



TFU

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conservation and
sustainable development
of tropical forests

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Council appoints new Executive Director

In this edition of the TFU we report on the outcomes of the most recent session of the International Tropical Timber Council, which concluded in early December 2021 (page 3). Most crucially at the session, Ms Sheam Satkuru, a Malaysian national and the first woman to win the position, was appointed by consensus as ITTO's next Executive Director. Ms Satkuru is a lawyer by training and has considerable experience in international negotiations and the tropical timber trade.

The Council made several other decisions at the session, including on a new strategic action plan that will guide policy and project work for the next five years.

The 2021 Annual Market Discussion, which was held during the Council session, addressed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the international

tropical timber trade and its stakeholders (page 26). The pandemic has caused considerable disruption to timber supply chains, and most experts expect this to continue for some time yet. Nevertheless, the sector should ultimately recover, with demand for timber likely to rise in coming years as consumers look for renewable, sustainable materials.

In part, increasing wood demand could be met by a corresponding surge in forest restoration while also restoring lost ecosystem services and increasing land productivity. Indeed, much has been said in recent years about the need for such restoration to repair the damage done to forests, landscapes and communities by a multitude of forces, such as low-quality logging, poorly conceived agriculture, fire, cattle-grazing, invasive species and mining. In many communities in many countries, the talk is being matched by action—as indicated in stories in this edition of the TFU.

Inside: Council session · Restoration in West Africa · Guatemala · timber tracking · teak · more

Sheam Satkuru appointed as ITTO's new Executive Director

The International Tropical Timber Council also discussed the Organization's policy and project portfolio and made a range of decisions.3

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Cover image: Sheam Satkuru, ITTO's newly appointed Executive Director. Photo: CTWPDA

An outcome of the 26th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Glasgow, Scotland, in November 2021, suggests that a further scaling up of such action might be imminent. The Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, endorsed by more than 140 countries, commits to strengthening "shared efforts" to, among other things, "[c]onserve forests and other terrestrial ecosystems and accelerate their restoration". The Glasgow Declaration reinforces the United Nations resolution (made in 2019) proclaiming 2021–2030 as the United Nations Decade for Ecosystem Restoration with the aim of supporting and scaling up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide.

Coinciding with the Glasgow Declaration were various announcements of new funds totalling about USD 19 billion to help protect and restore forests globally (more details of these funds are on page 30 of this edition). This seems a decent start (if the promised funds materialize)—but *only* a start. According to one estimate, USD 1 trillion or more might be needed to restore 350 million hectares of degraded forest landscapes by 2030.¹

ITTO has been promoting forest restoration for at least two decades, and its recently published *Guidelines for Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics* provide advice on how to establish effective forest landscape restoration (FLR) projects and programmes. The work continues, as illustrated in this edition.

Mélanie Feuerer and co-authors (page 7) report on the challenges facing smallholders in West Africa in participating in and implementing FLR. The study is based on analyses by six national experts and a regional workshop attended by participants from 16 countries. The authors conclude that, in all the studied countries, improving land titling and tree rights for smallholders, especially women, is an essential first step in scaling up FLR, and incentives and financial and technical support are other important needs. The article provides eight recommendations—generated by workshop participants—for engaging smallholders in national FLR efforts.

¹ NYDF Assessment Partners 2019. *Protecting and restoring forests – A story of large commitments yet limited progress*. New York Declaration on Forests (NYDF) Five-year Assessment Report. Climate Focus (coordinator and editor). Available at forestdeclaration.org

Silvia Anaité López-Alquijay and César Joaquín Zacarias-Coxic (page 10) describe the efforts of a coastal community in Guatemala to restore degraded mangrove forests, with assistance from an ITTO project. The key to this work is the establishment of local governance platforms designed to promote sustainable mangrove management. Although the forests are state-owned, communities are able to lease them; they have restored forests and are monitoring and surveilling them, and they are now eligible for a governmental incentives scheme and to sustainably use the resource.

