

Introduction on Developing the National Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in China

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1. Background on developing code of practice for forest harvesting

Forest logging has attracted abroad attention from many governments, non-government organizations, social groups and individuals in recent years due to the universality and complexity of its influence.

In 1992, The Forum of UN Environment and Development Convention held in Brazil proposed a "*Principal Declaration on Forest Problem*", severely regarding forest sustainable management of world forest.

As a follow-up action of the Environment and Development Convention, the Sustainable Development Board of United Nations built up an Inter-government Program on Forest (IPF) in 1995. An Inter-government Forest Forum (IFF) was set up after 1997 UN Special General Assembly. The IPF extremely promoted discussions, activities and recommendations on sustainable forest management in global scope, with one of its concrete propositions being an appeal for formulation of operation rules on unbidden forest management, including forest harvesting.

From 1995, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, UN) began to organize the compilation of model regulations of *Criterion of Forest Harvesting Practice*, which was finished and published in 1999. The purpose is to hasten extension and application of harvesting methods that comply with sustainable forest management and have little compact of environment, and to promote decision-makers on the globe to set down national, regional and local criterion, so to better meet special needs of government organizations, private sections, non-government organizations and other sections.

From 1997, International Labor Organization (ILO) began to compile *Safety and Health in Forestry Work*, an ILO Code of Practice, which was finished and published in 1998. The purpose is to guide ILO member countries to improve safety and health practice in forestry industry or enterprise, to protect workers from falling across

dangers in forestry work, to prevent and lessen occupational disease cases or injury accidents.

Many countries in the world, including countries in Asia-Pacific region, have constituted or are formulating national rules, national standards or guidelines, mainly to normalize timber harvesting of productive forest. In 1996, Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission set up a "Special Work Group for Sustainable Forest Management" and compiled the *Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in Asia-Pacific Region* to support the sustainable forest management in the region.

2. Process of Developing on national code of practice for forest harvesting in China

Up to now, there has been no integral operation regulation on practice for forest harvesting at present for the whole country. Although under the permission of the State Council, the Ministry of Forestry has promulgated statutes such as *Administration Measures on Forest Harvesting and Regeneration* in 1987, this regulation is partial with localizations. Secondly, it gave prominence to timber production. Thirdly, its contents do not embody the requirement of sustainable forest management as well as to reduce negative impact on environment.

In order to normalize forest harvesting operation in China, to strengthen production safety, to heighten operation quality and to reduce negative impact on environment, the State Forestry Administration decided to compile the *National Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in China* after negotiation with ILO, and signed the consultative protocol in October 1999. The ILO helped China in constitution and implementation of the code, while FAO participated the work of its formulation. According to the cooperative agreement of the project signed by ILO and the State Forestry Administration, the first phase is from Oct., 1999 to Mar., 2002, and there are two targets in this phase:

---- Formulation of the *National Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in China*;

---- Compilation of a proposal for the trial and implementation of the *National Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in China*, and convention of a round table to strive for international aids, so to create conditions for the trial and implementation of the second phase.

A project group was organized in Nov.- Dec. 1999, which was divided into 5 drafting teams of forest planning and cutting preparation, forest maturation (main harvesting

age), cutting operation, extraction transportation and log yard, operation safety and assessment. The drafting staff includes 12 persons, with two project coordinators and two persons for each group.

The drafting board of the *National Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in China* convened the first meeting in Beijing in January 2000. The meeting systematically introduced project background, articles of the protocol, and *Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in Asia-Pacific Region*. The compilation scope, principle, stylistic rules and layout of the *National Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in China* were decided, and its primary frame was proposed. The works and tasks of each group were divided and clarified, with the stress that writing of the regulations should strictly execute stipulations of the protocol.

From Dec. 1999, the project office (project coordination group) positively organized the translation and publishing of three documents: Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in Asia-Pacific, FIJI National Code of Logging Practice (1st Edition), ILO Rules. *FAO Model Code of Forest Harvesting Practice which the FAO is responsible to translate has been finished at the end of April and handed over to the State Forestry Administration.*

Starting from March – May 2000, the drafting groups unfolded investigation activities for extensive material collection according to work arrangements. Based on this work, the drafting groups made assessment on contents related to their own responsible portions of existent regulations or criteria, and submitted assessment reports.

On May 2000, a workshop on *National Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in China* was smoothly held in Beijing. Participants included representatives from international organization, specially invited representatives, administrative officials and members of drafting groups. On the meeting was clarified the need for harmonization and compatibility between the existent code and the requirements of forest development and of sustainable forest management both domestic and international. Also were determined the targets, intention, basic principle and major viscera of the *National Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in China*, so to form a systematic and operable detailed outline of compilation for the *National Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in China*.

The drafting groups carried out the writing of the drafts separately according to the detailed outline of compilation from June 2000 to March 2001. The drafts were integrated by the coordinators to form the draft of the *National Code of Practice for*

Forest Harvesting in China and translated in to English a same time.

