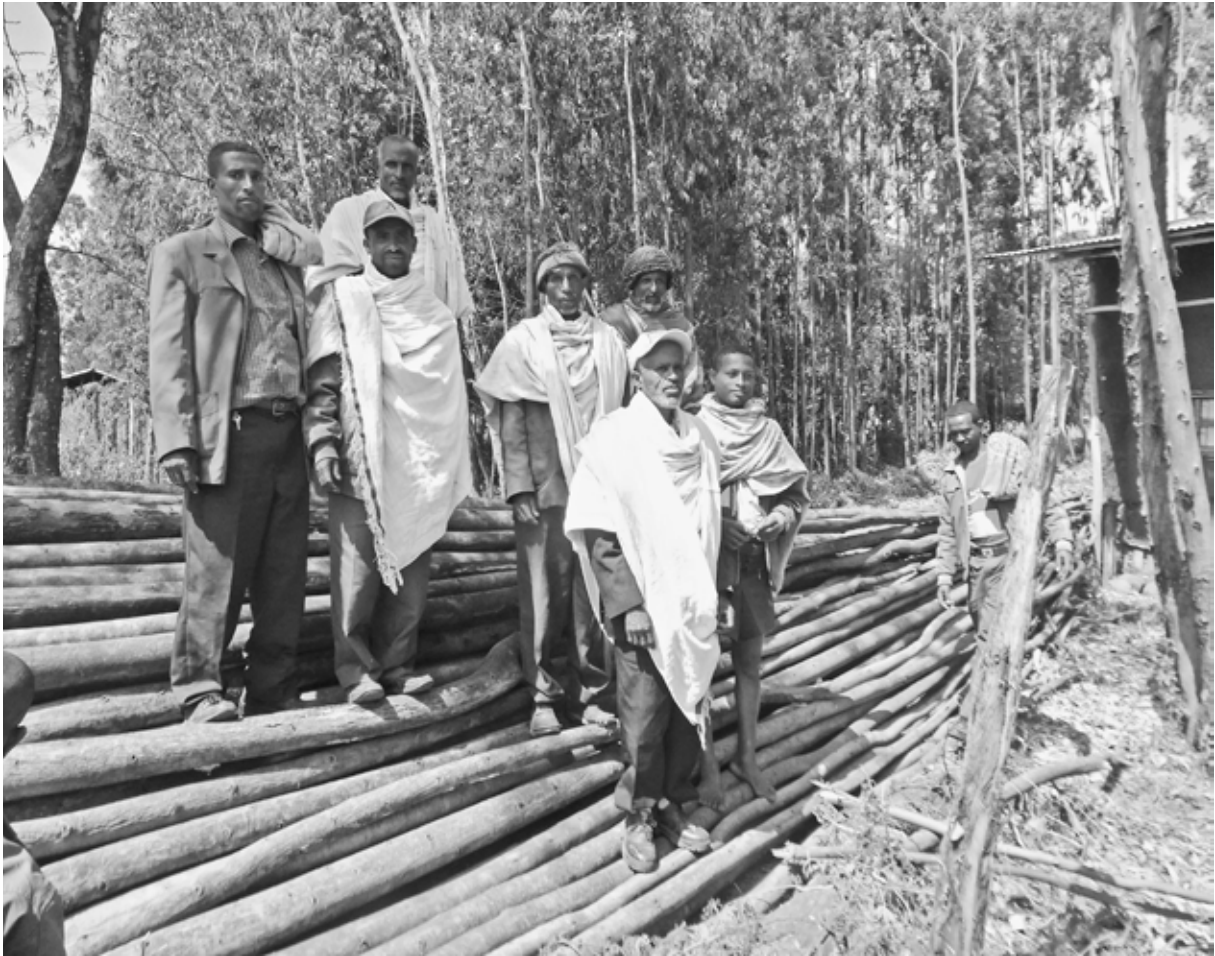
## **5 Establishing inclusive partnerships**

*SDG 17 (revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development)*

Global partnerships and cooperation are integral to the new Sustainable Development Agenda. The cases – global and from Kenya and Mexico – show how local voices can reach global processes. They illustrate cooperation for development as expressed in regional and global conferences, reaching out to multiple partners, and a government/civil society partnership.

### **Message for action**

The cases in this report show the tremendous potential within FFPOs to provide direct benefits related to the SDGs. Unlocking this potential requires commitment to (and investment in) FFPOs from governments, civil society and the private sector, to help them function even more effectively. It also requires improvements to the enabling environment for FFPOs, starting with security of tenure for smallholders, and access to productive forests, farms and other resources. The rights of smallholders to form FFPOs must be safeguarded, and such organizations should have legal rights to provide services and represent their members. FFPOs must be invited to join decision-making processes so that they can be involved from the outset in efforts to achieve the SDGs. Finally, the barriers which restrict FFPO members' access to markets and engagement within value chains must be removed. This concerted set of actions will optimize FFPOs' ability to fulfil their role as operating systems of the SDGs.



© FFD/ATTE PENTILÄ

## INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), extends the scope of the earlier development milestones, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs do not distinguish between the developed world and developing countries: we all have global responsibilities, particularly regarding climate change. And the Agenda for Sustainable Development goes much further than the MDGs to address the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development.

The SDGs aim to balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. As almost every SDG has some connection with how we use the land, forest and farm producer organizations (FFPOs) are inextricably linked to the SDGs - the

infographic inside the front cover of this publication highlights elements of these links.

Partnerships are a key element of the SDGs. With this in mind, and building on the persuasive cases presented four years ago in the earlier *Strength in Numbers*<sup>2</sup>, this new publication brings together more examples of successful forest and farm producer organizations supported by FFF, AgriCord and IFFA.

This new *Strength in Numbers* argues that producer groups are key operating systems of the SDG agenda. They lie at the heart of sustainable development because, in many remote areas, FFPOs are the only

<sup>2</sup> [http://agro-info.net/UserFiles/Image/interactive\\_pdf\\_strengthinnumbers\\_web.pdf](http://agro-info.net/UserFiles/Image/interactive_pdf_strengthinnumbers_web.pdf)

organized groups in existence and they have the great advantage of a ready-made network and infrastructure through which development can occur. They represent a growing global phenomenon: those once considered merely poor and needy beneficiaries of development assistance are forming organizations and taking their place as legitimate drivers of their own future, as recognized producers and primary actors in revitalizing rural economies. No longer lumped within the category of civil society actors, these organizations are increasingly seen as rights-holders, landscape managers and legitimate private-sector representatives, able to fill the gap between the large-scale private sector, development NGOs and technical government departments on one side and 'local people' on the other. They directly represent the largely invisible or under-rated power and potential of smallholders and small-scale producers. Through service-provision to their members, contributions to local economies and increasing engagement in policy-making, such organizations make solid contributions towards the SDGs, bringing benefits not only to their members but also to people and the planet at large.

FFPOs are key operating systems because they respond directly to the range of real needs of smallholder farmers and forest producers who form the vast majority of the world's rural population – they are solution-oriented and directly relevant. They represent their members in a way which ensures direct feedback on the effectiveness of implementation and the need to modify and adapt policy measures to reflect realities on the ground – they are persistent and vigilant. FFPOs provide the means to reach scale and impact horizontally through their members and their organizations – they are inclusive and expanding. Finally FFPOs offer the possibility of leaving in place strong rural institutions driven by and responsive to their members. They will ensure that the SDGs become sustainable and embedded within the context of each country and region, because they are owned and run by those who are committed to the land and their children's future. They have an abiding interest in creating opportunities in their landscapes.

### *What are forest and farm producer organizations?*

Forest and farm producer organizations (or groups – both terms are used in this publication) are formal or informal associations created by and for their members. Their main activities fall into four main categories: representing smallholder farmers and their interests (for instance helping to strengthen security of tenure); providing economic services (such as improving market access); providing extension services (such as advice on new crops or management systems); and providing public goods (managing natural resources).

FFPOs vary in size and institutional form, and may focus on forests or combinations of forest- and farm-related activities. They may include indigenous peoples and local community organizations; tree-grower and agroforestry associations; forest owner associations; producer cooperatives and companies; and their umbrella groups and federations.

Evidence is growing that organized groups are the key to scaling up locally controlled forestry and agriculture, a vital process if we are to meet the growing global demand for food and forest products (including environmental services and non-timber forest items such as medicinal plants). Nay-sayers may claim that it is too difficult to scale up locally controlled agriculture and forestry, but others, including IIED and the Forest Connect Alliance, say that it must be made to work.<sup>3</sup> And there are many examples where it is working.

Our experience suggests that strong organizations with diverse membership are dedicated to serving their members' interests, so supportive partnerships with them fosters activities driven by the needs expressed by farmers themselves. Support is particularly needed to create an enabling environment – secure tenure, fair market access and business support, technical extension, and freedom to form strong, effective associations – in which development can take place.

<sup>3</sup> Macqueen, D., Bolin, A. and Greijmans, M. (Editors) (2015). *Democratizing forest business: a compendium of successful locally controlled forest business organisations*. The Forest Connect Alliance is a network of practitioners supporting small and medium forest enterprises. It is co-managed by IIED, FFF/FAO and the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC). <http://forestconnect.ning.com/>

### *Who are forest and farm producers?*

They are women and men, smallholder families, indigenous peoples and local communities who have strong relationships with forests and farms in forested landscapes. Such producers grow, manage, harvest and process a wide range of natural-resource-based goods and services for subsistence use and for sale in local, national or international markets.

.....  
*“We are indigenous peoples, local communities and family smallholders – women and men, young and old. Without us it will be impossible to achieve food security and nutrition, respond to climate change, conserve biodiversity, and reduce poverty. Engage with us as equal partners. Support us. Invest in us. We have the numbers. We have the knowledge. We are a big part of the answer.”*

**Common declaration of the indigenous peoples, local communities and family smallholders<sup>4</sup>**  
.....

The SDGs provide the framework for this publication. Our main focus is on ways in which producer organizations lead to direct SDG benefits, but many indirect development benefits spring from the improved livelihoods and better decision-making that are hallmarks of an effective producer group. A slew of SDG targets have explicit links to forests and landscapes (particularly under SDG 15, Life on land), and forest and farm producer organizations also contribute to most of the other Goals.

Cases in this publication illustrate forest and farm producer groups' contributions to the following Goals:

- Goal 1: No poverty
- Goal 2: Zero hunger
- Goal 3: Good health and well-being
- Goal 4: Quality education
- Goal 5: Gender equality
- Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy
- Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth
- Goal 10: Reduced inequalities
- Goal 13: Climate action
- Goal 15: Life on land
- Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions
- Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals

Cases for this publication were selected through dialogue with the producer groups. FFF invited partner organizations to complete a questionnaire on their group and on specific SDGs. AgriCord summarised partnership and project experiences and results. IFFA approached member organizations for case illustrations. The responses formed the basis of the cases narrated in the following chapters, which briefly explain the track record of strengthened FFPOs and highlight the relevance in terms of one particular SDG. However, we remind readers that this gives only a glimpse of FFPO activities and their relevance to the SDGs.

Through their core activities, FFPOs deliver on several SDGs, so this publication is structured around five broad themes: *improving livelihoods* (SDGs 1, 2, 3 and 7); *strengthening environmental stewardship* (SDGs 13 and 15); *developing social cohesiveness* (SDGs 5 and 16); *fulfilling human capabilities* (SDGs 4, 8 and 10); and *establishing inclusive partnerships* (SDG 17). The concluding section looks to the future and argues that an expanded phase of FFF is a global SDG imperative.

This updated *Strength in Numbers* reinforces the message of the original publication - that there is huge global potential to be unlocked via active, dynamic forest and farm producer groups. Such groups are local actors working towards universal goals. It is also clear that FFF, AgriCord and IFFA have important roles in supporting such groups.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i54o8e.pdf>





# THEME 1



© FFD/ATTE PENTTILÄ

## IMPROVING LIVES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING

Poverty and hunger make for miserable lives. In much of the developing world, the rural population suffers to some degree from both, so it makes sense to bundle SDGs 1 and 2 (no poverty and zero hunger) in this chapter, which looks at how properly managed rural producer organizations can improve the lives and livelihoods of members and their families. We also look at SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing) because by managing forests sustainably, we retain the option of using these resources in future – and this would increase the earning capacity of forest and farm producer groups. Also, the plant world, particularly in forests, includes a range of medicinal plants, many of which remain undiscovered or under-used.

SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) is considered here, as poor people rely almost exclusively on biomass (mainly firewood and charcoal, but also twigs, leaves and animal dung) for their cooking and heating needs. Despite progress with solar and other high-tech renewables, biomass will be important for years to come - it is currently the biggest source of renewable energy globally and the largest use of forests by value.

*'Agricultural growth in low-income economies can reduce poverty by half.'*<sup>5</sup>

5 FAO (2016). *Food and Agriculture: Key to Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

The world needs more productive and – crucially – more sustainable systems of agriculture throughout the world. Global population is growing and weather patterns are becoming more unpredictable with climate change, to which agriculture itself is a contributing factor. Bringing farming and forestry together under FAO's Forest and Farm Facility recognises that agricultural systems are often inextricably linked to forest activities (think of conservation agriculture, shifting cultivation or agro-forestry) and that approaching the landscape in an integrated way can be more productive than either system on its own.

.....  
“The close link between forests, water management, agriculture and food security is, in itself, reason enough for halting or reversing deforestation and forest degradation.”

FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva, speaking on the International Day of Forests 2016  
.....

Poor family farmers become stronger when they work together in trust, because they can buy and sell collectively, and can speak up for their rights. Producer groups, once established and functional, can lobby for access to land and resources, and link their members to the technology and finance necessary for small-scale enterprises to take off. They can also negotiate better prices for produce. The small-scale farm forest sector can become more formalised and sustainable when organized, offering secure employment and able to access credit for enterprise development.

To reach this state, producer groups may well need support. In the previous *Strength in Numbers* it was pointed out that an enabling environment is crucial in the early years, particularly in the case of forestry groups, because of the time-lag between investment and the prospect of financial return. There are many aspects to an enabling environment: fair markets, access to credit and training, and links to research institutions spring immediately to mind but there are wider issues such as transport infrastructure, education and healthcare, without which smallholder farmers will struggle to thrive.

Although roads, schools and hospitals lie beyond the remit of this publication, properly functioning producer groups will be able to lobby on broad political issues as well as on subjects specific to their interests. We therefore show in this chapter how support to producer groups can contribute to improved livelihoods via SDGs 1, 2, 3 and 7.

## SDG 1: NO POVERTY

.....

Having access to and control over resources gives people the power to escape poverty. Smallholders and forest farmers need access to land, inputs and training; small-scale forest and farm enterprises need access to technology and finance. Cases here show how producer groups can be the means by which smallholders move away from poverty.