Elsewhere in this edition, Raul Briz (page 14) reports on an ITTO project that helped create a fully functional timber-tracking system in the Philippines and trial it in three provinces. The system is improving forest governance in the country and is expected to boost investor confidence in the sector. It could now be adopted nationally.

Chumnun Piananurak and Somporn Khumchompoo (page 18) discuss the outcomes of a workshop for the Mekong Subregion that equipped foresters and smallholders with skills for training farmers in the propagation and management of high-quality teak trees, which in turn will boost local livelihoods. Raman Nautiyal and Promode Kant (page 20) present the outcomes of modelling on wood supply and demand in India that suggests India's wood-supply deficit will escalate in coming years. Mahtuf Ikhsan (page 23) introduces ITTO's free online course on legal and sustainable timber supply chains, and ITTO Fellow Angelica Barrero (page 24) relates her experience in gaining a master's degree in development and conservation practice.

We take this opportunity to wish all readers Happy New Year, and we look forward to sharing more stories in 2022 about ITTO's work to support the sustainable and legal trade of tropical timber and the sustainable management of tropical forests.

Editor's note: Due to budgetary limitations caused by tardy payments to ITTO's administrative budget in 2021, the TFU suffered interruptions to its production schedule in the second half of the year. Therefore, this is the final issue produced for TFU volume 30. The TFU will return to its regular production schedule of 4 issues per year with volume 31 in 2022.



Integrating smallholders into forest landscape restoration

ITTO is promoting the participation of smallholders in six West African countries in efforts to restore 20 million hectares of degraded land by 2030

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Teak peek: A smallholder farmer stands in his young teak plantation in Togo. *Photo: J. Blaser*

The combined effects of natural-resource overexploitation, forest conversion for agriculture, unsustainable land-use practices (e.g. slash-and-burn), wildfire and mining have taken their toll on West African forests, which declined in area by nearly 2 million hectares between 1990 and 2020 (FAO 2020) and suffered extensive degradation. Insecure land and tree tenure are underlying drivers of this loss and degradation, with negative consequences for biodiversity, ecosystem services and local livelihoods. In an effort to arrest forest decline, many countries in Africa have pledged to restore forest landscapes in the framework of the Bonn Challenge¹ and the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100), the latter of which is a “country-led effort to bring 100 million hectares of land in Africa into restoration by 2030” (AFR100 2021a).

Forest landscape restoration (FLR) is an integrated approach to the rehabilitation of degraded forests and forest lands with the capacity to enable the sustainable management of landscapes over time. In 2018, the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) agreed on the following six principles of FLR:

- 1) Focus on landscapes
- 2) Engage stakeholders and support participatory governance
- 3) Restore multiple functions for multiple benefits
- 4) Maintain and enhance natural forest ecosystems within landscapes
- 5) Tailor to the local context using a variety of approaches
- 6) Manage adaptively for long-term resilience.

These principles are the backbone of the ITTO publication, *Guidelines for Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics*, which was released in 2020.²

ITTO seeks to support its West African member countries in their efforts to achieve FLR commitments based on the new guidelines; this includes encouraging the involvement of smallholders through, for example, the planting of trees in woodlots and agroforestry systems. As part of the ITTO Programme on Legal and Sustainable Supply Chains,³ the authors led an analysis of the challenges and opportunities that smallholders in six countries (Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Mali and Togo) face in participating in FLR. The initial analysis was carried out by six national experts and consolidated at a regional workshop in November 2019, at which participants from 16 countries exchanged views and discussed the way forward.

FLR and smallholders in six countries

Together, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia and Togo have pledged to restore nearly 10 million hectares by 2030. Along with Mali’s pledge made in 2019, this means a total commitment of almost 20 million hectares of FLR in the six countries (Table 1). Most of the substantial FLR pledges have been made as part of AFR100.

“Smallholders” are defined differently in different countries. In Ghana, for example, a smallholder is someone who manages 2–5 hectares of land; in Togo, it is someone who owns a plantation of fewer than 10 hectares. Smallholders in Côte d’Ivoire manage modest areas of land.

