



Environment and climate change

Forest policy and sustainable forest management

The challenge

Forests secure people's livelihoods; they are a source of income and a land reserve. Some 1.6 billion people are dependent on forests for their subsistence. For the world's 350 million people who live in extreme poverty, forests provide a safety net essential to their survival. Forests are also of global importance for the climate, and they harbour more than two-thirds of terrestrial biodiversity.

Despite this, around 13 million hectares of forest are destroyed by human activities every year. Forests must give way to competing land uses that yield higher profits in the short term, or they are exploited destructively in conflict regions. The rapid rise in global demand for biofuels, wood and other forest products increases the risk of over-exploitation and further degradation of the world's forests.

Our approach

We support our partners in introducing sustainable forest management as an intersectoral development strategy and in positioning forest-related interests in the national, regional and international context.

Our services

In addition to providing technical advice we work to improve the policy framework, identify sustainable ways forward and mediate a balanced approach in all forestry-related matters. We provide services in the following areas:

- **Sustainable forest management (SFM):** We advise local authorities, small and medium-sized enterprises and relevant administrative bodies on all technical aspects of forest management – including surveying national forest resources, drawing up forest management plans, implementing and monitoring these plans, using traditional knowledge and building new expertise, and working with forest certification procedures.
- **National forest policy:** Our approach is based on the concept of national forest programmes (NFPs). In a process of broad social dialogue, the conservation and sustainable use of forests is mainstreamed in a government's political agenda, and political decision-making processes (not only those related to forests) are improved.
- **Regional cooperation schemes and partnerships:** The largest forest areas of the Amazon region, the Congo basin and South-East Asia stretch over several countries and are subject to disparate national statutory systems. The task here is to develop and implement regional action plans and strengthen regional institutions and dialogue forums.
- **International forest-related regimes and conventions:** Forest-related issues play an important part in the three Rio conventions (on climate change, biodiversity, and desertification). They are negotiated in the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). We advise our partners in formulating their forest policies in accordance with the international framework and in preparing for international negotiations. We develop and accompany pilot projects to mainstream international initiatives, such as the UNFF Forest Instrument and REDD (reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation of forests).
- **Financing strategies:** Economic exploitation of forests is still primarily based on the marketing of timber. We advise partner countries on how to develop innovative financing strategies, taking into account the full potential of the ecological and social services that forests provide.
- **Tackling illegal logging:** We advise partner countries on tackling illegal logging and on negotiating and implementing voluntary trade agreements (FLEGT-VPA) with the European Union.



The benefits

Conservation and sustainable use of forests help to reduce poverty, maintain biological diversity and tourism potential, reduce CO₂ emissions, adapt to climate change and regulate water flows. Sustainable forest management creates employment in production and processing and helps to meet the growing global demand for timber and timber products.

An example from the field

Natural forests account for more than eighty per cent of the 11.5 million hectares of Vietnam's forests. Although these forests are of paramount importance in protecting watersheds and mitigating the effects of climate change, Vietnam has until now lacked practical concepts for the sustainable management of natural forests.

Vietnam's National Forest Development Strategy aims to put in place conditions for sustainable management of forest resources by 2020 and to establish timber processing industries that are competitive on international markets. Current conditions in the sector however do not support the targeted industrial growth and the investment necessary for creating long-term employment opportunities.

GIZ, acting on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), supports the Vietnamese government in promoting sustainable forest management through a multi-level approach:

At national level the appropriate political and legal environment is being created. Targeted training and institutional development measures are used to build capacities at national and provincial level. A forest policy network helps to promote the implementation of the national forest strategy in the provinces.

GIZ has developed the conceptual basis for sustainable management of natural forests and forest certification and supports forest enterprises in five pilot provinces in implementation. Foundations for making better use of forest products have been laid by setting up a training centre, providing advice to timber-processing businesses and working with organisations in the timber industry.

Contact

Herbert Christ
E herbert.christ@giz.de
T +49 61 96 79-1282
I www.giz.de

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Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5
65760 Eschborn
T +49 61 96 79-0
F +49 61 96 79-11 15
E info@giz.de
I www.giz.de