### Small plantations increase household income – UWAMIMA, Tanzania

**An association of Tanzanian smallholders are growing trees and diversifying their farm enterprises. The farmers should benefit from the growing demand for timber, and their incomes are already rising.**

In Tanzania, private forestry is struggling to keep pace with demand for timber and fuel wood, and some 400 000 hectares of natural forest are being cleared every year.<sup>6</sup> With the rising population and heavy reliance on wood energy, plus economic growth, industrialisation and the expansion of agriculture, the situation is likely to get worse. But these factors also create demand for forestry, with knock-on economic, social and environmental benefits, particularly if smallholders can be included.

National policy is to encourage small producers to plant trees and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism promotes groups such as the Matembwe Tree Growers Association (UWAMIMA), which was formed in 2009 and now has 75 members. UWAMIMA has links to both FDT and the Private Forestry Programme (PFP).<sup>7</sup> Known locally as *Panda Miti Kibiashara* ('plant trees for the market'), PFP provides access to various forest extension services and improved or selected seed.

6 According to the Forestry Development Trust (FDT), which is working with the public and private sectors in Tanzania to increase the supply of wood products and energy from sustainable sources. <http://forestry-trust.org>

7 PFP is supported by Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs. <http://www.privateforestry.or.tz/en>

UWAMIMA has received funding for tree planting and income-generating activities (including beekeeping, poultry and avocado production) from development partners, and it won a tender for the production of 81 000 seedlings for PFP. Most of the young trees were distributed to members; the rest were sold for a total of TSHS 2 million (just under €800) to support UWAMIMA's operations. UWAMIMA acquired land already stocked with *Eucalyptus grandis* as a demonstration plot for silviculture and beekeeping. There is also a communal plot where individual members have their own parcels of land.

Although most members of the association are farmers, and therefore have a fairly regular (if minimal) source of income, there are lean years before a plantation begins to produce income. Revolving funds, which help to sustain income while trees are growing to first-thinning stage, are one way of preventing trees being harvested prematurely. Good yields depend on seed source, choosing the correct species for each site and correct management. Technical support has been provided through a twinning partnership with the Päijät-Häme Forest Management Association via FFD, a member of AgriCord.

Farmers who have started growing trees in the area have seen their living standards rise. UWAMIMA's support to smallholder tree-growers (facilitating access to inputs, training, equipment, marketing support and lobbying) aims to increase the proportion of income derived from selling wood products, at the same time as encouraging diversification into non-timber products such as honey and avocado. Early indications are that it is possible to develop sustainable plantations and create employment along the entire value chain.

## Farmers grow acacia trees for revenue – TTHCA, QTCA and QNCA, Vietnam

**Growing trees on land leased for decades can provide long-term income for smallholders and a good social safety net. Cooperatives have important roles in extension services, marketing and group certification.**

Agriculture in Vietnam's lowland areas is based on rice, but floods and typhoons often damage the harvest – farmers have noticed changing weather patterns and now find it difficult to live on agriculture alone. The younger generation often seek work elsewhere. The

poorest, particularly from ethnic minorities, are excluded from commercial agriculture and plantation forestry (which has relatively long lead times till harvest) because they lack cash and land. This excluded group relies on subsistence agriculture and harvesting forest products.

There is an increasing support from the Vietnamese State for farmers growing trees on their land, and national forest strategy now involves handing over 75 per cent of state-managed land to private enterprise, small farmers, communities and cooperatives on 50-year leases. An increased domestic supply will benefit both the country and the tree growers, if the quality of local timber can be improved and certified as coming from a sustainable source.<sup>8</sup>

Farmers have planted eucalyptus, pine, acacia and indigenous species. *Acacia mangium* is the most important because it is easy to plant, can survive in poor land, improves soil quality because its roots fix nitrogen and has a short production cycle. It is also a good cash crop – there is a strong demand for wood and the prices are competitive with alternative perennial crops that can be grown on similar land types. However, producers have found that prices are volatile and smallholders do not usually have long-term supply contracts, instead relying on middlemen who reduce the potential profits considerably. Individual farmers do not sell directly to factories because they have no means of transporting timber and because the production volume is small. Even though they know that logs, especially if certified, are more valuable than small timber sold for chipping, farmers may not be able to afford to wait for the trees to reach a suitable size: they often sell small poles simply to raise cash.

The handover of state-managed land to smallholders provides a good opportunity for organized groups to increase their membership by offering services: the three agricultural cooperatives in this case<sup>9</sup> expanded their remit to include forest-related elements through partnership with the Finnish agri-agency FFD (via the Savotta Forest Management Association). One of the coops, TTHCA, provides services to smallholder forest owners for management and marketing and has set up a specialised system for yield measurement.

<sup>8</sup> Vietnam is one of the top ten global producers of wood products, but most of the raw materials have to be imported.

<sup>9</sup> Thua Thien Hue Cooperative Alliance (TTHCA), Quang Tri Cooperative Alliance (QTCA) and Quang Ngai Cooperative Alliance (QNCA).

The coops have created networks with business partners such as furniture export companies and Asia Pulp and Paper (one of the largest pulp and paper companies in the world) for group sales of timber. Direct links to business gives the coops access to market information on price and demand for certified wood. And by promoting forest certification, the coops hope to increase members' income – timber that is certified as sustainably produced attracts a price premium in well-regulated markets.

It would be impossible for small producers to meet the requirements for sustainability certification as individuals. But forestry coops, working with a range of partners, have been developing procedures for group certification, validating standards with stakeholders and carrying out pre-certification assessments. In 2014 the Vietnamese government approved national standards for sustainable forest management, which gives the government recognition for certification processes.

Although growing trees is a long-term venture, good silviculture demands regular interventions that can generate extra income for forest farmers. Women's groups are well able to grow young trees from seed to sapling, and they sell them on to farmers at a competitive price (some 10 per cent lower than saplings produced further afield). Taking on temporary work by joining pruning, thinning and harvesting groups can also create extra income for families. In the short term, the aim is that by using cooperative forestry services, forest owners will increase their income from forest production by 10 per cent.

## **Farm forestry for diversified enterprises – ZNFU, Zambia**

**The Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU) has established a high-level committee to encourage farmers to integrate tree-planting with their agricultural activities. As well as reducing the national deforestation rate, agro-forestry offers additional sources of income.**

Woodland covers two thirds of Zambia's land area, but the deforestation rate, at over 250 000 hectares per year, is one of the highest in the world. The situation is made worse by unsustainable farming methods, the demand for wood fuel for tobacco curing, and widespread unregulated production of charcoal. Recognizing that action is needed, ZNFU has set up a Farm Forestry Commodity Committee that has been formally recognized by the Ministry of Lands.

The concept of farm forestry (which can include agro-forestry) sees trees as an integral part of the farming landscape, and entails planting trees on farmland and waste areas, including degraded forest. It integrates tree planting with crop and animal production, creating livelihood and business opportunities, and diversifying the sources of farm income. Smallholders can grow fruit for sale and to improve family nutrition and establish a small woodlot for cooking fuel and animal fodder, thus freeing up time otherwise spent gathering firewood. Medium-scale farmers can grow live fences of pine or eucalyptus as wind-breaks and to produce poles.

Farm forestry has huge potential to generate income for farmers as well as protecting the environment and mitigating climate change. Zambia's growing middle class is increasing the demand for wood-based products, so farm forestry has the potential to evolve from a secondary to a primary income source. FFD and FFF are therefore coordinating their work in Zambia, and FFF is supporting the Farm Forestry Commodity Committee through their representatives in the District Farmers Associations.

Challenges to farm forestry include the traditional land-tenure system, under which 94 per cent of land is 'customary' land, allocated by village headmen. This does not grant secure tenure rights to those working the land, so farmers are reluctant to make long-term investments – tree planting only sees revenue after 3-5 years at a minimum. It is complicated to convert customary land to leasehold, and the lack of secure tenure means that land cannot be used as collateral for loans.

## **Steady earnings from sustainable bitter bamboo production – LFN, Laos**

**The national farmer network in Laos is working with the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program to boost its members' productivity and living standards. This includes supporting producer groups to adopt sustainable methods and share best practice.**

Agriculture is important in Laos, absorbing 75 per cent of the country's workforce, and women farmers are responsible for over half of all agricultural activities.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.fao.org/laos/fao-in-laos/laos-at-a-glance/en/>

But until recently there were few organized producer groups, and smallholder farmers had no say in agricultural policy. The situation changed in 2014, when Laos joined the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) because GAFSP requires countries to develop strategic plans for agriculture and food security through a participatory process involving farmers themselves.<sup>11</sup>

GAFSP in Laos will support value chain development of non-timber forest products. Large parts of Laos, particularly in the northern mountainous areas, are covered with forest (although this is under threat from logging and shifting agriculture), and forest foods and medicines are still important to local communities – many people consider edible bitter bamboo shoots to be the most important product of all. In general, bamboo shoots are harvested and consumed in the rainy season (May-September), but the bitter bamboo, found mainly in northern Laos, is productive in the dry season (January-April). This off-season harvest provides market opportunities for local communities, and the bitter bamboo group in Nampheng village (a member of the Lao Farmers Network, LFN) is considered to be a model of sustainable management. The Nampheng group controls the harvest, only allowing members to cut bamboo until March, leaving some shoots to grow to maturity and maintain vegetation cover.

LFN has been documenting (with a view to promoting) how the Nampheng group manages to maintain its bitter bamboo while developing livelihoods, and good practice is then shared to build the capacities of other producer groups. These consultations put LFN in a good position to provide expertise for GAFSP. Farmers will train other farmers by peer-to-peer exchanges between groups, in effect engaging in GAFSP as providers of extension services. By promoting sustainable natural resource management – including bitter bamboo growing – LFN is contributing not only to improved livelihoods for bitter bamboo producers but also to keeping the local eco-system in balance.

LFN was formally established in 2014, following a series of farmers' organizations exchange forums, with the aim of supporting poverty eradication and livelihood development through improved access of its members to productive resources and support services. LFN is now a network of 17 producer organizations representing over 4 000 farmers (half of them women) from 10 provinces. The Lao government, through its

Department of Agricultural Extension and Cooperation (DAEC), supports LFN's initiatives and recognizes the role of farmers' organizations in the country's agricultural development strategy. The agriculture ministry sees such organizations as critical to the development of agricultural production and agribusiness, and hence to the national economy.

## Higher household income – MRDI, Zambia

**Promoted by a local leader with a vision of sustainability, a village in Southern Zambia has its own woodlots and plans to set up a community tree nursery. Villagers can now afford to buy household necessities and send children to school.**

In Zambia's Southern Province, some 50 km east of Choma, the local chief has been promoting the sustainable use of natural resources for over a decade. Encouraged by Chief Singani's vision, a group of a dozen young people started the Mboole Rural Development Initiative (MRDI) in 2003. No external support was involved until the group won an international award, which attracted the attention of donors. Today the group has 65 members, about half of them women, and they have set up 21 woodlots in the surrounding area. There is also an active tailoring group to generate further income.

A key factor in the group's success seems to be its ability to seek and maintain good relationships with partners which have provided technical, material and financial support. MRDI has forged links with UNDP, Community Response to HIV and AIDS, Zambia's Forestry Department, AFRICARE and the Zambian youth and sport ministry.

The more recent alliance with FFF has built capacity in the group, and the Director has received training on how to write proposals and mobilise finance. MRDI intends to diversify into beekeeping and honey processing. It also has plans to establish a community tree nursery capable of growing 30 000 seedlings per year – local demand for trees is high now that people are more aware of the risks from deforestation and climate change.

Using the eight sewing machines in a designated tailoring hut, young people are being trained in sewing techniques and design, particularly to meet the high demand for school uniforms.

<sup>11</sup> GAFSP is a multilateral fund with a main objective of improving the income and food security of the poor.

Results can be seen in the village – local people no longer struggle to afford basic supplies such as sugar and salt. Marble, the mother of four children, has a woodlot where she grows maize under a crop of young pine trees. She says she can produce eight school uniforms a day and can now afford to send her children to school.

Challenges remain – plans for the tree nursery have not moved forward because of a lack of funds, and an experiment to grow eucalyptus for poles failed because of termite attack. Undaunted, the group plans to press on with making people more aware of climate change and the need for sustainable production. They will try again to establish eucalyptus woodlots for poles and firewood, and they plan to set up a carpentry workshop to make the beehives for honey enterprises.

Lessons from this modest success story are that the involvement of traditional leaders can be a powerful boost to an initiative. And that strategic links to cooperation partners are vital for financial, technical and material support.

## SDG 2: ZERO HUNGER

---

There is enough food for everyone on the planet today, yet almost 800 million people suffer from hunger. Tackling hunger and malnutrition is not only about boosting food production, but also to do with increasing incomes, creating resilient food systems and strengthening markets so that people can access safe and nutritious food even if a crisis prevents them from growing enough themselves.<sup>12</sup>

We must make better use of land and water resources if we are to feed the growing world population. The 2030 Agenda stresses the importance of sustainable food systems and managing natural resources for future generations and notes that climate change poses an added threat to global food production.

SDG targets call for a doubling of agricultural productivity of small-scale food producers while ensuring sustainability. This is a big task and it is recognized

<sup>12</sup> FAO (2106). *Food and Agriculture - Key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

that more investment will be needed to achieve this. But investing via forest and farm producer groups is an effective way of bringing about change, and agro-forestry provides one route to making agriculture more sustainable.

### Simple measures boost food production – NFPG, the Gambia

**The introduction of low-tech improvements in crop diversity and post-harvest handling has improved the productivity of small farms.**

Surrounded on three sides by Senegal, the Gambia is a poorly developed country that relies heavily on agriculture: a large part of its workforce is employed on the land. The National Farmers Platform of the Gambia (NFPG) has been speaking out on behalf of farmers and local forest managers since 1998 and it now has about a quarter of a million members. The platform consists of 365 forest and farm associations from all sectors including livestock, fisheries, beekeeping, forestry, vegetables and rice. Its multi-sectoral nature brings together a range of stakeholders to share information and deal with collective problems that cannot be solved by single groups

NFPG is improving farm productivity in several ways. To reduce post-harvest losses, women's groups have been trained how to process and preserve food. Farmers have learnt to plant a range of horticultural crops to improve dietary diversity and trees to provide wood for cooking fuel. Farmers are also being encouraged to diversify into sweet potatoes and 'hungry rice' (a quick-maturing, nutritious form of millet) to improve household nutrition.

To increase agricultural production, the platform secured funding to provide early maturing seeds and cashew nuts for family farmers to grow. Farmers have been taught pruning and thinning techniques to boost yields from tree crops. A method of rapid composting plus judicious use of fertilizer has improved productivity on upland and lowland farms alike. And farmers have learned that they do not need to clear-fell an area before planting rice – Nerica<sup>13</sup> rice will grow in an agro-forestry system. Peer pressure has been brought to bear too – by publicizing regional production levels at farming conferences, the less successful areas are

<sup>13</sup> 'Nerica' or new rice for Africa is an inter-generic hybrid rice with higher yields and more drought tolerance than its parents.

motivated to improve. Finally, NFPG now sits on the steering committee of the Food and Agriculture Support Development Project (FASDEP), and has been able to link member organizations to the ‘marching grants scheme’ to improve agriculture, horticulture, livestock and fish farming on project sites.

