

# **SUMMARY REPORT**

**Adopted 20 November 2003**

## **International Expert Meeting on the Development and Implementation of National Codes of Practice for Forest Harvesting: Issues and Options 17-20 November 2003, Kisarazu City, Chiba Prefecture, Japan**

### **Background**

Countries throughout the world are facing critical challenges in managing forests in ways that effectively sustain the wide range of economic, social and environmental benefits that human society expects and demands. The challenges are particularly daunting with respect to harvesting vital wood and non-wood forest products without compromising other important forest values and functions such as water quality, wildlife habitat, conservation of biological diversity, protection against soil erosion and landslides, aesthetic values, tourism and recreation.

Responding to concerns over the negative environmental and economic impacts of poor forest harvesting, the international forestry community has developed a number of tools and mechanisms to improve forest management, including forest harvesting practices. Codes of practice for forest harvesting have emerged as one such tool, particularly in Asia and the Pacific, where the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission has facilitated the formulation of a regional code of practice for forest harvesting and several countries have developed national codes of practice.

To promote enhanced international collaboration for the effective development and implementation of national codes of practice for forest harvesting, and to build upon the past and ongoing work in this field by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) and others, the Forestry Agency of Japan and the Chiba Prefectural Government organized an international expert meeting, 17-20 November 2003, in Chiba, Japan. Approximately 120 participants participated from 16 countries (governments), 5 international organizations and a number of universities, research institutions, NGOs and forest-related industry.

The international expert meeting sought to:

- facilitate common understanding on the current state of the development and implementation of national codes of practice for forest harvesting and the development and dissemination of reduced impact logging techniques;
- share challenges faced and lessons learned by forest management in these aspects; and
- deliberate on the practical options, from policy level to field operation level, including the associated costs and benefits.

The meeting assessed the current status of development and implementation of national codes of practice for forest harvesting and guidelines for reduced impact logging, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. It also critically reviewed the experiences of various countries with respect to the successes, failures and challenges in implementing codes of practice.

Codes of practice were recognized as useful tools for minimizing the potential negative impacts of forest harvesting, demonstrating country commitment in working toward sustainable forest management, establishing standards of performance, reducing waste, fostering broad stakeholder consultation on harvesting issues, improving cooperation between government and the private sector, enhancing worker safety, and promoting the equitable distribution of the benefits from forest harvesting among communities, industries and society in general.

Various approaches for monitoring and enforcing codes of practice were considered, as were methodologies for monitoring the impacts of forest harvesting. Consideration was given to the relationships among forest authorities, the private sector (particularly logging companies) and civil society, and how these relationships could be enhanced to work more effectively for improved forest harvesting. Discussions also focused on policy measures and incentives for encouraging the adoption and application of improved harvesting practices. Priority needs for additional research, training and international cooperation were identified and elaborated.

Participants anticipated that the outcome of the meeting would contribute to enhancing international forest dialogue and follow-up actions under the Asia Forest Partnership, the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Forest Law Enforcement and Governance East Asia Pacific (FLEG-EAP) and others.

Participants expressed their sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Forestry Agency of Japan and the Chiba Prefectural Government for their excellent organization of this meeting, which made this meeting a great success.

### **Key issues and recommendations**

The following key issues and priority recommendations related to enhancing the development and implementation of codes of practice for forest harvesting were identified by the meeting:

#### ***1. Clarifying definitions and establishing consistent approaches for developing and implementing codes of practice for forest harvesting***

The term “code of practice for forest harvesting” is understood differently by different individuals, groups and countries. Codes range from diffuse sets of technical guidelines for timber harvesting to clearly recognized individual documents specifically identified as a “code of practice.” Codes may be either voluntary or mandatory, and may sometimes apply to public lands exclusively or encompass private lands as well. Codes may cover only narrow aspects of timber harvesting or more holistically encompass utilization of non-timber forest products and broader forest management aspects. As such, a code of practice is, at best, only one tool for improving overall forest management.