During the time of March to Aug. 2001, the Department of Forest Resources Management held two expert consultation meetings for a broad solicitation of opinions. In the mean time, several international specialists were invited by the ILO to make revision on the draft and at last the *National Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in China* (draft) was formulated.

On August 2002, the State Forestry Administration selected 5 forest management units according to the forest features and climates as the national code testing sites. And also held a starting workshop for the second phase under the support of FAO.

In order to guide the testing work, the SFA held the first training course successfully on November 2002, the participants came from 5 testing units and its related provinces.

On October 2003 , the SFA organized a large scale training course (workshop) in Simao Yunnan province under the finance help from ILO. Participants not only came from 22 main forest provinces but also came from ILO, WWF, IKEA, Canada as well as the Chinese Worker Union. The concept of forest sustainable management and other new actions which is related to forest harvesting in the world was introduced in the course.

3. The main contents and characteristics of national code of practice for forest harvesting in China

The national code has 10 chapters.

Chapter one is “General Principle” which elucidates objectives, principles, scope of application and major legal grounds.

Chapter two “Institution and Staff Competencies” prescribes the competences of institution and staff concerned, and establishment of corresponding technical training system. The institutions include units for planning and design of forest harvest, and cutting crews, while the staff includes management persons for forest harvest, personnel of investigation, planning and design, cutting workers and quality supervisors.

Chapter three “Cutting Types of Forest” stipulates different cutting types, with all cutting types divided into 4 major kinds, i.e. harvest cutting, regeneration cutting, tending cutting, renovation cutting of low yield forest, with applicable conditions and technical standards of each type outlined.

Chapter four “Forest Harvest Planning and Design” regulates requirements on planning and design in logging practice, with forest harvest marked out into three arrangements of long-term, medium-term and short-term. The requirements on coupe survey and design are defined and the concept of setting up and management of buffer zone are proposed.

Chapter five “Pre-harvest Field Preparation” emphasizes particularly on preparation of skidding trail, landing and living spot.

Chapter six “Forest Roads and Log Yards” emphasizes particularly on preparation of timber transportation system and deposit space.

Chapter seven “Harvesting Operation” deals with requirements on logging practice, with the former part related to main steps of coupe operation, with middle part referred to major demands on log yard operation, while with the latter part relating post-harvest operation including clearance of coupes, living spots, loading spots, skid trails and transportation roads.

Chapter eight “Forest Regeneration” proposes requirements on regeneration after logging, including regeneration methods and major technical criteria.

Chapter nine “Safety and Camp Hygiene” puts forwards requirements on safety and camp hygiene in total logging procedures on the coupe, including safe production operation, labor protection, fire prevention, machinery conservation and maintenance, camp hygiene requirements and supervision of harmful/poisonous materials.

Chapter ten “Inspection and Evaluation of Harvesting Operations” stipulates the requirements, procedures, methods and judging standards for cutting operation supervision, checking, coupe examination and acceptance.

The basic characteristics of the national code are that under the guidance of forest sustainable management thinking, all the concepts ,criteria and standards are adopted according to international usage but closed to the condition of China and the Chinese forest. In details:

Technically, to practice classified forest management, with different cutting measures being determined in terms of commercial forest and ecological forest;

Economically, to heighten labor productivity and labor efficiency;

In ecology, to stress that no heavy impact and destruction should be caused on ecological environment;

Socially, to give prominence to the idea of regarding people as the center, to ensure safety of workers and to lessen labor intensity.

4. Lessons learned

China is a developing country, its economy is relatively poor and its technician is still low quality comparatively. Traditional idea and backward production method in China needed long time to change and to meet with the thinking that the developed country already have had and the advanced production technology level. Hence, we have the following lessons learned by means of developing the national code of practice for forest harvesting in China.

First, we should learn and adopt all the advanced ideas and technologies in the world, but it must be concerned and closed to the situation in China and our forest situation as well.

Second, to develop any kind of code or regulation, the public hearing is essential in other word, suggestions or ideas from different stakeholders should be taken to consideration. Meantime a certain amount of testing sites should be selected before code be approved.

Third, It is the guarantee that government pay a great attention to the developing of code of practice for forest harvesting in China, since a large amount of manpower and money are needed while developing such a code.

5. Planning for next steps

The national code of practice for forest harvesting in China is getting better and better after 4 years writing , revision and testing , it will be approved and issued in 2004. Therefore the following work should be done as soon as possible.

First, the testing and modification work will be further continued and the national code should mainly focus on the macro-matters so that the local forest sectors will have some flexibility when applying the code.

Second, the training should be enhanced and strengthened among all different level foresters national-wide so as to make more awareness and better understand with the national code.

Finally, we will continue strive for support from international or national organizations on the training and competence building as well as other areas related to the national code implementation. Let us work together make active contribution to the forest resources sustainable management and development in China.