There is healthy partnership with FFF, which supports a range of activities – training on business and market access, joining policy dialogue and sustainable community-based forest management – prioritised by affiliated groups every year. Challenges facing NFPG are a lack of management capacity compounded by high levels of illiteracy, and insufficient monitoring and evaluation. On the positive side, the platform has government recognition and takes part in national forums; it has good development partners and is a member of national and sub-regional networks; and it has nationwide coverage throughout the country’s 45 districts.

## SDG 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING

.....

Tangible health benefits spring from the work of FFPOs. Many groups actively encourage their members to grow more fruit and vegetables to boost household nutrition and wellbeing, and the improved economic status of group members means that they are better able to afford healthcare when necessary. Some well established organizations are even able to provide social protection and healthcare for their members, as shown by a case from Guatemala.

Many FFPOs are also the stewards of a huge untapped resource of medicinal plants. Only a fraction of the world’s potentially useful plants has been identified, let alone brought into commercial use, so it is vital that the forests where they grow are preserved for future generations. The case here shows a group creating employment through sustainable production of a plant-based chemical.

## Affordable healthcare for coop members – *Fedecovera, Guatemala*

**A diverse federation of coops funds social protection – especially health and education – from the profits of economic enterprises.**

The 25 000 members of Fedecovera<sup>14</sup> have a lot to gain from the services of their cooperative. Belonging to the Maya indigenous population in Guatemala, most are smallholder farmers and forest farmers. There are few education and health services where they live and many farmers are illiterate. To add to the difficulties, storms and hurricanes (made worse by climate change) are frequent occurrences, and some smallholders are threatened by ‘land-grabbing’ by private interests.

Fedecovera, a federation with a 40-year track record, aims to ensure social protection and dignified lives for its members. Among the many services it provides is basic healthcare. The central government struggles to maintain community health points, so Fedecovera’s member coops often take charge of these facilities to run preventive health services (consultations with doctors, vaccinations) and dentistry, subsidised by the federation. They make a small charge but the costs are almost 90 per cent cheaper than other private clinics. Fedecovera also runs a higher-level centre in Cobán and organizes occasional ‘medical days’ where services are offered free of charge. There is a fund to help those who cannot afford to pay – this would also cover the cost of visiting a specialized clinic elsewhere.

This social support (the educational aspects are discussed on page 32 under SDG 4) is underpinned by Fedecovera’s diversified commercial and financial activities. It is one of the world’s largest exporters of cardamom and its 38 cooperative members also produce coffee, cocoa, tea and certified timber. Fedecovera’s forest nursery is Guatemala’s biggest, and it sells both seedlings and forest planting and management services to the thousands taking advantage of government forest restoration incentive programmes. Its state-of-the-art sawmill uses the timber to make pallets for the fruit industry. It is a major shareholder in the country’s rural development bank (Banrural) and its coffee tourism business near Cobán is expanding. Having such a range of enterprises gives the organization financial resilience. And the organization invests about half of its own resources on direct services to member cooperatives and ultimately to individual members.

<sup>14</sup> Federacion de cooperativas de las Verapaces

FFF is supporting Fedecovera to strengthen its FFPO group businesses, which are the mainstay of the federation's social safety net. FFF is also supporting lobbying efforts. As a result, one per cent of Guatemala's national budget revenues will be used to finance income-generating activities of FFPOs for 30 years from 2017. This is estimated to amount to some US\$ 20 million per year. New legislation also ensures that only smaller producers will be eligible for forest incentive payments (to avoid elite capture) and makes the restoration of watersheds a priority.

In regions where Fedecovera operates, significant differences are emerging between farmers organized into cooperatives and those who do not. There are obviously direct impacts on terms of people who have access to healthcare (and education), and member families also report better living conditions and more reliable access to varied food. Improved food household food security is partly due to promotion by Fedecovera of improved varieties of the local staples, maize and beans.

## Distilling essential oil for medicinal use – Thach Ngoa Star Anise Group, Vietnam

**A small enterprise to extract star anise oil for medicinal purposes has made a good start. Local producers now have secure employment and there are hopes to expand production.**

After only a year of working together, a small producer group in Thach Ngoa village has almost doubled its membership and branched out into oil production from the fruit and leaves of the star anise tree (*Illicium verum*). The original five members formed a group to pool their production of star anise, timber and *bo khai* (a forest vegetable) and sell without recourse to middlemen. Star anise is used widely for flavouring in food and drink, but a far bigger use is medicinal. It is the world's major source of shikimic acid, which is an important component in anti-influenza drugs such as Tamiflu. Although shikimic acid can now be synthesized by a bacterial process, demand for star anise oil is still strong, driven by the global need to keep drug stocks in place in case of outbreaks of new strains of influenza.

Training provided through the Vietnam National Farmers Union (VNFU), supported by FFF, helped the group recognise the potential value of the star anise growing

locally (there are more than 100 hectares around Thach Ngoa) and learn how to distil star anise oil – the oil is more valuable than the unprocessed fruit, and it can also be extracted from leaves. As a result, the group felt confident enough to invest their own money (59 million VND or roughly €2 300) in small-scale distillation equipment. And by conducting their own market research, the group now has customers in provinces bordering China as well as local buyers. Star anise is not their main income, but the oil fetches more than twice the price as the raw fruit and the group can process 20 tons of fruit and 25 tons of leaves each year.

Expanding the business will be a challenge: quality control must be improved, the group needs to develop a trademark and packaging, and it could consider certification to add further value. Poor roads through the forest make transport expensive. But on the whole, the group's prospects are good. They already buy fruit from non-member households, paying slightly over the market price, and hope to expand and increase members' production and processing expertise. The group plans to lobby for road improvement, which would benefit the wider community too.

Overall the group provides work for 24 people (families of the nine households that constitute the group). Eleven more women find work collecting fruit, working in the distillation plant, and packaging and selling. And the group also cultivates *bo khai* under the forest canopy, for family consumption as well as local sale.

After only a year of operation, it is too soon to claim unequivocal success. But it appears that FFF support helped overcome the potential challenges of starting a new enterprise. Members are now gainfully employed and there are good prospects for growth.

## SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

---

Biomass energy is ubiquitous in the developing world. It is the most significant use of forests by value globally, and both rural and urban populations depend on it daily for cooking and heating. Regulating the use of wood and encouraging smallholders to establish their own community supplies are important tasks of most FFPOs, even those that deal principally with other products. The case here shows a national union



working towards countrywide organized production to improve the lives of those involved and to guarantee future supplies.

## Regulating the charcoal sector for sustainability – NACUL, Liberia

**Bringing the currently unregulated charcoal industry into the formal economy is expected to increase incomes for the producers and allow better regulation for sustainability.**

Liberia's population has roughly tripled over the last 50 years, but infrastructure has not grown in parallel and most rural areas do not have access to electricity. Almost everyone depends on charcoal for cooking, and deforestation and land degradation are pressing problems. Paradoxically, this presents a significant opportunity – to bring order to the chaotic charcoal sector. It is usually easier to ensure sustainable use of resources in a formalised sector, and a regulated industry can offer better job security and working conditions. Successful businesses can pay taxes that help pay for public services. This case shows how the National Charcoal Union of Liberia (NACUL) is improving its members' prospects through this route.

Responding to constant demand for cooking fuel, charcoal producers are active throughout Liberia; NACUL estimates that 100 000 people are involved in charcoal production and trade.<sup>15</sup> But the sector operates below the legal radar and individual producers have little power. NACUL was formed in 2004 and became more active in 2011. It is slowly mobilising producers, transporters and sellers, and so far it has created seven district network organizations with just over 900 members in total (roughly a third of them women). NACUL sees sustainable production as key to a thriving, legal charcoal sector and recognises that its network organizations must become effective institutions if this is to happen.

Bringing everyone involved in charcoal production and trade together is a gradual process. NACUL has found that producers and traders are willing to be legally registered as groups – the idea of sustainable production (and thus secure employment) and collective strength in seeking better livelihoods is persuasive.

Network organizations are encouraged to move towards sustainable production, and some practical results have been seen. In one district, charcoal producers and local leaders have agreed to protect a designated forest reserve; more generally, local leaders are identifying land for tree planting to provide a long-term supply of charcoal for their communities.

Selling charcoal at a fair price is a challenge for individual producers, so NACUL links its network members with markets and helps with practical services such as providing charcoal sacks, arranging bulk transport and paying for transport on behalf of the seller on credit. Arranging the charcoal producers into networks means that they can benefit from group management, and information can be shared more easily.

Formal partnership with FFF – a small direct grant to support the organization of district chapters in a few counties – has built NACUL's capacity in several ways. It is better informed on forest governance, and understands the importance of consulting members prior to taking part in policy dialogue. Knowledge of sustainable charcoal production is growing, as is the organization's advocacy and lobbying power. These improvements to NACUL's status are of direct benefit to its network organizations, which have access to training and workshops, and which can feed the voices of their members into forest policy stakeholder meetings.

NACUL has built strong collaboration between communities and its network organizations for job creation. Following large meetings, NACUL supports each fledgling organization with leadership and management structures.

NACUL has recommended that its networks should be eligible for training/extension on tree planting, improved charcoal kiln technology and forest management. Gender training is also seen as a priority, as women working in the charcoal trade are still vulnerable to (sexual) exploitation.

<sup>15</sup> Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (World Bank) (2012). *Liberia: Assessment of key governance issues for REDD+ implementation through application of the PROFOR forest governance tool.*



## THEME 2



© FOREST AND FARM FACILITY

# STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Forests and woodland in a mosaic with small farms provide a range of global environmental services including protecting watersheds, preserving biodiversity and gene-pools, sequestering carbon from the atmosphere, recycling nutrients and regulating the water cycle. In this chapter we therefore include SDGs 13 (climate action) and 15 (life on land), with passing mention of 6 (clean water and sanitation).

In addition to global effects, trees have important roles in specific situations – reducing coastal erosion and the impact of storm surges, and protecting against landslides and avalanches. It is therefore vital that we maintain global forest cover, particularly where local people depend on woodland for shelter, jobs and security – estimates suggest that there are

about 1.6 billion people in this position.<sup>16</sup> We can do this, and thereby mitigate climate change and give ourselves resilience to climatic shocks, if we manage forests properly. For this, good governance – as can be provided under well-managed producer groups – is critical.

As well as protecting existing forests, we need to plant more trees. This does not necessarily mean that agricultural land is lost, because there are many integrated production systems that combine forestry with agriculture. The forest and landscape restoration (FLR) mechanism, for instance, is a way of reversing environmental damage and restoring land to a higher level

<sup>16</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/forests>

of productivity. FLR restores ecological integrity through multi-functional landscapes that can improve food security, nutritional intake, livelihoods and resilience for smallholder farmers and producers. Technologies such as agro-forestry bring together trees, crops and livestock to provide a range of goods, benefits and services simultaneously. Nutritious food, renewable energy and clean water can all be produced while conserving biodiversity.<sup>17</sup> And having a more diverse range of products (fruit, nuts, fodder) provides opportunities for producer groups to develop new value chains.

## SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION

---

Climate change and related extreme-weather events have especially serious consequences for poor people, so the need to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards is particularly pressing for FFPOs in the developing world. Given that roughly a third of the world's forests are estimated to be under some form of community or family control, their producer groups have an important role to play in efforts to adapt to climate change.

With the development of payments for ecosystem services, new rights have emerged. In this context, rural producer groups are the only effective means by which smallholder farmers and foresters can be financially rewarded for their actions in protecting the environment, because reaching the farmers as individuals would be impractical.

FFPOs have multiple roles here. They can help their members adapt to climate change by supporting them to use climate-resilient species and techniques; they can sequester carbon by helping to plant new trees; and they are potential conduits for climate-change finance such as REDD+.

Cases here show producer groups using trees to protect against the effects of drought and flooding related to climate change (adaptation and disaster risk management). The case of Dhaneshwor Baikiwa Community Forest also shows an environmental benefit linked to SDG 6 (clean water).

<sup>17</sup> Ujjwal Pradhan (2015). *Agroforestry, Rights and Commons: Rethinking food and livelihood Security and Contributions to SDGs*. Presentation at ICRAF Science Week, Bogor.

## Forest user group rewarded for restoring water table – DBCF, Nepal

**A town council in Nepal rewarded a community forest user group for environmental services – in this case restoring the local water table to pre-deforestation levels. More than 70 similar agreements have been made in other parts of Nepal and the national federation is encouraging other groups to adopt this model.**

The Dhaneshwor Baikiwa Community Forest (DBCF) covers 40 hectares of hill forest beside the small town of Kavre Panauti, 30 km east of Kathmandu in central Nepal. The community forest user group was formed in 1994 to take official responsibility for managing the badly deforested hills. The group is a member of FECOFUN, the national federation of community forests in Nepal. Since then, its 100 members have worked hard to re-establish a variety of both native and exotic species and have specialized in the production of high-value fruit and forest spices such as lychee and cardamom.

In 2014 the group persuaded the town council to pay 75 000 Nepalese rupees (about €615) in recognition of the fact that the valley's water table had been restored as a result of reforestation. A reliable supply of water is vital not only for the town's drinking water, but also its food supply, since nearly all the local agriculture relies on irrigation.

The community forest manager was asked why the town agreed to make the payment. "When we took over the hills," he explained, "the water table in the valley was 30 metres lower than it had been before the severe deforestation that occurred in the 1980s. There were frequent shortages of both drinking water and water for irrigation. After 20 years of reforestation and careful forest protection by the community forest user group, the water table is back to previous levels and water supplies are again adequate for local needs. When we approached the council and asked for a contribution towards the cost of managing these forests, it was not a difficult discussion because the town people experience the value of the community forest in their daily lives. We hope to continue this agreement on a yearly basis."

He was also asked where the idea for this arrangement came from. Was it from an international consultant, or from a government report? "Oh, we just thought of it ourselves," was his answer. Dilraj Khanal, FECOFUN's legal advisor, reports that more than 70 similar agreements have emerged spontaneously over the past two

years. He says that FECOFUN has now developed a generic contract for such arrangements, to encourage wider adoption of this model.

## **Communities adapt to climate change – ACOFOP, Guatemala**

### **Forest farmers in a biosphere reserve are adapting their activities in response to an increase in severe droughts.**

In 1990, Guatemala's government established the Maya Biosphere Reserve to protect Guatemala's portion of Central America's largest tropical forest. Located in the Petén region of northern Guatemala, the Maya Biosphere Reserve is home to a huge range of plants and animals including the toucan and jaguar. There are important cultural sites too, ruins left by the Mayan people, and communities have been making their living from the forest for generations.

