

RURAL DEVELOPMENT through DECENT WORK

FOR GROWTH, PRODUCTIVE JOBS, INCOME, FOOD SECURITY, GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, RIGHTS, VOICE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CRISIS RESILIENCE



International Labour Office

Sectors

Rural Policy Briefs

Productive and safe work in forestry

Forestry provides valuable products, while establishing, regenerating, managing, and protecting forests. Breaking the circle of low productivity, low wages, high accident rates and high turnover that characterizes forestry calls for improved training and social dialogue.

Facts and Figures

- Forestry employs 13.7 million formal workers, about 1 percent of total world employment, although its workforce is probably much larger due to widespread informality, especially in developing countries.¹
- Over 60 percent of total forestry employment is concentrated in 10 countries. China, with 3.5 million formal jobs in the sector, accounts for 26 percent.²
- Commercial forestry represents about 0.4 percent of world GDP, but the value of non-commercial goods and services provided by forests may well exceed the commercial output.³
- Forestry is expanding in Latin America and Asia while it has been continually declining in Europe and North America.⁴
- Informal workers have been estimated to represent between 66 and 72 percent of formal employment in forestry depending on the definitions involved and data available.⁵
- Wood is by far the most important forest product, with 3.5 billion m³ harvested annually.⁶
- Women are strongly under-represented in management and decision-making and tend to be trapped in low-status, low-paid work.⁷



© IFAD/G.M.B. Akash

Why action is needed

- Forests are an important source of energy and livelihoods for local communities, providing food, medicine, and materials for energy and shelter. They also provide jobs in logging and conservation, and support important sectors such as agriculture and wood processing.
- Forests provide indispensable environmental services including water sources and catchments, maintenance of the hydrological balance, soil protection and recycling of atmospheric gases.
- Sustainable forestry work provides an opportunity for protection of sites and landscapes of high cultural, spiritual, touristic and recreational value.
- Forestry has considerable potential to create green jobs, particularly through activities such as reforestation, afforestation, agroforestry and sustainable forest management.
- Debates about forests tend to focus on concepts such as biodiversity and ecological issues and neglect the human dimension, namely the function of forests for communities and the role and conditions of forestry workers.
- Forestry is characterized by a high degree of informality, especially linked to the expansion of illegal logging (also a major cause of deforestation).⁸ Informal work usually entails poor working conditions including low pay, lack of job security and of health and safety protection.⁹



© FAO/T. Frisk

- Work sites are usually temporary and scattered, and the continuous movement of facilities makes it more difficult to set standards and evaluate working conditions.
- Widespread informality and temporary and scattered worksites make labour inspection particularly difficult.
- Forestry in general and logging in particular continue to be among the most dangerous occupations. Accidents are normally caused by poor organization and supervision, inadequate tools and equipment, poor planning, and lack of skills and competence among workers, supervisors and managers.
- Forestry wages are generally below the average of other industries, including wood processing and pulp and paper.¹⁰
- Subcontracting practices in forestry have led to precarious and unstable employment practices in many countries.
- Gender equality gaps are notable in forestry. Women are strongly under-represented in management and decision-making; receive comparably lower wages; and often are more exposed to significant health risks than men.
- Although training of forest workers has made great strides in some countries over the last decades, it is rudimentary or non-existent in most tropical countries. Often training is limited to high level positions of management and to supervisors and does not address the productivity and safety of unskilled and semi-skilled workers.
- Unionization rates are low, and although forest industry associations often exist they seldom function as employers' organizations, particularly in developing countries.
- Mechanisation in timber harvesting has led to increased productivity, but also job losses and radical change in working methods. While mechanization often reduces the danger and stress of forestry work, it may cause psychological and musculoskeletal problems of a different kind.

Policy options

Focus on training and skills development

- Prioritize capacity building and skills development to ensure and maintain a competitive and sustainable forestry workforce.
- Create training programs that target low-skilled jobs to improve worker productivity and safety.
- Provide training to ease adjustment to new mechanized harvesting, and ensure the effective and safe use of new equipment.
- Promote and mainstream safety and health training practices for workers.

