

The principles of sustainable forest management developed by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

Another organization that has placed a great deal of emphasis on sustainable forest management is the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) (<http://www.itto.int/>). This organization was one of the first to recognize the need for guidelines on the sustainable management of forests, and published a series of booklets within these guidelines. They included guidelines for the sustainable management of both natural tropical forests and planted tropical forests.

The background to the publications is interesting. At a meeting in Quito, Peru, in May 1991, the Council of ITTO drew on a document that had been prepared called *ITTO Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forests*. Decision 3(X) of the Council stated:

Consider, at its XI Session, the conclusions and recommendations of an expert panel convened by the Executive Director to develop methods of defining and measuring sustainable tropical forest management and decide on any further initiatives to ensure the attainment of the Year 2000 Target.

The Year 2000 Target was to ensure the sustainable management of tropical forests and trade in tropical timber form sustainably managed resources by 2000. At this stage, the definition of sustainable forest management still lay somewhere between the early German ideas of sustainable yield and today's view that forest management is about all products and services. In a report later adopted by the Council, ITTO's consultants defined sustainable forest management as:

Sustainable forest management is the process of managing permanent forest land to achieve one or more clearly specified objectives of management with regard to the production of a continuous flow of desired forest products and services without any undue reduction of its inherent values and future productivity and without undue undesirable effects on the physical and social environment.

As described by Duncan Poore in his book *Changing Landscapes*, a number of pre-conditions were identified, without which the achievement of sustainable forest management would be very difficult. They included:

- Appropriate national policies (including political commitment, economic policies, land use and forestry policies, and supporting legislation)
- Broad public support for these policies
- An appropriate government structure to ensure the effective implementation of sectoral policies, including the necessary connections between the sectors
- Prescriptions for action based on best practices
- Guidelines for all important forestry operations in both natural and planted tropical forests

- High implementation standards
- Adequate capacity in terms of institutions, staff numbers, qualifications, commitment and conditions of service.

Emphasis was placed on the need to have appropriate indicators, and also for the need for appropriate targets. While the existing *Guidelines* provided some useful material, there was a feeling that greater precision was needed, especially over the use of indicators of sustainability.

Having produced basic guidelines, ITTO went on to produce a number of reports related to the use of criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management. These are all available in the resource section for this topic. A full account of the history of ITTO and its role in promoting the sustainable management of tropical forests can be found in the following book:

Poore, D. 1993 *Changing Landscapes: The Development of the International Tropical Timber Organization and Its Influence on Tropical Forest Management*. Earthscan Publications, London.



Duncan Poore, author of *Changing Landscapes*. (Photo source: <http://www.iisd.ca/sd/wfc12/22sept.html>)