Forest smallholders in West Africa generally face constraints such as the use of rudimentary tools and basic production techniques and limited access to land and other resources; they are also highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks.

¹ www.bonnchallenge.org.

² The guidelines are available at www.itto.int/policy_papers. See also TFU 29/3, pp. 4–7.

³ ITTO activity PP-A/55-334 “Building legal and sustainable forest product supply chains”, subcomponent 3: Promotion of Smallholders’ Forest Landscape Restoration in West Africa.

Table 1: Forest data for six West African countries, including commitments on forest landscape restoration

Parameter	Benin	Côte d'Ivoire	Ghana	Liberia	Mali	Togo
Forest (ha) (FAO 2020)	3 135 150	2 836 710	7 985 710	7 617 440	13 296 000	1 209 270
Total land area (ha) (FAO 2020)	11 276 000	31 800 000	22 754 000	9 632 000	122 019 000	5 439 000
Population in 2020 (million) (World Bank 2021)	12.1	26.4	31.1	5.1	20.3	8.3
Population density (2018) (people per km ²) (World Bank 2021)	102	79	131	50	16	145
Forest change, 1990–2020 (FAO 2020)	– 1 700 000 ha	– 5 014 150 ha	– 1 938 550 ha	– 907 800 ha	0 ha	– 152 390 ha
Annual forest change, 2015–2020 (FAO 2020)	– 50 000 ha	– 112 890 ha	21 050 ha	– 30 260 ha	0 ha	– 2 960 ha
Restoration commitment by 2030 (AFR100 2021b)	0.5 million ha	5 million ha	2 million ha	1 million ha	10 million ha	1.4 million ha
Main value chains	Timber, shea nuts, cashew, African locust bean	Timber, shea nuts, woodfuel, medicinal plants	Timber, woodfuel, shea nuts, cashew	Rubber, coffee, cocoa, oil palm, cashew	Fuelwood, shea nuts, arabic gum, medicinal plants	Timber, cashew, oil palm

The degree of community organization varies between countries: in some cases, local communities create associations in forest areas so they can establish agreements with forestry administrations. In Côte d'Ivoire, associations of farmers (e.g. teak planters and cocoa farmers) are well-structured formal organizations that provide smallholders with better access to technical support and inputs as well as more bargaining power.

Plantations in West Africa may be state- or privately owned. Teak (*Tectona grandis*) is a common plantation species, and the modified *taungya* system is a typical practice, in which farmers tend young trees and in turn can plant food crops among the trees in the first few years. In Benin, forestry models include state-owned forest plantations, municipal plantations, private plantations, and agroforestry. In Côte d'Ivoire, the state owns 90% of teak plantations and smallholders the remaining 10%; shade-grown cocoa is the most widespread agroforestry system. Private plantations are a new trend in Togo, with the larger plantation owners employing permanent qualified staff. In Ghana, plantations are either private or part of the national forest plantation development programme. Smallholder agroforestry systems in Liberia are common for fruit trees and kola (a native tree species that produces edible nuts), while cash crops are often planted in monocultures. There is no known smallholder teak plantation in Liberia, however—all teak plantations there are state-owned.

In Mali, reforestation is done mainly with exotic species. Historically, plantations were used to reforest, restore classified forests, and create windbreaks around Bamako and other big cities. But these plantations have had only mixed success, due at least partly to the cost of management and a consequent lack of follow-up.

Most current FLR activity in West Africa, including forest plantations, is state-driven. Apart from issues of scale, smallholders are motivated predominantly by daily livelihood

needs and have limited capacity to invest in plantations if these yield only long-term financial benefits. The role of smallholders in FLR lies essentially in agroforestry (in which “restoration” is not a primary objective). Nevertheless, initiatives exist at the local level, for example in community forests and sacred forests and in the creation of individual income-generating activities such as agroforestry and woodlot planting. Agroforestry practices include scattered trees on farms, tree plantations (e.g. cocoa, coffee, rubber, cashew and oil palm) and various tree–crop combinations. In many of the six countries, governments support such practices through, for example, the supply of seedlings of native and exotic timber trees and fruit trees.