- Focus on developing specific tools such as handbooks and training modules, and make them available to contractors, workers, and independent training institutions.
- Develop training materials on technical as well as policy and management issues (e.g. management of forests, fire management, awareness raising about the role of forests in protecting the environment and biodiversity, reducing poverty, gender equality, afforestation, forest conservation, and deforestation).
- Strengthen and support relevant formal and informal academic and training institutions that focus on forestry education.
- Build up technical capacity among government staff dealing with forestry work.
- Encourage forestry research by supporting relevant civil society groups, international knowledge exchange, academic institutions, entrepreneurs and other interested bodies.
- Foster a variety of channels for knowledge transfer. In addition to formal training, include role modelling, coaching, and collective learning.

Create better jobs and working conditions, and protect fundamental rights

- Strengthen and promote small and medium-sized enterprises at the local level.
- Raise awareness about the role of forest work in protecting the environment and develop national policies supporting green job creation.
- Promote rights of women by fighting gender-related stereotypes, providing training specifically for women, thus enabling them to secure management and decision making positions; and promote national networks of women in forestry.
- Include indigenous people in decision-making about forestry and ensure their resources and livelihoods are protected.
- Strive to eliminate forced labour and child labour in the industry.

Box 1

Guidance on safety and health in forestry

The 1998 ILO Code of practice on *Safety and Health in Forestry Work* is not legally binding but provides guidance that can be used as a benchmark for good practice. It is widely available in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Polish, Serbo-Croat, Czech and Albanian.

In Europe, the Code has supplemented national efforts by involving governments and stakeholders in tackling safety and health within the industry, that are increasingly viewed as an important contributor to productivity, profitability and employability.

Source: ILO: *Safety and Health in Forestry Work*, Code of Practice (Geneva: 1998)
http://www.ilo.org/safework/normative/codes/lang--en/docName--WCMS_107793/index.htm

- Promote better quality, formal employment and better working conditions by enforcing adequate contracting standards (e.g. ensure the contractor firm is formally established and has competent management and skilled personnel).
- Promote health and safety requirements in all stages of forest work, from planning to implementation.
- Establish health and safety policy and management systems that systematically identify hazards and take preventive measures.
- Develop, mainstream and ensure enforcement of labour inspection in the industry.
- Ensure that social dialogue includes issues related to employment stability, wages, social coverage, occupational safety and health, and other working conditions.

Promote social dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders at all levels

- Create an enabling environment for labour unions, employers' associations and collective bargaining practices.
- Ensure that relations between workers and management are based on regular consultation and fairness on both sides.
- Develop and mainstream national codes of practice in occupational safety and health using participatory mechanisms that involve stakeholders at all levels, including workers, employers, contractors, government representatives, environmental groups, indigenous peoples and technical experts.
- Work with international institutions to adopt forest work certification mechanisms to ensure sustainable forest management.
- Promote transparent, multi-stakeholder verification of compliance with forestry management standards to protect the livelihoods of the poor and other vulnerable groups.
- Share knowledge with stakeholders on how to best link forestry management with development assistance.



© FAO/Giuseppe Bizzarri

Box 2

Decent work and green jobs in Indonesian forestry

Indonesia has one of the largest forestry industries in the Asia Pacific region. Forestry contributes significantly to the country's GDP, foreign exchange, public revenue and employment while playing a major role in the deforestation and climate change debate.

In 2010, the ILO workshop on "Decent work in the Indonesian forestry industries" brought together the Ministries of Manpower and Transmigration, and of Forestry; the National Development Planning Agency; the Provincial Governments of East Java and of East Kalimantan; employers, workers and donor agencies to debate the issues of declining growth, structural changes in the industry, illegal logging and its impact on the environment, green jobs and other labour-related matters. This multi-stakeholder approach brought together different actors that normally did not engage with one another and created an important platform for social dialogue and future work.

The seminar reached consensus on the relevance of forestry as a long-term provider of jobs and livelihoods for millions of workers, valuable exports as well as its capacity as an environmentally friendly and sustainable industry.