The Reserve is divided into three zones: protected areas (about 30 per cent of the total), where no harvesting of trees and other resources is allowed; multiple-use zones where communities practise sustainable management; and buffer zones to prevent human encroachment. This model is a living demonstration of the effectiveness of community management, and it has kept the largest protected forest in the world in community hands. It is estimated that if the forest were to be lost, annual rainfall would decline by up to 140 mm and average annual temperatures would go up by 2.3 °C by 2050.

Success is due to the Petén community forest association (Asociación de Comunidades Forestales de Petén, ACOFOP). Set up at the same time as the Maya Reserve, ACOFOP now has over 1 600 partner organizations and, although 75 per cent of their members are men, women are actively encouraged to take part. Additional support has come from partners, including FFF.

ACOFOP, with its understanding of environmental and sustainability issues, is well placed to boost the climate-change resilience of its members. Recent summers have been extremely hot and dry, so reservoirs for rainwater have been dug where possible. Early warning systems to prevent and control forest fires – more likely and more dangerous during a drought – have also been established.

Drought has also affected the xate harvest: leaves from particular species of palm have traditionally been

collected for the international floristry market, but hot summers prevent this activity, as the water supply in collectors' camps often dries up. ACOFOP has encouraged farmers to collect ramón nuts instead. Although ramón is not a major export crop, its nutritional value and wide availability make it a valuable addition to local diets, particularly for children. As it is harvested simply by collecting the fruit as it falls, the trees remain to produce fruit (and protect the soil) in subsequent years. A series of training sessions has been provided to highlight the potential effects of climate change and to emphasise to communities the great importance of maintaining forest cover.

Lastly, ACOFOP is involved in developing a national REDD+ project to generate financial incentives to reduce deforestation. The initiative was started in 2012 and brings together government and some two dozen communities, all under the ACOFOP umbrella. The idea is to reinvest incomes from emission reductions into forest protection. Even if the project is still being rolled out, ACOFOP has shown that local communities could pave the way for climate change mitigation when working together with national programmes and given management control over forest landscapes.

## **Restoring forests to protect against climate-related erosion – ASEC, Nepal**

### **Community forest user groups are protecting landscapes at risk from climate-change related landslides by planting bamboo and other non-wood forest products. They hope to persuade the authorities to lift a logging ban, arguing that having the right to benefit from the sale of valuable timber trees will be a strong incentive for vigilant forest protection.**

In the steep wooded hills of Nepal's Inner Terai, not far from Bardia National Park (home to some 50 Bengal tigers), erosion caused by deforestation and overgrazing is a serious problem. This area is geologically young and the topography is unstable, so the monsoon rains often trigger serious landslides on unprotected land. With the increased risk of extreme weather events caused by climate change, flood protection is important and tree cover vital. Local government is trying to conserve the trees by imposing a logging ban in the Dang district, but the Amritpur Social Entrepreneurs Cooperative (ASEC) is lobbying to have it lifted on the grounds that community forestry can help with reforestation and protect the remaining forest. Until timber

extraction is permitted, ASEC is focusing on growing bamboo, broom grass and other non-timber forest products to stabilise soils and provide income for community groups. It has already helped community forest user groups (CFUGs) to draw up sustainable forest management plans and to replant areas where vegetation is scarce.

Nepal's forest policy supports community management, recognising the value of local autonomy and the potential for forests to meet people's basic needs (fuel, fodder, timber etc.) and to provide worthwhile employment. But government does little to promote forest-based industries. This task falls instead to active producer organizations such as ASEC. Set up only three years ago, ASEC already boasts about 8 500 members who are keen to take advantage of the potential already being shown by forest-based small and micro-enterprises in the district.

One clear local need is affordable tree seedlings for reforestation eroded areas. ASEC is planning to set up a nursery and will work first with Navadurga CFUG as a pilot partner.

National legislation allows communities to harvest timber from their forests but there are serious hurdles of cost and bureaucratic to overcome. Collecting non-wood forest products is considerably cheaper than extracting timber but the products are mostly of lower value and the producers need training to maximise value-addition and to reach profitable markets. The Finnish Savotta Forest Management Association and FFD (a member of AgriCord) have therefore been working with ASEC to assess various markets for timber. Being allowed to cut and sell valuable timber trees (under a sustainable management plan) would give the communities even more incentive to protect their forests. Local demand certainly exists, with more than 100 houses constructed every year in Tulsipur and five furniture manufacturers in two of the CFUGs. The aftermath of the devastating 2015 earthquake has left huge reconstruction needs which could be met with community-sourced timber.

## SDG 15: LIFE ON LAND

---

Forests remain supremely important for the health of the planet and as a source of raw materials. They are known to reduce the risk of natural disasters, including floods, droughts and landslides. At global level,

forests mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration, contribute to the balance of oxygen, carbon dioxide and humidity in the air and protect watersheds, which supply 75 per cent of freshwater worldwide, and they are some of the most biodiverse systems on land, providing habitat for 80 per cent of terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects. Forests are diverse in human terms too, with more than 2 000 indigenous cultures and roughly 1.6 billion people depending on forests for their shelter, jobs and security.<sup>18</sup>

### *The wealth of forests*

Forests provide timber for building, wood-based biomass energy, fruit, bark, leaves, bush-meat, tubers, fungi, medicinal plants, and other raw materials for making such diverse items as leaf plates, furniture, twig brooms and fuel briquettes. To those living nearby, they are also a source of jobs and income.

Many of the non-timber forest products listed above are important for subsistence and they can also form the basis of various forest-based enterprises.

Investing in forests and forestry represent an investment in people and their livelihoods, especially the rural poor, youth and women. Small to medium farm and forest enterprises have a crucial role to play here because smallholders manage large areas of the world's forests and can thus directly contribute to sustainable management, halting deforestation and reversing land degradation.

The future of forests and forestry in sustainable development at all levels was at the core of the XIV World Forestry Forum, held in Durban in September 2015. The Durban Declaration called for new partnerships among forest, agriculture, finance, energy, water and other sectors, as well as engagement with indigenous people and local communities.<sup>19</sup>

Cases in this section show how producer groups have taken on valuable stewardship roles over their local forests.

<sup>18</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/forests>

<sup>19</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/forests>

## Organic agro-forestry to safeguard dry tropical forest – *MINGA, Bolivia*

**Bolivia's Chiquitano dry forests are particularly rich in biodiversity. Family farms are making integrated management plans to safeguard household food security without compromising the forest ecosystem.**

Dry forests are some of the most endangered tropical forests in the world. The Chiquitano dry forests where La Asociación de Grupos Mancomunados de Trabajo (MINGA) is active are also an important transition zone between the moist Amazonian forests of the north and the arid Chaco further south.<sup>20</sup> Because of its large size and generally healthy status, the Chiquitano forest is particularly rich in biodiversity. It harbours a great variety of vertebrates including jaguar and giant tapir, and it is likely that many plant and animal species living there have not yet been identified. But the area is under threat, not least because three-quarters of the trees are valuable timber species. Clearance for agriculture is also a constant threat, as is the more insidious damage done by roads and pipelines, which fragment the habitat.

Recognising the value of this and other natural areas of Bolivia, the national association of agro-ecological producers (AOPEB) successfully lobbied the government to pass legislation that promotes and regulates organic non-timber production and agro-forestry. MINGA benefits from this law, as its members – some 1 500 families – do not use any chemicals and its products can therefore be certified as organic. MINGA was established in 1979 with just 80 producers of groundnuts and coffee grown in an agro-forestry system. It works with communities, supporting them to use the forest sustainably and buying members' produce, which includes coffee, the chiquitana almond, wild fruits and some annual crops. Under FFF support, family farms are developing integrated management plans to ensure food security – such plans are recognized by the Bolivian environment ministry. The organic coffee is in high demand locally. Chiquitano almonds are collected from the forest – roasted, they are a popular local snack as well as being used in cooking.

As many of the farmer members of MINGA have always lived in and used the forest, there is a wealth of traditional knowledge that the association is trying to optimise. Many types of wild fruit (acerola, achachairú, conservilla, guava) are suitable for preserving or

otherwise processing, giving farmers new options for diversifying income and adding value. The association is constantly seeking to expand the range of fruits and nuts that is marketed.

Although farmers have for generations used the forest in a sustainable manner, more intensive practices (including the use of chemicals) have been creeping in, to the detriment of the wider environment. There is a need for to relearn some of the old ways, augmented by up-to-date agro-forestry practices, such as combining timber species with annual crops, fruit and coffee. Technical assistance is provided through FFF to ensure that national conservation standards are maintained and that the agro-forestry techniques are adapted to the dry climate of the Chiquitano region. Inputs, training and access to microcredit are all involved, together with lobbying (under agrarian reform policy) for farmers to claim title deeds for land they have worked for generations.

Producers can now take part in the annual Bio Bolivia, a national fair organized by AOPEB to promote organic production and raise consumer awareness. With an eye to the future, a university diploma in business development and community forest management has been launched. This will produce a cadre of local professionals able to manage and lead local organizations.

## Eucalyptus trees can have environmental benefits – *Zenbaba Union, Ethiopia*

**Tree growing in Ethiopia provides various benefits to farmers: they can sell poles, use leaves and extracts for aromatic oils, and process small wood as charcoal to replace dung as fuel. Added to this, increased forest cover is important to reduce soil erosion.**

Farmers in the arid northern parts of Ethiopia have been growing trees, mainly eucalyptus, along field margins and in small woodlots for many years. Smallholders appreciate their speed of growth, the fact that livestock do not eat them, and their ability to coppice (regrow from the stump) after being cut. Poles find a ready market for the construction industry and the market is booming. There is particularly strong demand for poles in Bahir Dar, Addis Ababa and in neighbouring Sudan. Closer to home, the smaller twigs and dried leaves are valuable cooking fuel.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/151105/>

As its name suggests, the Zenbaba Bees' Products Development and Marketing Cooperative Union was set up (in 2006) as a producer group for honey. But, since many farmers were already growing and selling poles, it made commercial sense for the union to expand its remit to include farm forestry. Support for this change came through a twinning partnership with Karstula-Kyyjärvi Forest Management Association and MTK South-West Finland Region. Finland's family forestry is well established and the forest management associations have long experience in increasing the financial returns to forest owners.

Bureaucratic hurdles had to be overcome first: unions and coops are supported by the Cooperative Promotion Agency (CPA) which works free of charge to promote both the organizations and demand for their products. But long administrative processes were required to obtain permission for Zenbaba Union to expand its operations into forestry in early 2015. Cooperatives can now legally buy poles from farmers to sell collectively, which has increased the price received by the farmers. Income generation opportunities have become more diverse for all the member coops.

Zenbaba Union has been active in setting up new forestry coops and more than 2 000 farmers have been trained on a range of subjects from agro-forestry to marketing. Model agro-forestry woodlots have been set up in nine coops and on 21 individual farms, and inter-cropping is proving successful, with farmers able to grow food crops alongside trees for the first few years. The system appears to be profitable and to increase household food security. So far, potatoes have been found to do well, and experiments are continuing with maize, wheat, teff (Ethiopia's staple cereal), chilli and beans: the union is active in sourcing improved seeds of the relevant crops.

A key issue beyond the undoubted monetary value of properly marketed pole crops is the fact that wood residues – top lengths of poles, trimmed branches etc. – are extremely valuable to turn into charcoal or use unprocessed as cooking fuel. Having a ready supply of wood to burn means that farmers can return animal dung to the soil. In the semi-arid Ethiopian highlands where soils are infertile and lack organic matter, dung is a renewable and sustainable resource capable of increasing productivity of local farming systems.

## **Biosphere reserve protected by community action – ACOFOP, Guatemala**

**Communities in the Maya Biosphere Reserve are conserving the natural forest. They harvest a range of non-wood products and a certain amount of timber under agreed management plans.**

As described above (see page 17), the Maya Biosphere Reserve has successfully protected Guatemala's portion of Central America's largest tropical forest. Through strict zoning (some areas are off-limits completely) and tailored management plans for areas where harvesting is allowed, environmental benefits have been huge. Deforestation has been reduced to almost nil and forest fires are far less frequent than they used to be. Many communities have achieved certification for their timber production, and the populations of jaguars, tapir and puma – all species that need large tracts of forest to survive – are stable. Valuable, long-lived trees such as mahogany are protected by management plans that take into account their growth rate and means of regeneration.

How was this achieved? The Petén community forest association (Asociación de Comunidades Forestales de Petén, ACOFOP) was set up at the same time as the Maya Reserve to promote sustainable management in the multiple use zones. People living in these zones are required by law to have management plans for their proposed harvest of timber and non-timber forest products – the latter include xate, an ornamental palm used in flower arrangements, and chicle, an ingredient in chewing gum – and ACOFOP has provided training and support to community groups drawing up such plans. It has encouraged community tourism as an additional source of income for forest dwellers and hopes in future to receive payment for ecosystem services. Support from FFF has enabled ACOFOP to explore the best ways to use forest resources to boost local living standards, and to strengthen the organizational, management and marketing capacities of producer groups.

ACOFOP has set up a service company, FORESCOM, which acts as an intermediary between community forest enterprises and the demands of domestic and international markets. It has specialised technical staff to guarantee the technical, financial and environmental sustainability of forest producer groups in the biosphere reserve. FORESCOM has equipment for drying and sawmilling, and is able to manufacture timber products such as tongue-and-groove and



decking. The trees are harvested selectively, to take account of their natural regeneration capacity, and some of the income generated from timber sales is reinvested in forest protection.

ACOFOP is a member of the Guatemalan National Alliance of Forest Community Organizations which represents them in national policy discussions including REDD+ and climate-change decision-making processes. They are also members of the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB), which promotes community involvement in natural resource management across the region. It does this by permanent dialogue with government and other official bodies.

## Learning the environmental value of forest – TTHCA, QTCA and QNCA, Vietnam

**Farmers growing certified timber are learning that their trees have more than monetary value – forests protect the soil from erosion, help prevent landslides and store carbon. And research suggests that hybrid acacia trees are better at fixing nitrogen than the parent species, which improves soil fertility for subsequent crops.**

As described in theme 1 (see page 7) many farmers in Vietnam have started planting trees (including acacia, eucalyptus, pine and indigenous species) to diversify their farming income and provide an economic buffer against crop loss due to climate-change-related extreme weather. But although they are working towards certification (which demands that timber is produced sustainably) they do not necessarily consider the wider environmental value of forests and trees, such as in reducing the risk of landslides, improving soil water retention or sequestering atmospheric carbon. Three cooperative alliances<sup>21</sup> are working to address this situation through a twinning partnership with the Finnish Savotta Forest Management Association, via FFD, a member of AgriCord.

One aspect of the work is to promote acacia hybrids that show much better nitrogen-fixing ability than the parent species. Trials have also shown that these hybrids create a more favourable environment for many other soil micro-organisms, thus improving the

physical and chemical properties of soil. The capacity of acacia hybrids to improve infertile soil will provide economic benefits to subsequent rotations of acacia or other crops, as they will need less fertilizer.

