

**REFORMING  
THE TROPICAL  
FORESTRY  
ACTION  
PLAN**



**A WWF POSITION**

# Reforming the Tropical Forestry Action Plan A WWF Position

## OVERVIEW

The Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) was launched in 1985 as the major international response to the tropical forest crisis.

During the last 5 years, TFAP has accomplished much in terms of raising attention at the international level, initiating cooperation between governments of tropical countries and development aid agencies and mobilising considerable amounts of financial support. Despite the importance of these accomplishments, however, the conceptual design and operational structure of TFAP have failed to deliver acceptable results.

TFAP has failed to provide consistent guidance and leadership to national governments in developing plans for the rational management and conservation of their tropical forests. It has been unable to set priorities among countries and consequently has become overburdened. It has yet to demonstrate the capacity to oversee the implementation of national plans. It has been unable to effectively align all donor activities in the forest sector under one common umbrella. It has failed to ensure widespread participation by representative groups within countries. It has made limited attempts to integrate issues (such as land tenure, agricultural development, and rural poverty), which have a crucial bearing on forest sector development, into national forestry action plans. And it has failed to convince local groups and non-governmental organisations that it offers realistic solutions over the long-term.

Recent critical reviews of the TFAP by the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation<sup>1</sup>, the World Resources Institute<sup>2</sup>, and the World Rainforest Movement<sup>3</sup> confirm WWF's belief that TFAP must undergo fundamental changes in order to become a viable mechanism for addressing deforestation and forest degradation in tropical regions. WWF also believes that countries from the industrialised and developing world must also address, outside of the confines of TFAP, broader issues of trade and economic development that underlie the crises being played out in tropical forests. Issues such as the terms of trade for commodities produced in tropical countries, trade barriers which discriminate against locally processed products derived from tropical forests, and the net flow of resources from developing to developed countries define a macroeconomic framework in which poverty and resource degradation are inevitable.

## WWF'S POSITION ON TROPICAL FOREST CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Tropical forests have tremendous significance in terms of their ecological and environmental protection functions, their role in sustaining and supplementing the livelihoods of millions of rural dwellers, and their economic value. In light of the continuing decline of the world's tropical forests, WWF is promoting targets for their protection and sound management which we have urged other institutions to adopt into policy. These targets are:

1. By the year 2000, double the area of tropical moist forest in national parks and strict reserves, and establish a well-managed and securely-funded network of protected areas covering 10 per cent of the existing area of tropical moist forest (i.e., 100 million hectares).
2. By the year 1995, reorient the entire international tropical timber trade so that it is based on the concept of sustainable utilisation and management.
3. By the year 2000, achieve a state of no net deforestation in the tropics (primarily through the protection of existing forests).

These ambitious targets underscore the urgency of providing effective responses to the worsening situation in tropical regions. WWF calls upon the coordinating and executive agencies of TFAP to adopt similar targets. We believe these will form the basis of a meaningful agenda for concerted international action and provide a means of monitoring progress on a global basis.

In addition to setting concrete targets for the conservation and management of tropical forest, WWF believes that specific criteria for evaluating tropical forestry development plans should be formulated and made an explicit part of the TFAP process. A partial list of basic criteria for sustainable forest management might include:

- **Establishment of permanent forest estates to protect intact areas of existing forests and achieve better management of areas already degraded or under active timber concessions.**

- **Adoption of national guidelines for sustainable forest management.** Each country participating in TFAP should develop a set of national forestry standards consistent with the ITTO "Guidelines for Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forest."

- **Reforming timber concession regulations and policies that promote forest clearing.**

Government policies often serve to devalue forest resources, thus encouraging excessive forest clearing and unsustainable expansion of timber-based industries. Government controlled fee systems and incentives that encourage rapid mining of timber resources, as well as sectoral policies that drive extensive forest clearing, must be closely scrutinised and modified.

● **Broadening economic analysis.**

All too often planners focus exclusively on the short term tangible benefits of forest exploitation, with little consideration for the longer term social and environmental benefits. A better approach would be to assess the total benefits (environmental, social and economic) from the forest before focusing on the tangible benefits.

While recognising the limitations of current economic methodology to properly value all of the forest's functions, at least the validity of the concept must be recognised. Efforts at quantification based on recent methodological innovations must be made, and the limitations clearly expressed.

● **Increasing local participation.**

Local participation in project design is another tool to broaden economic analysis. Local populations know the value of the forest's goods and services to them. The forest functions that are most often undervalued are those that may not reach the market economy but which may be vital to local communities. TFAP must take due account of the non-timber forest products which are so valuable to local economies.

The particular role of forest dwelling people should be included and issues such as land rights and land tenure are crucial if forestry policy is to cut through to the causes underlying deforestation. Lack of participatory involvement of local communities and NGOs has led to the economic failure or non-adoption of many plans and programmes. Future forestry field projects and policy initiatives must avoid falling into this trap if they are to be socially, economically and environmentally successful.