There are also a wide range of approaches and processes for formulating codes of practice, sometimes leading to confusion and unfulfilled expectations among stakeholders.

#### **Recommendations:**

**1a.** Identify common principles and approaches to guide the formulation and implementation of national codes of practice. Of particular importance is the need for transparency and broad involvement of stakeholders in all aspects.

**1b.** Clarify the roles and scopes of codes at regional, national and sub-national levels, including the relationship of codes within the broader forest management legal and policy framework.

**1c.** While it is not practical or desirable to strictly define the parameters of codes of practice for forest harvesting across all countries, each individual country should clearly identify what constitutes its national code of practice for forest harvesting.

***2. Ensuring the involvement of major stakeholders in the development and implementation of codes of practice for forest harvesting***

Success in developing and implementing codes of practice depends heavily on the effective participation of major stakeholders, particularly the relevant government agencies, local communities, the private sector and leading non-governmental organizations. Transparency and access to all relevant information is particularly important. Broad involvement of stakeholders in the development and implementation of codes would help ensure the credibility and acceptance of codes, and reduce the risk of conflicts arising during implementation, but the legal and institutional basis for stakeholder involvement is seldom clearly defined.

Despite the widespread recognized benefits of open stakeholder processes, there remains considerable resistance to such practices and approaches in some countries, including the perception of some that code development, in particular, should remain the purview of government. There is also a need to enhance the facilitation skills for individuals responsible for guiding code development and implementation.

**Recommendations:**

**2a.** Ensure transparency and public access to information regarding codes of practice and forest plans to foster consultation with all major stakeholders during both planning and operational stages.

**2b.** Develop effective facilitation and conflict management skills for guiding and managing processes related to formulation and implementation of codes of practice, ensuring in particular that local communities are able to effectively participate.

***3. Improving awareness of codes of practice and their potential to contribute toward sustainable forest management***

For codes of practice to be effective, there must be widespread awareness of the codes and appreciation of their potential to contribute toward sustainable forest management. Awareness must be promoted both within the forestry sector and among important groups outside the sector. Awareness of codes should begin with involvement of all stakeholders during the formulation process, ideally leading to broad-based support and continued involvement during implementation. Broad-based awareness of codes can help to rally public pressure for code compliance and implementation.

**Recommendations:**

**3a.** Publicise codes among forestry professionals and administrators, and civil society through conferences, workshops, technical seminars and literature.

**3b.** Build broad awareness of the potential (including benefits and costs) for codes to improve forest management among political leaders and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, the media and the general public.

**3c.** Develop sound communication strategies and systems to enhance widespread dissemination of codes and their potential, including through the mass media and posting on website.

#### ***4. Increasing the commitment of major stakeholders to effectively implement codes***

The support of political leaders, government forestry officials at all levels, company executives and field managers, and leaders of civil society organizations is essential for smooth and effective implementation of codes of practice. It is not unusual for these groups of stakeholders to have conflicting perceptions, goals and expectations with respect to forest harvesting. People's perceptions and attitudes are slow to change and there is a natural tendency for humans to resist change. There are legitimate concerns and uncertainties over the costs of code implementation, which discourage both government and the private sector from embracing new harvesting practices. Implementation may also be undermined by individuals who stand to lose opportunities for personal enrichment from corrupt practices that might be threatened by forceful code implementation.

#### **Recommendations:**

**4a.** Build commitment, especially on the part of governments and forest owners for effective implementation of codes of practice.

**4b.** Clearly define roles, responsibilities, rights, and privileges of individuals and groups in the formulation and implementation processes.

**4c.** Develop effective feedback mechanisms between practitioners and policy makers to allow for continuous improvement of codes and their implementation.