## Woodlots scheme for active management – SWA, Scotland

**Replicating an idea from an IFFA member in British Columbia, members of the Scottish Woodlot Association can now rent small parcels of woodland from large landowners. The landowners are pleased to have their woods actively managed, and Association members reap lifestyle and livelihoods benefits.**

Much of the UK's woodland is not under active management – labour costs are high, forest areas are often fragmented or on steep slopes, so in many cases it is uneconomic to do the thinning and pruning that would, over time, add value to the timber. On the other hand, many people in the UK cherish the hope of managing a patch of forest. They would be happy to invest time and effort in return for some exercise and fresh air, plus the chance to enjoy the woodland flora and fauna. But small plots are rarely offered for sale and they usually command high prices.

In response to this conundrum, a mutually beneficial model pioneered by the Federation of British Columbia Woodlot Associations is being replicated by the Scottish Woodlot Association (SWA) to provide affordable access to woodland. Woodlot licences allow an individual to rent a plot of trees on a long-term basis for productive management. In April 2016 the Association signed their seventh woodlot licence agreement for land near Dumfries, southwest Scotland.

The new site on the Speddoch Estate comprises a number of small woodland parcels which have been combined into three separate licences. One of the new licence-holders, Steffi Schaffler, lives nearby and plans to manage her woodlot using her own horses. The 14 ha woodlot is ideal for them, as Steffi explains:

‘It’s a great site for horses, not steep and not too wet. I am looking forward to thinning it, which is what horses are really good for.’

Steffi and her partner recently installed a log-burning boiler to heat their home, so the poorer quality timber they cannot sell as sawlogs will be used for fuel.

<sup>21</sup> Thua Thien Hue Cooperative Alliance (TTHCA), Quang Tri Cooperative Alliance (QTCA) and Quang Ngai Cooperative alliance (QNCA)

Another of the licence-holders, Mark Rowe, also lives nearby – this local connection is typical of most woodlots. Mark runs a mobile sawmilling and general forestry business, and will use the woodlot to support his business and provide fuel for heating. Contributing to both lifestyles and livelihoods is again typical of the woodlot approach.

Under the terms of their licences Steffi and Mark will be responsible for managing their woodlots according to management plans agreed with Speddoch Estate owner, Rev Dr James Clark-Maxwell. This will include felling and extracting timber, which they will then be allowed to process and sell themselves. In return they pay an annual rent.

SWA Limited is a grassroots, non-profit-distributing forestry cooperative, whose members are working to implement Woodlot Licences and encourage small-scale forestry. It was founded in 2012 by a group of forestry professionals who, having seen the woodlot model at work, wanted to give rural people a stake in their local forests. In British Columbia, the provincial government has been running a highly successful woodlot licence programme on Crown land for over 30 years.<sup>22</sup> There, they are seen as an important part of a diverse forestry sector, delivering particular local and community benefits, and are being actively promoted and expanded by the government. The SWA hope in time that woodlot licence tenure will also become an important ‘family forestry’ model in a more diverse Scottish forestry.

*‘I am pleased to have been able to offer three families woodland to manage. I look forward to seeing their efforts bear fruit on the ground. The approach that the SWA has developed ensures that areas of non-commercial woodland are managed to current best practice whilst the families involved are provided with timber to keep their houses warm, sell or use in their businesses. I would encourage more landowners to consider the possibility of hosting woodlots.’*

Reverend Dr James Clark-Maxwell, Owner, Speddoch Estate.

<sup>22</sup> The Federation of British Columbia Woodlot Associations (FBCWA) promotes the economic and social interests of woodlot licencees, private forest landowners and others involved in small-scale forest management. Its mission is for all its members to practice exemplary forest and natural resources management in a socially, economically and environmentally responsible manner. The FBCWA is a member of the Canadian Federation of Woodlot Owners which, in turn, is a member of IFFA.

## **Agro-forestry for niche products protects hillsides – TKFPI, the Philippines**

**In hilly areas under threat from deforestation and erosion, high-value crops are being incorporated into sustainable agro-forestry systems.**

The Philippines are densely populated, including the upland areas where the cultivation of steep slopes can cause severe soil erosion and sedimentation of rivers. To sustain reforestation, farmers need a regular source of income and agro-forestry has been promoted for decades but optimum crop and tree combinations are still being sought. The Tao sa Kalikasan Foundation of the Philippines (TKFPI), a federation of five community coops with some 500 members, operates in communities around the Labo-Capalonga Forest Reserve, some 2 000 hectares of community-managed forest, where 80 per cent of the population are upland farmers who depend on subsistence agriculture. It has been supported recently by Trias, a member of AgriCord.

In the 25 years since it was formed, TKFPI has supported member cooperatives to implement a range of environment-related activities such as seedling production, upland reforestation and coastal and mangrove rehabilitation. Most of its income comes from government reforestation project contracts, which provide paid work for its members at the same time as helping to preserve the forest. TKFPI has also been active in forest rehabilitation through the government’s National Greening Project, which involved nursery development, tree planting and maintenance in five provinces in the Bicol Region. Environmental protection, rehabilitation and maintenance continue to be on TKFPI’s lobbying agenda.

More recently, TKFPI has promoted agro-forestry systems that combine niche crops such as Manila hemp (*Musa textilis*, a species of banana that produces high-quality fibre, also known as abaca) and lemon-grass (the source of citronella oil) with sugarcane for muscovado sugar.

Thanks to partnership with local government and the Fiber Industry Development Authority, TKFPI gained access to an improved variety of abaca – four of its farmer members were given the task of propagating the plant material for wider distribution. Manila hemp was traditionally used to make high-quality paper but it can also be woven into craft items – the Guisican Multipurpose Cooperative (a member of TKFPI)

produced and sold 2 259 pairs of abaca sandals in 2014. TKFPI has run training courses to improve the quality of workmanship and promoted hemp handicrafts at national trade fairs.

Steam distillation of lemongrass produces the valuable citronella oil, which forms the basis of farmer-run micro-enterprises. Total sales of citronella and handicrafts through TKFPI in 2014 amounted to some €14 400 (PHP 821 626) and citronella sales had increased by 52 per cent compared to previous years. Almost 459 litres were produced in 2014. These good results were only possible because the coops were able to access finance and training. TKFPI organised credit for its members: a loan of PHP 500 000 (some €8 750) was facilitated with the AgriCord Synergy Agri-Investment Fund and other funds for investments are available from government sources.

It is clear that sustainable forest and farm management provides opportunities for many families to create agro-forest enterprises to supply mainstream markets. But challenges remain – it has proved difficult to find experts to work on the Manila hemp value chain, the production of muscovado sugar has not taken off, and sugar cane is not an easy crop to incorporate with forestry. Other possibilities are being considered by TKFPI, such as supporting cacao instead of sugarcane.



## THEME 3



© FOREST AND FARM FACILITY

## DEVELOPING SOCIAL COHESION

The recurring theme of this publication is ‘strength in numbers’, again emphasising the importance of group strength in the context of social development. Building just and fair societies requires patience, teamwork and accountable institutions: properly run producer organizations should be miniature democratic institutions where members can have their say, as well as benefiting from the lobbying power and services of the organization they belong to. Through these organizations we can put people first in development processes, bringing in marginalised members of all groups. Today’s global challenge of truly sustainable development requires that everyone must fulfil their potential.

In this section we look at SDGs 5 (gender equality) and 16 (peace and justice), finding in them the foundations of social development.

### SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

---

*‘Women produce half the world’s food but have much less access to land.’<sup>23</sup>*

In most parts of the world, women have a triple work burden – reproductive, household and economic – they contribute to family enterprises in agriculture and forestry, and have important roles in processing and marketing, as well as being responsible for bearing children and for daily household work. Many girls miss out on school because they are expected to help with domestic tasks, which reduces their opportunities later. Women’s multiple contributions to family and

<sup>23</sup> FAO (2016). *Food and Agriculture: Key to Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

enterprise are not yet fully valued and, compared to men, women still have poor access to land and resources. Women's enterprises and organizations face extra legal and cultural barriers, and they are not always well represented in membership and leadership positions in FFPOs.

In working towards gender equality, we must take the realities into account and give specific support at the right time to women. We also need to work with men so that they understand, accept and start to share women's unequal burden. The main route towards gender awareness is via education. Many FFPOs provide special training courses for women, in response to the fact that in most developing countries fewer women than men will have completed secondary education. Some groups are formed exclusively for women. The cases below demonstrate that, with the right support, women are well able to become entrepreneurs in their own right and can take responsible roles within their producer groups.

## Improving handicrafts for higher income – *Mayangna women, Nicaragua*

**Mayangna women from the eastern coastal regions of Nicaragua are renowned for their handicrafts. With training to improve design and quality, women producers expect to earn more, as there is steady demand for their products.**

Nicaragua is the second-poorest economy in Latin America, but it contains one of the largest intact tropical forests north of the Amazon, home to indigenous peoples such as the Mayangna and Miskito Indians, who practice low-density shifting cultivation. The forest is under threat from large-scale ranchers and from logging. By the 1990s, the threat was so severe that the Mayangna organized themselves into associations to resolve territorial disputes; in 2001 they won a case against logging concessions.

By 2005 the Nicaraguan government had taken the progressive step of awarding common property titles to the Mayangna and others. The government now legally recognizes 49 per cent of the remaining forests as community-owned – a higher proportion than in any other Latin American country. This political support provides a platform for strengthening forest and farm producer organizations for business and policy engagement.

The Mayangna women's producer groups are some of FFF's target groups in Nicaragua. The aim is to help the women to find new business opportunities and contribute economically to their communities. The organization is driven mainly by culture and custom; the women are highly skilled craftspeople, using bamboo and fibre from the bark of the tuno tree (*Castilloa fallax*) to make items such as necklaces and purses. As well as helping the women add value to their handicrafts and set up cooperative enterprises, FFF has been working to boost the groups' capacity in food security and production systems, and raising awareness of the problem of domestic violence. With economic success, it is hoped that the women will become more confident as leaders – whether this removes women's obligations to do labour-intensive household tasks on top of their economic activities remains to be seen.

External and governmental organisations have been promoting women's leadership in indigenous communities in the region to make them more visible within their communities, families and society in general. Although women are encouraged to participate in political decision-making, women still have little say in forest management decisions and have scarce access to land, credit and decent jobs.<sup>24</sup>

## Women take more control – *MVIWATA, Tanzania*

**Tanzania's economic development is putting pressure on natural resources: community-based management allows small farmers to take responsibility for local forests.**

Like many countries in East Africa, Tanzania is developing fast. The economy is growing, with increases in agriculture, mining activities and related small businesses, all of which have put pressure on forests and other natural areas. As the population grows there is increasing demand for charcoal and firewood, and increasingly severe droughts are exacerbating the pressure on natural resources. The government is currently unable to protect the forests effectively.

<sup>24</sup> IIED briefing paper (March 2014). *Multi-stakeholder governance strengthens sustainable livelihoods in Bosawás, Nicaragua*. <http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/17207IIED.pdf>

With advisory support from Trias, a member of Agri-Cord, MVIWATA<sup>25</sup> Arusha and Manyara (the regional farmers' organisations of Tanzania's national farmer network MVIWATA) promote the best option for sustainable forest management at local level – community-led management and protection.

Farmers in the Arusha and Manyara districts are not rich. The pastoralist Maasai have lost many of their cattle in recent droughts and crop farmers are not much better off, beset by a shortage of quality seeds and fertilizer, and a lack of irrigation. For women it is even worse, because traditional systems do not allow women to own land or other assets.

MVIWATA at district level in Arusha and Manyara has therefore been offering female-only training courses covering skills that allow greater financial independence. A range of topics is covered, including agricultural entrepreneurship, household asset management, women's legal rights in terms of land and marriage, and the workings of cooperative savings and credit unions. Reproductive health and gender relations are also discussed. The aim is to allow women to take more control over their lives and have a greater say in decisions (on crops, investment, marketing) currently made by men. Three women from MVIWATA Arusha attended a national gender festival in Dar es Salaam, and the organization has set a target that a third of its leaders should be women. Roughly half of the members of MVIWATA Arusha are women, and more than 60 per cent of them took part in activities or training.

One important enterprise in these areas is beekeeping, although it has until now been a male preserve. Honey is a valuable commodity and, since the bees need flowering trees (particularly acacia in this case) for food as well as water to drink, beekeepers are keen to maintain tree cover around water sources. MVIWATA has been stressing the close relationship between trees, soil protection and water supply, and the environmental benefits of forest conservation.

Women are not yet convinced that they can take on a man's job – female beekeepers are still in the minority – but MVIWATA is trying to redress the balance. An incentive is the offer of half-price hives. MVIWATA

Manyara places a condition on this offer – farmers are given five tree seedlings free when they pay their subscription: if the trees are flourishing six months later, the farmer is eligible to buy a subsidised hive.

Another activity targeted at women is poultry farming, which requires minimal space and allows women to build their own assets. MVIWATA's poultry producers increased their income by an average of 23 per cent over a six-year period, with the poorest households seeing the biggest increase in their incomes.<sup>26</sup> Women who made money from their poultry found themselves in a stronger negotiating position in the home. MVIWATA Arusha now has some 750 poultry keepers organised in 50 producer groups, and most of them are women.

Irrigated onions and garlic are important cash crops in this area. The labour force in production and post-harvest sorting is largely female, but women take little part in the marketing. Instead of being able to profit directly, they receive only small wages for their work. MVIWATA's training courses therefore encourage women to join the value chain by setting up small businesses. As both onion and garlic are exported throughout East Africa, and the Arusha and Manyara branches of MVIWATA are well placed near the trans-African highway, there is real potential for these farmers, including women, to benefit from the regional market.

## **Women process cashew nuts to add value – URCPA-A/D, Benin**

**Producing cashew nuts generates an alternative source of revenue for farmers who also grow cotton, and more women are taking part in artisanal processing and group sales.**

Cashew nuts from Benin, renowned for their good quality, ripen earlier than the nuts from other producing countries such as Mozambique, Guinea and Tanzania. Production has risen significantly over the past 30 years as cashew is an interesting alternative for Benin in view of the difficulties in the cotton industry: it is the country's second most important agricultural export product. Part of this success can be attributed

<sup>25</sup> MVIWATA (Mtando wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania) is the national networks of farmers' groups in Tanzania. Between this national organization and the individual farmer is a middle-level network based in particular areas. The Arusha and Manyara networks are separate entities but they both cover semi-arid areas and their members by and large share the same challenges. In this example, we discuss both of them.

<sup>26</sup> The poorest and second poorest quintile was able to increase their household income by 536% and 147% respectively over the period (sample of 193 households). Study conducted by In Depth consultancy in 2013 and peer reviewed by ADE and Focus Up in August 2015.

to the grouping of cashew growers into formal producer organizations under a regional union (Union Régionale des Coopératives de Producteurs d'Anacarde of Atacora-Donga, URCPA-A/D).