Source: See: http://www.ilo.org/jakarta/whatwedo/eventsandmeetings/lang--en/WCMS_142536/index.htm

Box 3

Forestry Experts Network

Launched in September 1993 by the ILO, FORWORKNET is an international network of almost 300 individuals and institutions in over 70 countries interested in forestry workforce issues. Its primary functions are to enable its members to communicate directly and to open opportunities for international exchange and cooperation. It also allows members to keep abreast of new developments, publications, data and research results, forthcoming events, and new technologies affecting forest workers and other relevant news; and helps them locate sources of information, advice or assistance. The network regularly issues a newsletter covering specific topics that include human resource development, productivity, and social and labour issues in forestry.

Source: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/sectors/forest/forwknet.htm>



RURAL DEVELOPMENT through DECENT WORK

FOR GROWTH, PRODUCTIVE JOBS, INCOME, FOOD SECURITY, GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, RIGHTS, VOICE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CRISIS RESILIENCE

ILO's role

- Although the ILO does not have a specific Convention on forestry, many of its Recommendations and Conventions and all of its Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work apply to forestry.
- A large part of ILO's work in forestry is dedicated to facilitating and strengthening social dialogue through meetings among its tripartite constituents in over 70 countries (See Box 2).
- Capacity building is a second major focus in forestry, namely through the preparation and dissemination of guidance tools such as the *ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Forestry Work* (1998) (See Box 1), and *Guidelines for Labour Inspection in Forestry* (2005).
- ILO has been working jointly with FAO and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) for many years through the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training (1954-2004), and since 2004 through a joint FAO/ECE/ILO expert network, to develop and disseminate manuals, codes of practice, other related documents, and best practices in forestry (See Box 3).
- At country-level, work in Indonesia, Malaysia and Peru, for instance, targets illegal logging and decent work deficits.
- ILO provides technical inputs in international meetings and workshops in vocational training, applied ergonomics and other aspects of forestry [e.g. the International Conference on Safety and Health in Forestry (Annecy, France, May 2007); the Asia Pacific Forestry Week (Hanoi, Vietnam, April 2008); and the forthcoming meeting on Impact of Climate Change on Forestry Work (Geneva, Switzerland, October 2011)].



© FAO/Giuseppe Bizzarri

¹ FAO: *State of the World's Forests* (Rome: 2009)

² FAO: *Forest Finance, Contribution of Forestry Sector to National Economies, 1990-2006* (Rome: 2008)

³ ILO: *Forestry Wood, Pulp and Paper*, Website Available at: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/sectors/forest/emp-forestry.htm> (Geneva: 2008)

⁴ FAO: *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010* (Rome: 2010)

⁵ UNEP: *Green Jobs: Towards Decent Work in a Sustainable, Low Carbon World* (Geneva: 2008)

⁶ ILO: *Employment in Forestry, Wood, Pulp and Paper: Social Protection and Social Dialogue* (Geneva: 2010)

⁷ Peter Blomback and Peter Poschen: *Decent Work in Forestry? Enhancing Forestry Work and Forest-Based Livelihoods* (Quebec City: 2003)

⁸ Guertin, Carl-Eric: *Illegal Logging and Illegal Activities in the Forestry Sector: Overview and Possible Issues for the UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry* (Geneva: 2003)

⁹ FAO: "XIII World Forestry Congress", in *Unasylva* 234/235 Vol. 61 (2010)

¹⁰ Decent Work in Forestry, op. cit.

Links

- Department of Sectoral Activities:
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/sectors/forest.htm>
- ILO's Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment (SafeWork):
<http://www.ilo.org/safework/lang--en/index.htm>
- Database of International Labour Standards (ILOLEX): See in particular Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (C. No. 155)
<http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/index.htm>

Tools

- ◆ FAO/ECE/ILO: *Raising Awareness of Forests and Forestry* (Geneva: 2003)
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/papers/forest/wp198.pdf>
- ◆ ILO: *Safety and Health in Forestry Work: An ILO Code of Practice* (Geneva: 1998)
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_107793.pdf
- ◆ ILO: *Guidelines for Labour Inspection in Forestry* (Geneva: 2006)
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/papers/forest/guidelines.pdf>

Contact

Sectoral Activities Department: sector@ilo.org
Edmundo Werna: werna@ilo.org

Author: Abdul Saboor Atrafi