



# Codes of Practice for Forest Harvesting in Japan

*- Overview of Legal Framework -*

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# State of Forests and Forest Harvesting in Japan

- Approx. 67% of land area are forested – mostly steep mountainous terrain
- Approx. 60% of forests are privately owned and managed – very small ownership size
- Approx. 40% of forests are planted – in some regions plantation forestry has been sustained for centuries

# Forest Harvesting as a Part of the History

- Without having alternative resources, Japanese people utilized wood since prehistoric times – e.g., for housing, hand tools / farming tools, etc.
- Japanese people learned the consequences of inappropriate forest harvesting through experience – e.g., floods and erosion after meeting large demand for timber

# Legal Framework regarding Forest Harvesting

- *Forest Law* provides for the framework to ensure appropriate forest harvesting
- Two major components of the Law are:
  - Forest Planning System
  - Protection Forest System
- These set forth guidelines, minimum standards and legal restrictions on forest management including harvesting

# Forest Planning System

- Forest plans are formulated by national, regional and local forest authorities to:
  - Set forth proposed goals (desired state of forests)
  - Guidelines for forest management (harvesting, regeneration, thinning, road construction, etc.)
  - Cover both private and public forests

## Forest Planning System (2)

- Guidelines for forest harvesting in local-level forest plans serve as the basis for local governments to take actions such as: (for private forests)
  - Recommendation to improve forest management practice
  - Order to comply with the minimum standards

## **Forest Planning System (3)**

- “Forest Management Plans” can be drawn voluntarily by forest owners / managers for approval by the local government
- Plans must comply with some higher standards of forest management in order to be approved
- Favorable conditions of government measures are given to approved plans



# Protection Forest System

- Forests that should fulfill high public functions are designated as protection forests
- Forest harvesting is legally restricted in protection forests in various degrees, depending on the level and nature of public functions expected



## Protection Forest System (2)

- Designation of protection forests are done in 17 categories:
  - Headwater conservation
  - Soil run-off prevention
  - Landslide prevention
  - Fish breeding
  - Public health etc.

## **Protection Forest System (3)**

- Restrictions on Protection Forests include mandatory requirements, in accordance with the standards set for respective forests, on:
  - Prior approval of harvesting
  - Proper regeneration (planting) of harvested lands



## **Protection Forest System (4)**

- Financial compensation is given for the losses caused by restriction on harvesting
- Favorable conditions of government measures are given to management of protection forests
- Under certain circumstances, public conservation projects are implemented



# Challenges Faced

- Forest owners are losing their interest to appropriately manage their forests due to low / negative profitability
- Small size of ownership limits the efficiency of forest management
- Maintenance of viable management cycle of forests, particularly planted forests, is in peril



# The Ways Forward

- Long-term vision and goals
- Better understandings on the consequences of different management options
- Improved efficiency through collective forest management
- Raised public awareness of the importance of sustainable forest management
- Building of capacity of both forest owners / managers and enforcement personnel



Thank you for your attention !!