

Regional networking for the conservation and management of forest genetic resources: priorities and experiences from around the world

Riina Jalonen^{a*}, Michele Bozzano^b, Marius Ekué^c, Evert Thomas^d, Judy Loo^b

Populations of many ecologically and socio-economically important tree species are declining worldwide, according to the *State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* (FGR) Report that was based on country reports from more than 80 countries. In response, FAO launched a *Global Plan of Action on Forest Genetic Resources* to help safeguard these vital resources through *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation, sustainable management and strengthening of related policies and capacities. Here we present priorities and experiences of regional FGR networks which are assuming an important role in implementing the Global Plan of Action and have each developed their own strategies and priorities to that end. Networks on FGR were established in Asia and the Pacific (APFORGEN), Latin America (LAFORGEN), sub-Saharan Africa (SAFORGEN) and Europe (EUFORGEN) in 1990s and early 2000s, and together have members from more than 70 countries. Their current priorities include characterizing genetic resources and developing data systems to address the widespread lack of information on FGR, strengthening tree breeding and seed production systems to support forest restoration targets and increase socio-economic benefits from FGR, and mobilizing political and financial support for scaling up FGR conservation and management efforts. The networks could benefit from sharing technical expertise and experiences regarding what operational models help sustain and expand networks over time. Lack of core funding is a key challenge for the networks in the Global South. FAO has recognized the importance of regional networking in FGR conservation and management and called for support to networking efforts.

^a Bioversity International, Malaysia; r.jalonen@cgiar.org

^b Bioversity International, Italy; m.bozzano@cgiar.org

^c Bioversity International, Cameroon; ^{M.ekue@cgiar.org}

^d Bioversity International, Peru; e.thomas@cgiar.org

* Presenting author