The union provides expertise and extension services for cashew nut production and has a supply of shared tools such as saws for pruning cashew trees. It organizes marketing and group sales for members, and these capacities have been reinforced through exchanges with the farmers' cooperative Unicoque and Coop de France Aquitaine, through the French agri-agency Afdi (a member of AgriCord). There have also been exchange visits with Ghanaian producers. Efforts have been made to rehabilitate unproductive orchards, and in 2015 more than 1 700 hectares were brought back to full productivity. Combining beekeeping with cashew orchards improves pollination and provides another income stream from honey sales. Thanks to training in orchard management and modern apicultural techniques, the orchards' productivity (cashews plus honey) improved by between 50 to 70 per cent in 2015.

The cooperative pays its members a basic price immediately on delivery of the cashew nuts, using rotating funds and credit from a microfinance company. Farmers later receive a top-up payment after the coop sells the nuts. This basic payment is important because it comes at the peak of the hunger season in Benin, when household food stocks and cash reserves are at their lowest.

In 2014 URCPA-A/D facilitated market access for producers by negotiating contracts with two processing companies and a national buyer. Informal contracts were negotiated with four other buyers.

Many more women are now taking part in group sales and they now account for roughly 22 per cent of all participants, which is almost three times as many as in former years. In 2015, over 2 900 tons of cashews were sold in bulk, for a total price of over 1 160 million FCFA (roughly €1.77 million).

Apart from being increasingly involved in sales of nuts, women members are also involved in artisanal processing of the nuts, which adds a margin of about 5 per cent to the product. The cooperative facilitated access to microfinance for these women, so they can buy unprocessed nuts in the market when prices are at their lowest.

## SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

---

*'Ending hunger can contribute greatly to peace and stability'<sup>27</sup>*

Membership-based producer organizations have proved themselves to be strong builders of democracy. They also foster economic growth and equitable distribution of income. AgriCord's Farmers Fighting Poverty programme is based to a large extent on this view of the potential value of FFPOs, and the cases in this section show this process in action. In Myanmar and Nepal, the organizations are supporting the slow process of democratization and recovery from civil war; in less critical situations they make sure that their members' voices are heard in trade or policy discussions.

### Securing commercial community land rights – KFUA, Myanmar

**After half a century of military government in Myanmar, the National League for Democracy now has some power following a landslide victory. Community forestry offers an important platform for building peace and achieving prosperity in the new political landscape.**

The idea of a market-led approach to community forestry in Myanmar has been gaining traction for some five years, supported by the government, civil society organizations and ethnic groups. The approach will be based on securing commercial tenure, improving technical know-how, building business skills and strengthening FFPOs. As discussed elsewhere in this publication, strong FFPOs are a critical conduit for channelling pro-poor REDD+ finance towards forest restoration; they are also a central foundation for the legal and sustainable supply of timber for programmes such as FLEGT. But at this politically fragile moment, their most important role might be in mobilising local people behind constructive peaceful development that puts resources back in local hands and equips them to generate incomes that will serve as a peace dividend to those that participate.

<sup>27</sup> FAO (2016). *Food and Agriculture: Key to Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.



Efforts to establish and scale-up community forestry are in full flow, and legislative changes are under way. Successful new models of forest business are emerging through the collective efforts of user groups clustered under the Kachin Forest Users Association (KFUA) in northern Myanmar and the La Myang Community Forest Rattan and Bamboo Group business is well developed. Other groups have ideas for sawn timber processing, and integrated bamboo processing. It is expected that as more income-generating options are devised, the demand for registering and restoring community forest areas should also expand.

There is now a business environment in which the forest department and civil society are aligned behind a push for commercial community forestry, just as the transition to the new government is taking place. Since peace-building is the central priority of the new government, there is a huge opportunity to transfer forest resources to communities and develop their livelihood options through business development: such an undoubted peace dividend would contribute toward democratic reforms.

## Supporting democracy and building peace – *FECOFUN, Nepal*

### **Community forestry has made an important contribution to democratization and peace building in the aftermath of the country's civil war.**

Nepal's dramatic rates of deforestation of the 1970s have been significantly slowed by the introduction of community forestry as enshrined in the 1993 Forest Act and subsequent regulations. Communities now have the right to take legal control of their forests and community forest user groups (CFUGs) are now established throughout the country. The Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal (FECOFUN) was set up in 1995 to promote the rights of these groups through lobbying, advocacy and policy development, and to provide practical training and support. There are now almost 19 000 CFUGs across all 75 districts of Nepal: each district has its own federation of groups, and FECOFUN is the national federation.

A forest user group includes all adults from the households in the particular community, and each is run by an executive committee composed of equal numbers of men and women. If there are indigenous, poor or disadvantaged groups (for example dalits) within the community, they too must be represented on the committee. Fair representation continues at higher

levels – over 80 members of the national federation are from indigenous or dalit groups, and there are 44 women leaders. Internal representation processes have improved recently, with FECOFUN providing guidelines to the districts to make sure that they select representatives of disadvantaged groups to join the General Assembly.

Power is devolved to the lowest level: local forest user groups have their own constitution and an operational plan prepared by the users and approved by the district forest office. Support to local groups is mobilised through FECOFUN, which has a great number of national and international partners, some of which fund capacity-building or conduct relevant research. The partnership with FFF is important, as FECOFUN understands the importance of bringing forestry and farming closer together to enhance rural livelihoods. So working with FFF has helped integrate forest and farm activities and has strengthened existing links such as with credit and loan facilities, stakeholders in agriculture and livestock production, and business entities such as the Federation of Nepali Cottage and Small Industries, the other FFF partner in Nepal. Existing resources that might form the basis of new enterprises have been assessed, particularly with a view to empower women and marginalised groups. And having a cross-sectoral platform has helped highlight policy hurdles faced by small producer groups.

FECOFUN has grown to be the largest civil society organization in Nepal and is an important part of the national democratization process. Over the past two decades it has brought significant influence to bear on forest policy development and governance, including persuading the government not to expand conservation areas into community forests, and resisting government and Maoist intervention in community forests during the political turbulence of the 1990s. FECOFUN has become the authentic voice of community rights on forestry and, because of its extensive network and established governance structure, is also the legitimate body for communicating forest and natural resource management information throughout Nepal.

FECOFUN advocacy has helped protect user-group rights over forest resources, and the organization has played a key role in resolving disagreements relating to such issues as forest product harvesting and distribution, the taxation of forest products and boundary disputes. The organization has also provided livelihood services direct to forest-dependent poor; supported community-based enterprise development, and helped certify and market non-timber forest products.

Through membership of the Forestry Sector Coordination Committee (FSCC) and the Nepal NTFP Network (NNN), FECOFUN is a key actor in processes related to national forest strategy. It also a member of various forums associated with rights-based advocacy, and takes part in high-level forest-related events. In short, FECOFUN has been instrumental in strengthening legal and customary rights over natural resources, especially forests.

## **Small forest-owners defend their rights – LRF, Sweden**

**Small forest landowners in Sweden defended their rights by group action a century ago. The popular movement of family forest-owner associations has helped eradicate poverty not only in rural areas but also for the Swedish nation. It has led to one hundred years of increasing forest cover, to the benefit of forest ecosystems and forest owners alike.**

For hundreds of years, Sweden's rural dwellers made clearings in the indigenous forest for agriculture. The forest provided wood for cooking, heating and building the homestead; animals grazed beneath the trees. Formal structures were put in place, with laws governing land tenure to raise taxes for the king and the church. With industrialization at the end of the 1800s, sawmilling expanded dramatically, and there were suddenly many buyers for both timber and the forests.

Timber felling proceeded apace, forest resources began to be misused and small forest landowners were powerless to act. Sweden faced deforestation and rural poverty, which triggered political as well as community actions. In 1903 a Forest Service was established to support family forest-owners, a cap was placed on the amount of forest land that companies could purchase and a new Forest Act made it mandatory to replant trees after harvest. Despite these measures, individual forest owners had little influence in the market and this sparked a community response that paralleled many popular movements (including trade unions, independent churches and women's suffrage) emerging at the time.

The early family forest village associations were essentially civil society partnerships, created because independent forest owners had recognized the advantage of working together for a common purpose. But they were too small to have real bargaining power, so the local groups consolidated: by the early 1930s about 50 regional associations covered the whole country. The

need for fuel wood during the Second World War cemented the interdependence between producer associations and forest industries, and raised the profile of producer associations in the marketplace even further.

The importance of strength in numbers was further evident when family forest owner associations started to move up the value chain by processing their own timber, a move that required consolidation to raise funds. A further need for consolidation has been prompted by the mechanization of forest operations and the growing needs of association members for forest services, from management plans to harvesting. Today there are just four strong Family Forest Associations plus a national Family Forest Federation, which deals with policy issues and is a member of the International Family Forest Alliance (IFFA). It also works with international partners through FFF and AgriCord.

## **Lobbying for the right to cut trees – AFFON, Nepal**

**National legislation has meant that farmers in Nepal were not allowed to harvest trees, even if they were growing on their own land. A new association was formed to lobby for a change in the law, and some tree species may now be legally cut and sold.**

Community forestry has a long history in Nepal (see pages 16 and 29) but the regulations on harvesting timber (as opposed to dealing in non-timber forest products) are often strict. Nepalese forest farmers are allowed to grow trees on their land but in many cases have no legal right to sell or even use them. The number of farmers being arrested for cutting or selling trees grown on their own land was increasing, so family forest owners have joined forces to secure their rights.

In 2015, a meeting of private and family forest owners in Kathmandu marked the formation of the Association of Family Forest Owners Nepal (AFFON) as a national forum to ensure the rights of forest owners and bring them into the national policy-making process. In the short time since its formation, AFFON has proved effective in eliminating policy hurdles – the government has so far relaxed regulations on trading 27 tree species. With the trade in timber being somewhat eased, forest farmers now have the potential to earn significant income from their trees.

AFFON already has 30 active district chapters and 5 000 members – it aims to cover all 75 districts of Nepal and increase its membership accordingly.

# THEME 4



© FOREST AND FARM FACILITY

## FULFILLING HUMAN CAPABILITIES

Humans have vast capabilities that are only properly fulfilled when people have access to education and employment. Education does not end with school (for some it does not even start there), and producer organizations are some of the most active providers of vocational training in rural areas. With their widespread distribution and, often, federated structure, FFPOs have effective outreach over wide areas. Experience is often shared between groups, and they may make special efforts to include the excluded, such as by producing educational material in local languages.

Self-determination is an important part of good-quality jobs, and the enterprises set up by rural producer groups are characterised by (self)-ownership and empowerment of group members. The results of the education and employment provided through producer groups leads eventually to reduced inequalities. In this

chapter we look at SDGs 4 (quality education); 8 (decent work) and 10 (reduced inequalities).

### SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

---

Education is one of the most powerful vehicles for sustainable development. It is also a life-long process. For people (often women) who have missed out on childhood education, it is still possible to gain literacy and learn vocational skills that improve quality of life and productive capacity. In the cases below, we see a large federation providing education as part of a social safety net, and smallholders benefiting from study groups tailored to their needs.

## **Agro-forestry school to boost rural development – *Fedecovera, Guatemala***

**A range of profitable enterprises and support from FFF has allowed a large federation to set up a college specifically to train young people in agro-forestry. Students are expected to come from Guatemala and other Central American countries.**

Fedecovera is a successful federation of farm and forest cooperatives in Guatemala. Its well established programmes and services, with an approximate annual turnover of €9 million, means it can afford to offer social protection to its members – healthcare was highlighted in the case on page 11. Education is another service provided by the federation, with scholarships for needy children and vocational training for members. The latest initiative (supported through FFF, CoOPequity and We Effect) is to establish a rural school of agro-forestry business.

Building on previous collaboration, the objective of this initiative is to design and implement a model for rural entrepreneurial and productive training and capacity building. The focus is on agro-forestry, and it will take students (both women and men) from rural communities in Guatemala and the wider region. The first pilot phase is projected to begin in 2016, with 20 students initially. There will be collaboration with the region's leading universities and research centres, and continuous knowledge exchange to ensure the syllabus reflects the latest thinking.

## **Study circles for smallholder cotton farmers – *CAZ, Zambia***

**Zambia's association of smallholder cotton producers has set up a system of study circles, augmented by demonstration plots to practise what they learn. Farmers are achieving higher yields as a result.**

Cotton production by smallholders is economically important in Zambia, but until fairly recently the farmers worked as out-growers for large commercial enterprises. There was little opportunity to improve their farming methods and they had little influence on the industry. But cotton production provides work and income in rural areas, so the Cotton Association of Zambia (CAZ) was established in 2005 as an affiliate of ZNFU to educate smallholder farmers and give them a voice in shaping future policy. It now has more than 25 700 members, just over a third of them women:

CAZ outreach capacities have been improved through partnership with the Swedish Cooperative Centre (now called We Effect).

Study circles, with up to 16 members in each, have been established to bring smallholder cotton farmers together at regular meetings to learn and share new ideas. Cotton is known to deplete the soil, so farmers are encouraged to adopt agro-ecological techniques to improve productivity while safeguarding the environment. Many farmers have more than doubled their yields.

CAZ has been active with its lobbying on issues such as the price of cotton seed and contractual arrangements. An increasing number of cotton farmers are now independent rather than out-growers (they buy their own cotton production inputs) and are able, through the CAZ negotiating team, to engage the ginners in seed cotton pricing negotiations. Some farmers have formed savings and loans groups and are now able to earn income outside the cotton-marketing period. Overall, the study circles have helped the farmers to become more creative in adapting to changing circumstances. For example, having learnt about the importance of bees in pollinating the cotton plants, members have decided to invest in tree nurseries producing nectar-rich species such as acacia. The trees will be planted around the members' smallholdings to encourage a healthy bee population.

## **SDG 8: DECENT WORK**

---

At subsistence level, work on the land involves hard physical work for both women and men. On the other hand, a smallholder with plot of land and family labour already has valuable resources which, if supplemented by a degree of innovation and investment, have the potential to underpin a small business.

Organized groups of small producers can start to process their raw materials, adding value and creating employment close to home. Such groups foster entrepreneurship, effectively turning farms into small enterprises. Well-run groups will pay attention to staff development and quality of service, both of which are important in winning new customers. Cases here show that FFPOs are creating decent jobs in rural communities – including for young people (important because youth employment is a vital part of sustainable economic development) – and that smallholders are able, and willing, to invest their own assets in joint ventures.

The sheer numbers of forest and farm producer business operations around the world further argue for better investment. For instance, in Indonesia, where small and medium enterprises dominate the agricultural and forestry sector, 98.8 per cent of all economic units are classified as micro enterprises, and while they may contribute only 59.08 per cent of the GDP, they are absorbing over 107 million workers.<sup>28</sup>

## **Tree nurseries boost employment – NCTA, Kenya**

**Tree nurseries, which require minimal land area and are often set up close to main roads, can provide valuable employment and reliable income for men, women and young people.**

Land use in this part of Kenya's Rift Valley is varied, with smallholder plots, large commercial farms, National Parks and (degraded) forest areas co-existing in close proximity. The Nakuru County Tree Nursery Association (NCTA) has been active for eight years and has a mission to champion the interests of tree nursery stakeholders and encourage effective environmental conservation. Kenya's economy is growing fast and trees are needed for fuel wood, charcoal and for landscaping new commercial and housing developments, so tree nurseries are a good way for farmers to earn extra income. Inputs (compost, plastic bags and seeds) are relatively inexpensive and seedlings can grow rapidly if water is available. The Association has about 1 800 members, roughly 780 of them women.