**4d.** Ensure the equitable distribution of benefits from forest harvesting among stakeholders.

**4e.** Recognize and reward positive implementation of codes of practice.

#### ***5. Reducing the costs of implementing and monitoring compliance with codes of practice***

The high (actual and perceived) costs of implementing codes and monitoring their compliance continue to impede the widespread adoption of codes. There is therefore a strong need to develop new cost-effective tools, procedures and approaches for code implementation and monitoring. Simplified technical guidelines and rules are needed to streamline field operations. The potential for performance-based monitoring systems to replace expensive regulatory command-and-control approaches in some areas needs to be explored. Opportunities to establish incentives and rewards (including price premiums, enhanced security of tenure and easing of oversight regulations) for marked improvements in harvesting performance also need to be investigated.

A number of proven cost-effective improved harvesting techniques are still vastly under-utilized due to inadequate dissemination of information on such practices, resistance to change from traditional harvesting practices, lack of training, and insufficient incentives. Increased efforts are needed to overcome these impediments.

**Recommendations:**

**5a.** Encourage the development of new tools, techniques, guidelines and procedures for further reducing the costs of environmentally sound timber harvesting.

**5b.** Promote the awareness and application of proven cost-effective tools, practices and approaches through workshops, networks, cross-country visits, training, etc. Expand the use of RILNET to facilitate the archiving and searching of existing guidebooks, manuals and other information related to RIL on the internet.

**5c.** Establish integrated and streamlined administrative processes for planning and implementing codes of practice.

**6. *Enhancing capacities for effective implementation of codes at all levels***

The availability of skilled personnel at all levels is paramount to effective code implementation. This includes staff and workers of logging companies and community organizations involved in forest harvesting, as well as government officials responsible for monitoring compliance with codes, and those tasked with providing technical advice. There is a huge need for training of workers and staff across the region. This would often involve training-of-trainers to reduce costs and improve effectiveness. There is also a need for enhancing the facilitation and conflict management skills of planning officials to better serve the involvement of diverse stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of codes of practice. Undoubtedly, increased budget allocations will be required to build up and maintain staff capacities, at least initially.

**Recommendations:**

**6a.** Provide training at all necessary levels, including training-of-trainers, leadership training, field demonstrations and workshops.

**6b.** Allocate sufficient budget to support effective implementation of codes of practice, including for skill development, monitoring and support services.

**6c.** Promote regional and international cooperation to enhance institutional capacities for developing and implementing codes of practice.

**6d.** Establish regional and national (or sub-national) training centers, as appropriate.

**6e.** Incorporate the concepts and practices related to reduced impact logging and code implementation into the curricula of forestry schools, colleges and universities.

**7. *Developing effective verification systems for monitoring code implementation***

Successful implementation of codes of practice depends on effective and credible monitoring and auditing. This is important for ascertaining immediate code compliance as well as determining the wider results and impacts of harvesting under code implementation. Moreover, sound and credible monitoring and assessment can provide the basis for recognizing and rewarding good harvesting performance.

**Recommendations:**

**7a.** Develop and formalize practical and cost-effective independent monitoring and assessment procedures, verification systems and reporting practices.

**7b.** Test promising alternative approaches for compliance monitoring, including self-monitoring, joint monitoring, and performance-based monitoring systems.

**7c.** Promote concepts of market incentives for forest products harvested under systems verified as in compliance with codes of practices. This should be complemented by verification that timber has been legally harvested (including through timber-tracking systems).

#### ***8. Policy issues and constraints to implementing codes of practice***

There are a number of overarching policy issues and constraints that need to be addressed in order to create an enabling environment for implementing codes of practice. In this context it is recommended that concerted efforts must be made at all levels to mitigate these constraints and to highlight their importance for promoting appropriate forest harvesting. Among these issues are the following:

- lack of clear jurisdictional boundaries, rights and responsibilities;
- insecure land and resource tenure;
- corruption, illegal logging and associated illegal trade of forest products;
- lack of good governance and benefit sharing;
- inability to adopt forest certification systems;
- under-valuation of forests and continued depressed prices for forest products;
- inadequate political commitment at the highest levels of government;
- inconsistent and conflicting policies and frequent policy shifts;
- inadequate land-use planning; and
- inadequate law enforcement.