



Protection of forests and increased supply of sustainably produced forest products is the essence of sustainable forest management.

Introduction

Forests are a complex and vital component of the planet Earth's ecosystem. Forests are essential not only to maintain earth's health but are also important resource for economic growth, employment, food security, and energy, as well as to address climate change and other environmental challenges. The United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF) serves as a reference for the forest-related work with clear shared vision, and mission, global forest goals and targets. Its six goals collectively address the challenges faced by forests and designed to promote sustainable forest management on the ground.

Global Forest Goal 3 is one of the six goals of the United Nations Strategic Plan on Forests 2017-2030. GFG3 aims to “increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests.” It includes three targets:

- Targets 3.1 The area of forests worldwide designated as protected areas or conserved through other effective area-based conservation measures is significantly increased;
- Target 3.2 The area of forests under long-term forest management plans is significantly increased; and
- Target 3.3 The proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests is significantly increased.

Progress on all six Goals is essential to ensure the vision of sustainably managed forests in the world. In addition to the products and services, forests contribute towards the achievement of several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those related to poverty (Goal 1), food security (Goal 2), health (Goal 3), clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), energy (Goal 7), safety from disasters (Goal 11), resilience to the impacts of climate change (Goal 13), and in particular, Goal 15 on

Key Messages

- Progress made on all three targets of Global Forest Goal 3 is encouraging but is uneven among the regions and countries.
- Evidence shows that Protected Areas can make important contributions to SDGs on poverty reduction, food security, health, and livelihoods.
- Half of the world's forests is still without long-term management plans.
- Forest certification needs to be promoted in developing countries through incentives and public awareness
- Funding gaps and technical capacities for management are the main challenge in many developing countries.
- Pressure on forests for other land uses still a major challenge.
- Need to take concrete steps to enhance coordination among government institutions and between different stakeholders.
- UNFF may consider facilitating the follow-ups of forest-related declarations.

forests, terrestrial ecosystems, biodiversity and land resources.

Protected upland watersheds are a source of clean drinking water in human settlements downstream. Forest plants are sources for traditional and many modern medicines. In fact, GFGs and SDGs are interconnected and mutually-supportive. Due to its inherent core elements in conservation, sustainable management and production, Forest Goal 3 has close linkages with a number of SDGs as well as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Paris Agreement on Climate Change and other frameworks and processes.

Progress in Global Forest Goal 3 is Encouraging

The world has made reasonably good progress towards the GFG3ⁱ. Global statistics show that 726 million ha of forest (about 18% of world's forest) is now designated as protected area (PAs). There is a clear growing trend of forests being brought under long-term forest management plans, and supply of forest products coming from sustainably managed forests. In 2020, more than 2 billion ha of the world's forest has management plans (about 54%). Trend of forest certification indicating that forests are sustainably managed and forest products are produced in sustainable manner is growing. In 2019, total certified forests reached 426 million ha worldwide.

But progress is uneven among regions and countries

Forests with long-term management plans in Europe (944 million ha) account for almost half of the total global forests under management plans. While almost all forests in Europe (96%) are being managed under management plans, Africa and South America regions account for less than 25 percent of the forests under management plans.

Despite almost three decades of development, forest certification is concentrated in Europe and North America, and not so much in the developing countries. Factors such as complicated procedures, additional financial and management burden, uncertainties over market benefits, etc., have contributed to the slow adoption of certification in tropical regions.

Countries have been applying a wide range of policies, strategies, plans and programmes, including necessary changes in their laws, and mobilization of financial and human resources towards sustainable forest management. However, countries are constrained by limited funding, technical and human capacities, weak governance, particularly forest governance, lack of political will and policy coherence, among others.

Cross-cutting Global Forest Goals, namely Goal 4 (mobilizing financial resources, Goal 5 (promoting governance frameworks), and Goal 6 (enhancing cooperation, coordination and coherence) at national and international levels are pre-requisites for achieving GFG3. Cooperation and coordination between different line ministries, coherent sectoral policies and public-private partnerships increase likelihood for success. Stakeholder involvement, in particular, of the local communities in management and benefit sharing is crucial. Progress on GFG3 is susceptible to external forces, natural or human induced such as climate change, pandemics (COVID-19), conflicts, fire, demand for converting forests to other land uses, and unsustainable and/or illegal harvesting of forest products.

Increase protected areas and improve their quality to meet existing and emerging challenges

A new multi-country researchⁱⁱ has shown that protected areas with better planning and management not only benefit forests and inherent biodiversity but also local economy, children's health and general well-being of local communities. Therefore, the effort to increase protected areas should continue. This will also contribute to the new Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Target to conserve and manage 30 percent of world's land area as protected areas by 2030.

In addition, enhancing the quality of protected areas with better management and participation of local communities should continue to make such areas more effective in conserving forest biodiversity.

Policy makers and managers would need to anticipate and adapt to new challenges such as the ones resulting from Climate Change (e.g., shifting biodiversity v. fixed protected areas) and opportunities presented by advancement in technologies. Moreover, the power of information must be continuously and strategically harnessed to generate public support for protection and sustainable forest management. Countries should continue with public awareness programmes targeted at all interest groups, in particular, youth, farmers, private sector, women and the scientific community.

Continue increasing area under sustainable management of forests

At present about half of the world's forests are under some sorts of long-term management plans. That means other half, mostly in regions with developing countries, needs to be brought under similar management regimes as a priority.

Data availability and reliability need constant attention. For this, data generation and quality maintenance, monitoring and reporting systems should be improved and institutionalized. International cooperation for promoting sustainable management of all types of forests is crucial. Development partners and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) should be encouraged to initiate support programmes to developing countries in need of support on this priority area.

Need more efforts to increase forest products from sustainably managed forests

Demand for sustainably produced forest products needs to be increased through policy interventions, fiscal incentives and public awareness programmes for forest certification. Dynamic policy environment which is grounded on long-term vision for sustainable and integrated resource management and sustainable development is needed. Moreover, forest certification

and promotion for wood-based renewable building materials, new building codes encouraging such building materials and practices need to be expanded across the world.

Windows of opportunity are opening up

The “Glasgow Leader’s Declaration on Forests and Land Use” of 2021 and a launch of “Climate and Forest Leaders’ Partnership” in 2022 during the Climate COP26 and COP 27 have provided much needed political commitment for protection and sustainable management of forests. Corporations, large and small, national and multinational, are making commitments to sustainable forest management, so are other stakeholders. UNFF should be proactive and consider to facilitating the follow-ups of such forest-related declarations and commitments.

ⁱ Based, primarily on 52 national reports to UNFF15, held in May 2020, Global Forests Goals Report 2021, Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020, and other related publications.

ⁱⁱ Naidoo et al. 2019. Evaluating the impacts of protected areas on human well-being across the developing world. The study covered over 600 PAs from 34 developing countries and synthesized data on environmental and socioeconomic conditions of more than 87,000 children in over 60,000 households situated either near (within 10 KM) or far (more than 10 KM away) from PAs. [DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.aav3006](https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aav3006)