NCTA provides training in nursery techniques, offers financial advice, and shares updated information such as new propagation methods for fruit trees and the best way to germinate certain species. Nursery outlets have been opened along many roads to capture passing trade, which has boosted casual employment for women and young people. The organization has good plans for the future, including setting up a seed bank and obtaining a licence to harvest tree seeds from the wild. It also hopes to make water sources more accessible.

NCTA has partnered with FFF to improve seedling quality: the Lake Elementaita group has held training sessions on how to produce certified seedlings, and it is hoped that members' nurseries will in due course be certified by the Kenya Forest Service and the Horticultural Crops Development Authority.

With such a range of potential clients in the area – farmers (big and small), plus rural and urban householders – the association has encouraged members to produce the widest possible range of indigenous, exotic and ornamental tree seedlings. It has been decided that members must have a nursery producing at least 2 000 seedlings.

Many members have nurseries along highways, where it is easy for clients to reach them: some members have bought prime plots by pooling proceeds from seedling sales. The county government leases suitable roadside plots to members who do not own land. NCTA looks for tenders and buyers – the association is now recognized by corporate clients such as government agencies and schools – and links them to producers for collective sales.

Many members work full-time on their nurseries, where they make efforts to be professional and business-oriented. Some also work as landscapers, providing and planting trees in the rapidly growing urban areas: 80 per cent of the members (many of them young people) earn a significant proportion of their income from tree nursery and related work.

## **New jobs as rice farmers diversify into honey – Hanjuang Cooperative, Indonesia**

**Honey production now provides income for rice farmers during the dry season. New jobs have been created in the modern production unit and the honey is exported direct to Sweden.**

Honey production has traditionally supplemented the income from growing rice, which is limited to the rainy season. But before the Hanjuang Cooperative was set up, farmers would sell their honey to middlemen at a low price. The coop is a small group with fewer than 30 members, but it has flourished in the four years since it was set up and it now has a honey-processing unit that meets national standards. The coop has also developed a recognised brand which attracts a premium price.

<sup>28</sup> Macqueen, D., Bolin, A. and Greijmans, M. (Editors) (2015). *Democratizing forest business: a compendium of successful locally controlled forest business organisations* <http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/135811IED.pdf>

Such a small group depends on strong partners, in this case a network union (the Ujung Kulon forest-honey farmers' group, KTMHUK)<sup>29</sup> and the national farmers' organisation, API (Aliansi Petani Indonesia). The national forest department's cooperation is necessary too, for the farmers to have official access to forest areas. The coop has agreed to help protect the forest in a national park in return for the right to harvest honey.

The coop has trained farmers on the sustainable harvesting of forest honey (using steel knives so as not to disturb the bee larvae) and there are rules on the amount each farmer is allowed to take. As well as harvesting honey from existing forest, farmers are encouraged to plant more flowering trees to provide bee fodder.

Key to success has been the adoption of strict hygiene and quality control measures when processing the honey. This has allowed the coop to sell direct to a company in Sweden – demand is 3 000 bottles per month so there is scope to expand production. Sixteen people (most of them women) are employed in the production and processing units, and more jobs might be created if production rises. The existing staff are all young people, and the coop gives the chance for those who are interested in land rights to take part in both enterprise and advocacy.

## SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

FFPOs create responsible jobs in which local people own and manage the business. Employment in such group-owned, self-determining enterprises is a world away from low-paid wage labour and goes some way to reducing power inequalities between rich and poor. Because the businesses models are embedded in the local communities and depend on locally available resources, there are greater incentives to produce sustainably and distribute the earnings in a democratic way. Many FFPOs develop benefit-sharing mechanisms that govern how excess profits should be spent to benefit the community as a whole. The poorest members can benefit from these arrangements as they can take part in trainings, loan schemes or other social services set up by such initiatives.

<sup>29</sup> Kelompok Tani Madu Hutan Ujung Kulo

Examples here, both from Vietnam, show a successful local sawmilling business and training for FFPO leaders on benefit-sharing mechanisms.

### Investing in their own sawmill – Lem Village Acacia Group, Vietnam

**Acacia growers in Lem Village show how a forest and farm producer organization can develop a thriving business with the support of FFF.**

Created in 2008 with the help of the Vietnam National Farmers Union (VNFU), the group has 15 members and manages 57 hectares of forest in Yen Bai Province in Northern Vietnam. It was not registered as a formal collective: members simply met from time to time to share information, and they sold timber individually, mostly to local middlemen. At the start the group had no money to invest in processing, was in a weak bargaining position and made low profits.

In 2014, FFF started work in Vietnam and the national implementing agency, VNFU, chose the Lem Village Acacia Group as a beneficiary. Members learned about market analysis and development, wood processing and how to write proposals to access funds. They visited successful forestry businesses in northern and central Vietnam, and met authorities at all levels.

As a result of this training and exposure to the world of enterprise, members decided to start a joint business. In May 2015, seven of the 15 households contributed towards the initial sum (500 million VND or roughly €19 000) required to invest in a small sawmill. With VNFU support, the group carried out market research and contacted local customers and big processing companies in Hanoi and other provinces. After just seven months, the sawmill had brought in 720 million VND (roughly €28 000) and the net income of each family had increased by up to 10 per cent. Other farmers also benefited because the group bought their trees at higher process than the middlemen offered.

Working with big customers has made the group understand the importance of sustainability certification for their plantations and the need to register as a cooperative that can issue official tax invoices. Becoming a cooperative will help them meet timber sustainability requirements and take advantage of government support for cooperatives. In 2016, with a small grant from FFF and support from the Yen Bai Department of Forestry, the group will expand its membership,

submit an application to form a cooperative, and request all members to comply with international sustainability criteria in forest planting and harvesting.

FFF will continue to support this acacia group and others like it. Activities will include training in accounting and financial management, the use of advanced milling to produce high quality sawn timber, negotiation with banks and local government to access loans, visits to learn from other successful models, connecting producer groups with processing companies, and small grants to fund market research and strengthen organizational capacity.

## **Equality versus equity: how best to share benefits – VNFU, Vietnam**

### **New producer groups formed under the Forest and Farm Facility establish clear rules for benefit sharing.**

Between 1958 and 1980, the Vietnamese government tried to increase food production and raise farmers' incomes by established thousands of agriculture collectives. However, under this policy, rice productivity collapsed (from 3 kg/person/day in 1965 to 0.8 kg/person/day in 1980). Since then, despite many attempts, including the Law on Cooperatives and its later revisions, collective economic organizations accounted for only 5 per cent of GDP in 2013.<sup>30</sup> A report of the Cooperative Alliance in 2013 shows that of 10 339 cooperatives in Vietnam, only 1 000 functioned efficiently. The reason for this failure appears to be a mistaken belief that equality is the same as fairness.

This is not the case: for a collective organization to be viable, benefits (including dividends and assets) must be allocated in a way that members agree is fair, rather than through equal shares. To make this clear, the Vietnam Farmers Union (VNFU, the main FFF partnership organization in Vietnam) ran a five-day training course on organizational development for six newly established farm and forest producer organizations in Yen Bai and Bac Kan Provinces. Farmer leaders learned how to design appropriate benefit-sharing mechanisms; they also learned about basic management capabilities such as how to allocate tasks to members based on their skills and personality, and how to prepare monthly work plans.

A common assumption among the participants was that all profits would be shared equally among members, but the lead trainer, Dr. Phan Thanh Hai, pointed out that the more equally a benefit is shared, the less fair it is. He explained that sharing benefits equally diminishes incentives to work hard and can create 'free-riders'. To counter this, groups should devise rules for benefit sharing that take into account the proportion of the members' initial investment, the complexity of their task, and the number of days they work.

Participants in the training course were happy to provide constructive comments to each other on group statutes, enterprise development and technology such as forest product processing.

*"The teachers equipped me with skills I needed to become a leader. It is the first time I have heard about participatory management and I realized that if a consensus on benefit sharing is not reached and documented in writing at the beginning of group establishment, the group can be easily dissolved at any time,"* said Nguyen Tri Tue, leader of a cinnamon farming collective group.

VNFU will continue to train forest and farm producer organizations, focusing on financial management, marketing and communications, policy advocacy skills and support groups. This training is vital to help the groups implement and improve their enterprise development plans, and increase their membership.

<sup>30</sup> General Statistics Office of Vietnam





## THEME 5



© FFD/ATTE PENTTILÄ

# PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

## SDG 17: REVITALIZE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

---

The world today is more interconnected than ever before. Improving access to technology and knowledge is an important way to share ideas and foster innovation. Coordinating policies to help developing countries manage their debt, as well as promoting investment for the least developed, is vital to achieve sustainable growth and development.

The goals aim to enhance North-South and South-South cooperation by supporting national plans to achieve all the targets. Promoting international trade, and helping developing countries increase their exports, is all part of achieving a universal rules-based and equitable trading system that is fair and open, and benefits all.<sup>31</sup>

National and global agendas must be informed by the knowledge and priorities of smallholders, women, communities and indigenous peoples. Cases here show some of the partnerships relevant to achieving the SDGs.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgoverview/post-2015-development-agenda/goal-17.html>

## Linking local voices to global processes – Apex organizations, global

**Local concerns can be channelled into global process in various ways, often using the multi-layered structure of mature producer organizations.**

.....  
“On behalf of indigenous organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), Indonesia (AMAN), the Congo Basin (REPALEF) and Mesoamerica (AMPB), whose forests ... have the highest levels of carbon storage on the planet ... [make a] collective commitment to holistically manage more than 400 million hectares of tropical forest in the service of climate change mitigation and adaptation ... an area roughly equal to the size of the European Union ... that stores close to 70 Gt CO<sub>2</sub>, equivalent to some 11 years of the United States’ greenhouse gas emissions.”

Statement made at the New York climate change summit, 2014  
.....

FFF support has enabled five organizations to strengthen their membership and capacity to influence global agendas. Apex organisations channel local concerns into global processes in various ways. For example, the Asian Farmers Association (AFA) and the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB) gather information (about real situations, issues, challenges and possible solutions) from local member organizations at sub-regional and regional nodes of the organization. Personnel at these higher levels speak on behalf of the local membership at relevant forums.

AMPB organized local consultations through their members to identify priorities and advocacy points in climate-change negotiations (e.g. for COP 20 in Lima, Peru). This informed AMPB’s campaign ‘If Not Us Then Who’, which called for the recognition of resource rights, free, prior and informed consent, zero violence and funding. AMPB also organized activities to encourage connections with organizations in Asia, Africa and Mesoamerica – leading collaboration between the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA)-Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDESEP), the Indonesian Indigenous Peoples Alliance (AMAN), the Sub-regional Network for Indigenous People (REPALC) and AMPB in this campaign.

AFA organized consultations at township level in Myanmar, Nepal and Vietnam and four other countries to assess how forest issues affected its members. At

these consultations, AFA informed forest and farm producers about the main national and regional laws affecting their tenure systems and collected information on their situations and challenges – the latter included access to resources, eviction and displacement, forest degradation, infrastructure for market access and fire. The results of these consultations were presented at a regional AFA event in Myanmar involving 52 representatives of FFPOs and other partners. To address the challenges facing forest farmers, key policy interventions were framed: an enabling environment for community forestry; sustainable adaptive resilience in forest and farm management; fair markets and collective organization of farmer-managed enterprises; and active participation in decision-making. AFA shared these outcomes at the World Forestry Congress and FAO’s Committee on Food Security.

## Building networks of family forestry associations – IFFA, global

**The International Family Forestry Alliance (IFFA) was founded in 2002 to provide a common voice in international forest policy forums. It has also proved to be an excellent means through which members can share experiences. Three recent workshops are examples of South-South, South-North and North-North exchanges.**

Although IFFA’s early members were almost exclusively from Europe and North America, the alliance has expanded recently to include associations from Mexico, Kenya and Nepal. This was an important step towards validating IFFA’s claim to be a truly global voice, but much more needs to be done to support the development of family forestry associations in the global South. IFFA therefore held three regional workshops to share experience among associations and develop regional networks. The workshops were hosted by IFFA members in Mexico, Kenya and Norway.<sup>32</sup>

Two of the workshops, in Monterrey (Mexico) and Nairobi (Kenya), were large events, with more than 120 participants from a dozen countries, plus visitors. Monterrey included representatives from the US and Canada. Meetings of such scale rely on generous support, in this from partners including the Forest and Farm Facility, We Effect, national forest services and research institutes, local municipal and state

32 Hosts were CONOSIL (Mexico), the Farm Forestry Smallholder Producers Association of Kenya and the Norwegian Forest Owners Federation.

authorities, and PEFC. During the workshops, forest farmers discussed their successes and failures, and affirmed the belief that family forest owners, together with community and indigenous foresters, share a common perspective. They care deeply for their forests; they rely on them for a wide range of benefits; and they are convinced that with stronger enabling conditions (security of tenure, market access, extension and other services, and strong associations) forest farmers could make even more significant contributions to rural livelihoods, increased forest cover and forest environmental services.

There were clear signs that government authorities heard and understood this message. Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Water and Natural Resources, the Hon. Prof. Judi Wakhungu, opened the Nairobi workshop with these words: “a paradigm shift from business as usual to business unusual is needed. This new paradigm shift should focus more on the development of farm forestry... and the development of a policy and legal environment favourable to the development of locally controlled forest enterprises”. Lic. Rodrigo Medina de la Cruz, former Governor of the State of Nuevo León, had a similar but blunter message in his opening remarks to the Monterrey workshop: “Your organizations are the future!”

These two workshops set the stage for establishing regional networks and revealed opportunities to support the development of new associations. IFFA is leading follow-up efforts in several countries including Thailand.

The Oslo workshop was smaller, with a narrower focus. Participants came from four European associations and one from Canada to share detailed analyses of income tax policy and extension services - two factors that are highly influential in determining whether family forest owners produce timber from their forests for the market. The practical effect of different tax policies has direct application for associations wanting to lobby for improved policies in their home countries.

Sometimes the useful learning is completely unplanned, as was the comment from Sven-Erik Hammer from the Swedish national federation (LRF) about a recent change in government policy on compensation paid to forest owners whose land was expropriated: compensation as been increased from 100 per cent of fair market value to 125 per cent. Why? Because forest owners argued: “If fair market value was enough for my land, I would have already sold it.”

A regional workshop is planned for Thailand in late 2016, with similar partners plus the regional network, the Asian Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Rural Development. Follow-up workshops are also being planned for the Americas and Africa in 2017. As this work unfolds, it will be interesting to see whether associations will take the further step of identifying opportunities for common action.

