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Forest Products Utilization and Sustainable Development

Introduction Session

Paper by Mr. Wulf Killmann, Director, Forest Products Division, and
Mr. Olman Serrano, Chief, Wood and Non-Wood Products Utilization Branch,
Forestry Department, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Summary

Goods and services derived from forests contribute in various forms to the local socio-economic development: for example, through the provision of subsistence to rural communities living in or around the forests; through the generating of employment and income in rural and urban areas; and through direct contributions to the GDP of industrialized wood, wood fuels and non-wood forest products' production and trade.

This paper analyses the role, opportunities and challenges of wood and non-wood forest products' utilization in sustainable development. It addresses the contribution of wood and non-wood forest products towards poverty alleviation, trends in wood utilization and trade, as well as possible socio-economic and environmental impacts of wood products' substitution. A brief overview of recent wood products industry trends that affect sustainable development is provided, with examples of the increasing number of forest enterprises worldwide that are taking steps towards environmentally friendly forest harvesting practices (such as reduced impact logging) and efficient processing technologies.

The document also highlights some key aspects related to the role of forest products' utilization and climate change: as potential sinks of one of the major green house gases; as substitutes for energy intensive materials; and as substitutes for fossil fuels.

Finally, this presentation points out steps taken by the international community to better incorporate the sustainable use of forest resources into national and international development objectives.

Key words: forest products, wood and non-wood forest products, wood fuels, sustainable development
