

## **Information Note for FAO Regional Forestry Commissions**

### **Update on the International Conference on Forest Education, 22-24 June 2021 and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests' Joint Initiative on Forest Education**

26 July 2021

The Global Forest Education Project<sup>1</sup> is led by FAO in partnership with the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). It is being implemented with collaboration of several other global and regional organizations and financed by the Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture of the Government of Germany.

The project is a response to the requests by FAO's Committee on Forestry sessions in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020 that greater attention be paid and support given to forest education. Similar calls were made by Regional Forestry Commissions, in particular the African Forest and Wildlife Commission in its sessions in 2018 and 2020.

The project's objectives are to assess the status and needs of forestry education globally and to raise the profile of forestry professions among students and the general public. Project outputs include: a global survey on forest education carried out in 2020; six regional consultations held in February 2021; one global and six regional assessment reports on the status of forest education based on the survey and the consultations<sup>2</sup>; two online resources (i.e. an online platform for forest education, "Forestra" and an online learning course on Legal and Sustainable Supply Chains of Tropical Wood and Wood Products - LSSC<sup>3</sup>); the International Conference in Forest Education (ICFE); a Call to Action on Forest Education and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests' Joint Initiative on Forest Education - both of the latter launched at the ICFE.

#### **Needs for robust forest education**

The global survey on forest education and the regional consultations raised concerns that in many places forest education is too narrowly focused and under-resourced and that graduates of forest education and training programmes are insufficiently prepared for the contemporary workplace. It identified an urgent global need to increase interest in forest education and forest careers, rebrand and revamp forest education, improve incorporation of digital communication tools and information technologies, promote traditional and indigenous forest-related knowledge systems, and prepare students for jobs in the dynamic green economy.

#### **International Conference on Forest Education, 22-24 June 2021<sup>4</sup>**

The ICFE was held virtually from 22 to 24 June 2021. About 1000 people participated in the Conference and up to a few hundred more observed it via webcast. UNESCO played a significant role in the Conference to make links with the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for 2030 agenda. The key outcomes of the Conference were the launch of the Online Learning Course on Legal and Sustainable Supply Chains of Tropical Wood and Wood Products, the Call to Action on Forest Education and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests' Joint Initiative on Forest Education. General feedback from participants was that the time was right for more international attention and action at all levels to revitalize forest education.

#### **Call to Action on Forest Education<sup>5</sup>**

The Call to Action on Forest Education was launched at the opening plenary of the ICFE on 22 June. The purpose of the Call is to raise awareness of forest stakeholders and the general public of the crucial importance of and specific actions needed to strengthen forest education, capacity building and knowledge sharing and to generate their increased commitment to undertake these actions,

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<sup>1</sup> The project title: "Creation of a Global Forest Education Platform and Launch of a Joint Initiative under the Aegis of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests" and is operational from November 2019 until September 2021

<sup>2</sup> These reports will be available by September 2021

<sup>3</sup> <https://lsscource.com>

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/forest-education/conference/en/>

<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/forest-education/conference/en/>

individually and collaboratively. The Call covers formal forest education, non-formal training in extension and Farmer Field School approaches, and local knowledge including traditional and indigenous forest-related knowledge, recognizing that all three must be robust, resilient and inclusive across society globally. All of these are vital for building and retaining knowledge, skills and shared values to underpin sustainable forest management and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other forest-related goals.

Conference participants and others were invited to endorse the Call to Action. By 24 June 2021 over 300 people had endorsed the Call to Action and by 22 July 2021 the number had risen to nearly 600. This immediate and strong response is an indication of the importance that a wide range of stakeholders place on this topic. The Call to Action focuses on eight key areas related to forest education, capacity development and knowledge sharing that need improvement. It urges “all forest education stakeholders and actors to undertake these actions, individually and collaboratively, as appropriate to their respective mandates and capacities.”

### **Joint Initiative on Forest Education of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests<sup>6</sup>**

The CPF Joint Initiative (JI) on Forest Education: capacity building and knowledge sharing for sustainable forests<sup>7</sup> was formally launched on 24 June at the ICFE. It represents the CPF’s response to the Call to Action on Forest Education. The JI’s lead CPF partners are the Center for International Forestry Research-World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), FAO, ITTO and IUFRO and its collaborating organizations are the Secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). The five outcomes of the JI by 2024 are as follows:

- Outcome 1:** The *Forestra* platform is fully developed and facilitates global access to online resources for forest education and networking.
- Outcome 2:** Knowledge and skills taught in forest training and vocational education schools, tertiary level forest programmes and forest extension training programmes are strengthened and better aligned with the needs of the workplace.
- Outcome 3:** Local knowledge (including traditional and indigenous forest-related knowledge) is increasingly integrated into forest education, vocational and training systems, and links between it and scientific knowledge are strengthened.
- Outcome 4:** A Global Partnership on Forest Education for forest education stakeholders is established to facilitate dialogue, coordination, joint action, and links with other like-minded initiatives.
- Outcome 5:** The importance of forest education and knowledge is widely recognized, and students from primary through tertiary level are increasingly attracted to forest-related professions.

### **Next steps**

The six partners will work on detailed planning of the activities of the JI and to approach prospective donors for the financial resources needed to make the JI successful. Both will entail an intensive effort by the partners over the coming few months. The Regional Forestry Commissions members may wish to share information about the JI as well as the outcomes of the International Conference on Education with relevant actors and stakeholders.

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<sup>6</sup> See: <http://www.cpfweb.org/98704/en/> and <http://www.fao.org/forestry/forest-education/98724/en/>