## **Private forestry supported by national forest service – FF-SPAK, Kenya**

**Partnership between an umbrella organization for farm forest producers and Kenya’s national forest service is bringing extension advice to local producer groups.**

The Farm Forestry Smallholder Producers Association of Kenya (FF-SPAK) works with grassroots organizations to promote the interests of farm forestry smallholders. Registered in 2013, it speaks up for farm forestry and has built the capacities of producer groups to do business. The original membership of 4 000 has grown quickly to 12 000: there is a target of 100 000 members by 2020. The intention is for FF-SPAK to enter more partnerships with service-providers to support its members in technical, financial, marketing and other areas.

The member groups are in acute need of extension services, but these are inadequate because of limited funding and shortage of government staff. So FF-SPAK has been working with FFF, We Effect, county government and the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) to link extension experts from the public and private sectors with producer groups. The devolution of KFS extension services has made this process easier by greatly expanding the number of extension workers.

It is clear that FF-SPAK and KFS have the same vision of extending forestry production. In Kenya this is mainly confined to private land, as public land has defined boundaries and there is little room for expansion. So the partnership serves complementary functions of boosting national forest production and improving the productivity and livelihoods of smallholder forest farmers.

## **Beneficial government/civil society partnership – CONOSIL, Mexico**

**Mexico's national federation of forest owners takes an active role on the country's national forest council. Government budgets for forestry have been increased and communication between relevant stakeholders has improved as a result of effective lobbying.**

The Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones de Silvicultores (CONOSIL) was formed in 2005 as a national federation of 32 state associations of family forest owners (which in turn represent 218 local associations). Some 600 000 forest-owning families are represented across the country.

CONOSIL lobbies on behalf of its members and seeks to improve their quality of life through increased forest production. In pursuit of this mission, it has worked with national and state governments and their agencies to improve laws and programmes. It also provides a range of technical assistance and education services, has established a national forest-products market information system, and has negotiated access to low-cost credit for its members.

The confederation has also established partnership agreements with both national and international forest research institutions, and it became a member of IFFA in 2007. It hosted the first congress for forestry associations in the Americas in 2014, in the form of a workshop in Monterrey (see page 38).

One of the most important partnerships is with the national forest council (Consejo Nacional Forestal), a body formed by the Mexico government in 2003 as a multi-stakeholder consultation body. It provides recommendations to the government on a wide range of forest-related issues. For CONOSIL, being part of this process has produced tangible improvements for its members. Policies, programmes and government budgets have been strengthened for a range of programmes, of which payment for environmental services, technology transfer, research, forest industry development, plantation establishment, and restoration and reforestation of degraded areas are the most noteworthy. Less tangible, but also important in the long run, is the improved communication and cooperation between stakeholders fostered by the forest council, which will help assure the sustainability of the council's work, and will strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of civil society organizations such as CONOSIL.



© FOREST AND FARM FACILITY

## MESSAGE FOR ACTION

Although we did not set out to provide a comprehensive overview, the number and variety of cases in this publication demonstrate convincingly that FFPOs already contribute towards achieving most of the SDGs: it is no exaggeration to claim that they are essential local actors working effectively for global goals. These cases show that FFPOs are more than strategic partners in consultation processes: they are primary institutions of productive producers that are able to reach those who have so far been excluded from the development process. FFPOs are ideally positioned to play an expanding role as delivery and monitoring bodies – ‘operating systems’ – for the SDGs.

But the cases gathered here are only the start. We believe that FFPOs could make a much bigger contribution if they could be more explicitly drawn into national SDG implementation mechanisms and recognized as professional partners. Indeed, it could be

argued that empowering FFPOs is a global imperative in terms of achieving and institutionalising the SDGs.

This will require real commitment from governments, civil society and the large-scale private sector to direct significant investment and attention to FFPOs. FFPOs themselves will need to demonstrate and claim leadership roles. Building on their current capacities and experience, they will need to prove their ability to attract and distribute resources and services to their members efficiently and fairly. Many large FFPOs are ready to scale up and enhance their delivery of SDGs immediately. Others can dramatically increase their impacts with initial support and capacity building.

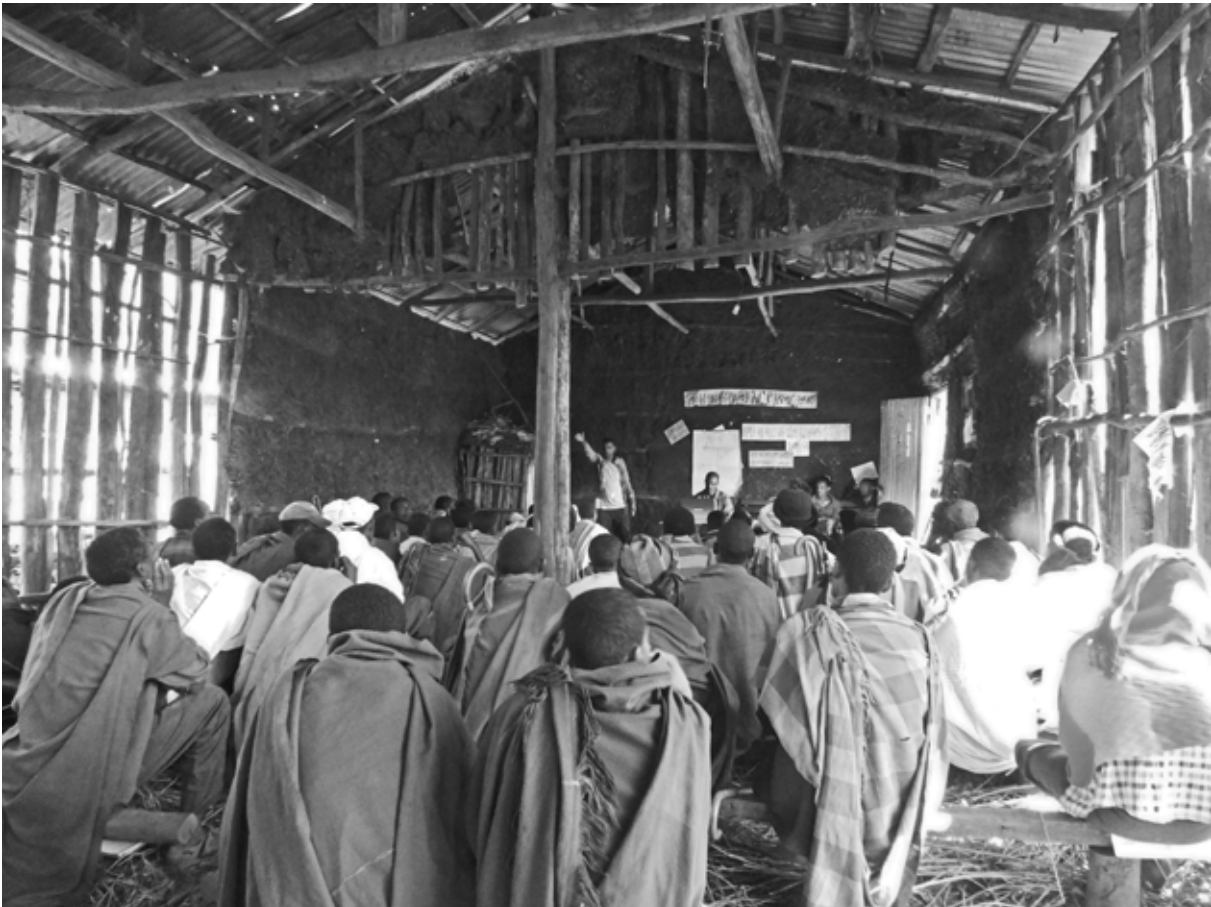
We therefore suggest that the tremendous potential of FFPOs to provide direct benefits related to the SDGs should be supported by enhancing the enabling environment which facilitates their effective functioning.

This starts by ensuring that smallholders have security of tenure and access to productive forests, farms, pasture, fisheries and other resources. Conscious efforts will be required to safeguard the rights of smallholders to form FFPOs at multiple levels, and to give legal recognition to FFPOs to provide services and represent their members. FFPOs must be provided seats at decision-making tables so that FFPOs are involved from the design stage through implementation and monitoring of efforts to achieve the SDGs. Finally, the barriers which restrict FFPO members' access to markets and engagement within value chains must be removed. These actions will optimize FFPOs' ability to become active and recognized actors in the private sector.

Unfortunately, relatively few resources are directed to enhancing the role and functioning of these key delivery systems. One proven delivery mechanism is the Forest and Farm Facility (a partnership with IIED, IUCN and AgriCord hosted by FAO): strengthening FFPOs to play this key role as SDG operating systems is at the core of FFF and its partners' work. In this effort

it shares objectives with AgriCord's Farmers Fighting Poverty Programme and the work of leading global FFPOs such as IFFA. As partners in this publication we have shared commitment to make the role of FFPOs visible.

Promoting FFPOs explicitly as primary actors offers a way forward. Channelling renewed and direct investment, capacity-development and learning opportunities towards these organizations is effective – we know they can influence and improve policies and, more important, get practical work done on the ground to ensure that the SDGs have real impacts and contribute towards transformative change.



© FFD/ATTE PENTILÄ



## Annex – FFPOs included in the report, by country

Country	Organization	Acronym	SDG	Partner/member	Membership	Formed
Benin	Union Régionale des Coopératives de Producteurs d'Anacarde de Atacora-Donga	URCPA-A/D	5	Afdi (AgriCord)	10 communal unions 93 village coops	2004
Bolivia	La Asociación de Grupos Mancomunados de Trabajo	MINGA	15	FFF	>1 500 families	1979
Ethiopia	Zenbaba Bees' Products Development and Marketing Union	Zenbaba	15	FFD (AgriCord)	8 665	2006
Gambia	National Farmers Platform of the Gambia	NFPG	2	FFF	225 000	1997
Global	Apex organisations: AFA, AMPB, COICA, AIDSEF, AMAN	-	17	FFF		
Global	International Family Forestry Alliance	IFFA	17	IFFA	>25 million	2002
Guatemala	Asociación de Comunidades Forestales de Petén	ACOFOP	13, 15	FFF	1 645 groups	1994
Guatemala	Federacion de cooperativas de las Verapaces	FEDECOVERA	3, 4	FFF	25 000	1976
Indonesia	Hanjung Cooperative	HC	8	FFF	27	2012
Kenya	Farm Forestry Smallholder Producers Association of Kenya	FF-SPAK	17	FFF	12 000	2013
Kenya	Nakuru County Tree Nursery Association	NCTA	8	FFF	1 800	2009
Laos	Lao Farmer Network	LFN	16	AsiaDHRRA (AgriCord)	4 211	2014
Liberia	National Charcoal Union of Liberia	NACUL	7	FFF	902	2004
Mexico	Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones de Silvicultores	CONOSIL	17	IFFA	600 000 families	2005
Myanmar	Kachin Forest Users Association	KFUA	16	FFF	15 CFUGs	
Nepal	Amritpur Social Entrepreneurs Cooperative	ASEC	13	FFD (AgriCord)	8 583	2013
Nepal	Association of Family Forest Owners Nepal	AFFON	16	IFFA	5 000	2015
Nepal	Dhaneshwor Baikiwa Community Forest	DBCFC	13	FFF		
Nepal	Federation of community Forestry Users Nepal	FECOFUN	16	FFF	>2.3 million households 18 900 CFUGs	1995
Nicaragua	Mayangna women	Mayangna	5	FFF	7 pproducer groups	
Philippines	Tao sa Kalikasan Foundation of the Philippines	TKFPI	15	Trias (AgriCord)	498	1992
Scotland	Scottish Woodlot Association	SWA	15	IFFA	30	2012
Sweden	Federation of Swedish Family Forest Owners	LRF	16	IFFA	112 000	1971
Tanzania	Matembwe Tree Growers Association	UWAMIMA	16	FFD (AgriCord)	75	2009
Tanzania	Mtando wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania (Arusha and Manyara)	MVIWATA	5	Trias (AgriCord)	Arusha 6 122 Manyara 7 402	2012 2007



Country	Organization	Acronym	SDG	Partner/member	Membership	Formed
Vietnam	Lem Village Acacia Group	LVAG	10	FFF	15	2008
Vietnam	Quang Ngai Cooperative Alliance	QNCA	1, 15	FFD (AgriCord)	272 coops	1995
Vietnam	Quang Tri Cooperative Alliance	QTCA	1, 15	FFD (AgriCord)	>137 800	1995
Vietnam	Thach Ngoa Star Anise Group	TNSAG	3	FFF	9 households	2015
Vietnam	Thua Thien Hue Cooperative Alliance	TTHCA	1, 15	FFD (AgriCord)	>236 000	1995
Vietnam	Vietnam National Farmers Union	VNFU	16	FFF	>10 million	1930
Zambia	Cotton Association of Zambia	CAZ	4	FFF	>25 700	2005
Zambia	Mboole Rural Development Initiative	MRDI	1	FFF	65	2003
Zambia	Zambia National Farmers Union	ZNFU	1	FFD (AgriCord)	>300 000	1905

# Acronyms

€	Euro
AFA	Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development
Afdi	Agriculteurs français et Développement international (a member of AgriCord)
AgriCord	alliance of agri-agencies
AIDSEEP	Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest
Asia DHRRA	Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (a member of AgriCord)
CFUG	Community forest user group
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon dioxide
COP20	The Conference of the Parties. United Nations Climate Change Conference 2014
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFD	Finnish Agri-agency for Food and Forest Development (a member of AgriCord)
FFF	Forest and Farm Facility
FFPO	Forest and farm producer organization
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GAFSP	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Gt	Gigatonne
IFFA	International Family Forestry Alliance
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
PHP	Philippine peso
REDD+	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Trias	Belgian agri-agency, a member of AgriCord
TSHS	Tanzania shilling
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US\$	United States dollar
VND	Vietnam dong
We Effect	Swedish agri-agency, a member of AgriCord



# FOREST AND FARM PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS AND THE 17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Forest and farm producer organizations (FFPOs) are effective operating systems to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since forestry and agriculture have links to all 17 of the Goals, and because smallholder producers control much of the world's forest and farm resources, FFPOs are a vital part of the sustainability equation. By forming self-governing groups, individual producers overcome isolation and reach out to the most marginalized and excluded people – their resulting strength in numbers has benefits across the globe.

This publication brings together examples of successful FFPOs supported by the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF), AgriCord and the International Family Forestry Alliance (IFFA), showing FFPOs working to address their members' real needs.

The brief case-studies make it abundantly clear that these membership-based organizations are ideally positioned to expand their role as delivery and monitoring bodies – 'operating systems' – for the SDGs. This tremendous potential in terms of SDG delivery should be supported by enhancing the enabling environment for such organizations and their members.



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

AGRICORD



**FOREST** AND **FARM FACILITY**

ISBN 978-92-5-109287-3



9 789251 092873

I5765E/1/06.16