Challenges and opportunities for West African smallholders

Information on smallholders in West Africa is still fragmented, particularly regarding land holdings and production systems. Nevertheless, our analysis of the six countries has contributed to an improved general understanding of their situation. We found that smallholders face specific challenges when it comes to FLR.

Secure land and tree tenure is key if any smallholder is to invest time and resources in restoration practices and particularly tree-planting, whether for woodlots or agroforestry. Even though several countries have written laws on ownership rights to land (and, more rarely, to trees), implementation on the ground is weak. Improving land titling and tree rights for smallholders, especially women, is thus the first essential step in better integrating smallholders into FLR initiatives.

In general, existing policies and laws in West Africa do not account for smallholder needs and fail to provide enabling conditions for their involvement in FLR. Incentive schemes (e.g. direct subsidies or tax reductions) could be developed

to support smallholders in investing in tree plantations and other restoration efforts. Currently, there is no clear incentive scheme in any of the six countries.

Accessing financial and technical support is a major challenge, with national governments controlling both multilateral and (in most cases) bilateral development assistance funds for FLR. Moreover, few opportunities exist for smallholders in West Africa to obtain funds via private investors or blended finance. Smallholders thus lack direct access to any existing substantial FLR financing scheme and must use their own generally insufficient resources for investment and to meet operational costs. Facilitating access to funds, particularly through microfinancing with affordable conditions, is another key factor for enabling smallholder FLR. Organizing into associations or other types of producer group is an opportunity for smallholders to gain access to advisory services and technical support and strengthen their bargaining power. Outgrower schemes⁴ can benefit both parties and achieve good restoration outcomes.

Smallholders are often not part of formal markets, and their position in value chains is usually weak because of their high dependence on middlemen and limited access to information on market prices. Wood quality is generally lower in smallholder woodlots than in the holdings of large producers, due partly to the lower quality of seedlings and generally less-favourable growing conditions. In addition, experience in, and technologies for, wood processing (e.g. small-diameter logs) and other value adding are lacking. In most countries, facilities for processing smallholder timber products are insufficient. Generally, smallholders can only gain access to certification schemes for timber and tree crops if they are organized into associations or similar structures.

Moving forward

The ITTO Regional Stakeholder Workshop, held on 27–29 November 2019 in Lomé, Togo, produced a joint statement on how to move forward in actively engaging smallholders in national FLR efforts. It made the following eight recommendations:

- 1) Establish or improve national databases on smallholders in West African countries.
- 2) Amend legal baselines to enable smallholders to secure land and tree tenure.
- 3) Create incentive schemes to enable smallholders to invest in trees and tree crops.
- 4) Develop management support schemes for smallholders and associations.
- 5) Develop structured finance products for smallholders to provide access to investment funds.
- 6) Enable financing mechanisms for smallholders with affordable conditions.



FLR proponents: Participants of the ITTO Regional Stakeholder Workshop on Smallholder FLR in West Africa, held in November 2019 in Lomé, Togo. *Photo: M. Feurer*

- 7) Create capacities for smallholders to apply silvicultural methods and technologies.
- 8) Include smallholders actively in value chains, such as through adequate ingrower, outgrower and other types of investment and benefit-sharing schemes and the further processing of products.

All stakeholders—governments, the private sector, international cooperation agencies, scientists, and smallholders themselves—need to work together towards more inclusive FLR processes that actively engage smallholders. After all, in addition to large-scale restoration initiatives, the more diverse smallholder systems are fundamental for building back better after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study reported here was part of an ongoing activity in ITTO's Biennial Work Programme, with funding from the Government of Germany.

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⁴ Outgrowers schemes are partnerships between timber or processing companies and smallholder farmers in which companies assist producers with (for example) seeds, technical advice and credit in return for access to their tree resources.