● **Avoiding unsustainable exploitation.**

In practice these statements suggest that aid agencies and multilateral funders should not support projects which include the construction of roads or commercial logging in primary forest, unless the necessary prerequisites to ensure sustainability, as described above, are in place.

TFAP donors must ensure that their projects and activities do not exacerbate existing problems. Given that the criteria for sustainable forest management are generally not yet in place, it will be a more urgent priority in most cases to focus investments on improving practices in existing concessions before opening frontier areas to exploitation. This in turn will require a greater emphasis on timber production from secondary forests, which are often areas that have already been exploited and require investment to convert their management to a sustainable basis.

● **Monitoring.**

At present, little accurate or frequent monitoring of the change in forest areas is practised. This process is a key element in the evaluation of the success of forestry policies being adopted and as a guide to the success of international efforts to reduce tropical deforestation levels. In spite of the reported doubling of aid flows to the forestry sector over the past five years, deforestation rates have nearly doubled. It is crucial therefore that some form of independent monitoring should be evolved to satisfy citizen groups that overseas aid funds are being spent in an effective and environmentally and socially acceptable way.

## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORMING TFAP

This section draws, in part, one of the three independent reviews of TFAP. It lists those actions WWF believes should be given greatest priority.

### I. Recommendations for Reforming TFAP at the International level

- \* FAO and the multilateral and bilateral donors to TFAP should take **immediate** steps to implement the necessary changes to TFAP. The obvious need for restructuring and reorienting TFAP should **not** be allowed to languish as this will adversely affect donor commitment to TFAP as well as relations with national country governments that have already begun working under TFAP.
- \* The international coordinating unit of TFAP should be reorganised as an **independent secretariat** within FAO. This secretariat should have a substantially increased staff and should be funded jointly by TFAP sponsors and donors.
- \* The new TFAP secretariat should be accountable to an **independent review committee** consisting of representatives of the donor community, tropical countries, technical experts, and international and local NGOs. The independent committee should have the ability to call for revisions to country plans which do not meet TFAP standards and the authority to influence funding decisions.
- \* The new secretariat should be responsible for providing completed and ongoing country-level documents to all parties expressing interest. **Greater access to information** should be provided to international organisations and made widely available within countries where information about TFAP rarely is disseminated outside of central ministerial offices. The secretariat should also oversee the coordination of country forest profiles and sector reviews performed by national, bilateral and multilateral institutions.
- \* The TFAP should prioritise those countries which have the highest rates of deforestation and which demonstrate the political will to take meaningful steps to respond. One means of assessing a country's level of commitment will be to require the preparation of National Forestry Action Plans that adhere to the criteria for sustainable forest management suggested in the previous section.
- \* Technical teams commissioned to lead the development of National Forestry Action Plans should be **multidisciplinary in composition**. Too often, the experts that develop in-country plans consist only of foresters and do not include the expertise necessary to address questions of local participation, cross-sectoral linkages, land tenure, and conservation. This situation has contributed to the relatively narrow focus on industrial forestry application taken by most country plans.

## II Reforming TFAP at the National level

- \* Guidelines for implementing TFAP at the national level need to be clarified to ensure a greater degree of **consistency and quality** among different national plans. The TFAP secretariat and donors should establish common means for evaluating national TFAP exercises.
- \* Institutional weaknesses have proven to be major limiting factors in the preparation of viable National Forestry Action Plans. In many cases, TFAP has concentrated only on those institutional needs relating to industrial forestry development. Other areas of TFAP planning such as land-use, land tenure and conservation need to be given greater attention. Therefore, TFAP country exercises should review institutional capabilities and assist in strengthening relevant government and non-government agencies as a first step.
- \* TFAP should become more of a **country-driven** rather than donor-driven process. National level secretariats and steering groups representing a broad cross-section of in-country interests should be formed to participate in sector analysis, policy reform, and project development.
- \* A process for **follow-up and ongoing review** of National Forestry Action Plans should be established. Round Tables Type IV could be envisioned as a mechanism to continue coordination among donors and the national TFAP secretariat.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Tropical Forestry Action Plan: Report of the Independent Review. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. May 1990.
- <sup>2</sup> Taking stock: The Tropical Forestry Action Plan after Five Years. Robert Winterbottom, World Resources Institute, Washington, D.C. June 1990.
- <sup>3</sup> The Tropical Forestry Action Plan at the Crossroads. Marcus Colchester and Larry Lohmann, World Rainforest Movement/Ecologist. July 1990.

Prepared by:  
Robert Buschbacher  
Christopher Elliott  
David Reed  
Francis Sullivan

Gland, Switzerland  
September 1990

Printed by Cranlake Ltd, England  
Recycled paper