

**National Report to the Fifth Session of
the United Nations Forum on Forests**

Republic of Korea

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II. Progress and issues related to implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

General

Assessment of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action in the National Context

- Korea Forest Research Institute of Korea Forest Service has conducted gap analysis on IPF/IFF proposals for action from 2003 to 2004. The analysis particularly included studies on implementing main actors, urgency, relevancy, etc. Gap analysis was conducted on policy-makers of various forestry fields, and for each category, the degree of action and the extent of implementation on national level was compared. For this gap analysis, the IPF/IFF proposals for action were classified into 6 categories and these categories were further sectioned into 14 elements as applied in Austria. The three main categories are as follows:
- Under the category of monitoring, assessment, reporting, and national forest program: (1) national forest program and land use program, (2) monitoring, assessment, reporting, and valuation elements mainly were unimplemented for the proposals with weak degree of action, therefore results showed narrow gap. As for (3) promoting and facilitating implementation, the proposals with strong degree of action were unimplemented. The extent of implementation varied from element to element according to their degree of action.
- Under the category of forest protection and sustainable management, the proposals with strong and medium degree of action of elements such as (1) causes of deforestation and forest degradation, (2) fragile ecosystems affected by desertification and drought are mostly being implemented. Therefore, the analysis showed no gap between the degree of action and the extent of implementation. However, (3) traditional forest-related knowledge element showed some gap.
- Under the category of economic, social, cultural aspects, (1) criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management element did not show any gap between the degree of action and the extent of implementation. However, for elements such as (2) trade and environment in relation to forest products and services, and (3) economic, social, cultural aspects of forest, significant gap was shown for they were unimplemented for proposals with medium and high degree of action.

Implementation and Progress of National Forest Plan

- In 2003, Korea Forest Service has revised the 4th National Forest Plan, which was established in 1997. The backgrounds on which the revisions are based on were to establish implementation mechanism of international SFM criteria and standards such as UNFF and Montreal Process on the national context and also to reflect the growing significance of ecosystem and environmentally sound forest management.
- The revisions on the 4th National Forest Plan target to “build abundant green nation with harmony between people and forest”
- The fundamental direction is to provide background for sustainable forest management by categorizing forest policies and mechanisms according to economic, ecological, social functions of forests. Also, great importance is given to public participation and unique local feature.

- Forest Land Management Act was enacted in 2003 to provide institutional basis for environmentally sound forest land use and conservation.
- As the backbone of Korean forest ecosystem, Baekdu Daegan Mountain System was given much significance. In 2001, Baekdu Daegan conservation and management mechanisms were established and genetic resource protection forests were designated and expanded. In 2003, the protection of forest ecosystem was strengthened on legal mechanism by the enactment of Act on the Protection of Baekdu Daegan Mountain System.

International Cooperation

- Through bilateral cooperation with China, Mongolia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Indonesia, and other countries, Korea Forest Service has conducted joint researches on restoration of degraded forest and enforced expert exchange. In 2003, Korea together with Indonesia has adopted the joint declaration against illegal logging.
- As a member of Montreal Process, a regional body for Sustainable Forest Management of temperate and boreal forests, Korea is reviewing the feasibility of the 7 criteria and 67 indicators in the national context. National report will be submitted after the review.
- In view of sustainable use and conservation of tropical forests, Korea, as a member of ITTO, has long been assisting capacity building projects to expand SFM in tropical timber producing countries.

Mechanisms to Facilitate Stakeholder Participation

- The decisions for the National Forest Plan revisions in 2003 were reached after collecting opinions from multi-stakeholders such as local governments, academic organizations, etc. Also, "Forest Policy Deliberation Council" was organized where both the public and the local government could participate.
- For ecological and cultural conservation of the Baekdu Daegan Mountain System, protection areas were designated. In the process of specifying the protection areas, opinions from multi-stakeholders such as residents and local governments are taken into consideration.
- Also, to achieve forest administration based on public participation, national forests are open to the public in such a way that the public could practice forest tending, establish recreation forest, and participate in other various forest activities. Consequently, the public opinions will be reflected in the forest policy decisions and forest administration.

IPF/IFF Proposals for Action on Ecological Aspects (UNFF 2)

1. Deforestation and Forest Degradation

1.1. Diagnostic studies to analyze underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation

- In relation to the causes of forest degradation such as air pollution, acid rain, etc., a study was conducted on the forest deterioration level over 65 forest regions nationwide in 2003. The results showed deterioration only in 10% of the regions and to a very insignificant extent. The deterioration occurred mostly in forest areas near the industrial districts where factories are crowded.
- Forest land use and deforestation is unavoidable in Korea where forest covers 64% of its land causing absolute lack of available sites. More or less 8,000 ha of forests are deforested every year to establish the roads, residential sites, constructed sites, agricultural sites, etc. However recently, the deforestation figures are decreasing and some degraded land and fallows are being rehabilitated.

1.2. National Policies and Strategies Addressing the Causes of Deforestation

- To take action against indiscreet forest activities, Forest Land Management Act was enacted in August 2003 and triggered the development of an environmentally sound forest management system that balances between conservation and utilization.
- According to the above stated Act, “Central Forest Land Management Board” composed of experts from relevant government bodies and NGOs was organized. For large scale forest development projects (conversion of forest to other uses), the Board facilitates feasibility studies with the participation not only from the government bodies but also from the NGO before undertaking the development.
- In March 2004, civilians, local governments, and academic organizations together formed the Forest Land Conservation Association. The Association carries out: monitoring activities on large scale deforestation; conducts researches and studies for forest land protection; and provides policy proposals.
- As to settle forest land management mechanism efficiently, an explanatory booklet on Forest Land Management Act will be prepared and distributed to the local governments (city and county level). Site inspection and guidance on conversion of forest land use will be strengthened.

1.3. Raising awareness of the importance of issues related to forest degradation and the multiple values of forests

- In 2000, Korea Forest Research Institute raised public awareness on forest benefits by quantifying the multiple benefits such as air purification, water resource enhancement, erosion control, etc. The Public benefit function as of the year 2000 amounts to 42 billion USD.

2. Forest Conservation and Protection of Fragile Ecosystem

2.1. Management, Designation, and Expansion of Protected Areas

<Conservation of Baekdu Daegan Mountain System>

- Baekdu Daegan Mountains System is the backbone of Korean peninsula and is important for the conservation of forest and biological diversity as well as for the culture and livelihood of local communities. In order to maintain the connectivity and also to achieve effective conservation and sustainable management of the main mountain chains of Korean peninsula, the Act on the Protection of Baekdu Daegan Mountain System was established in 2003 and it was enforced on January 1, 2005.

? To secure sustainability of Baekdu Daegan Mountain system and to protect the so-called “ecosystem hub,” **Baekdu Daegan protection areas** will be designated as **Core Zone** and **Buffer Management Zone**.

? Opinion collection from local governments, local residents, and other stakeholders is a requisite to creation of protection areas.

? Researches on restoration of degraded ecosystem will be conducted and development activities will be restricted on the protected areas. Also, comprehensive rehabilitation and restoration projects will be implemented on severely deforested area.

2.2. Forest Owner and Mountain Village Resident Participation, Active Local Involvement

<Forest Owners>

- 70% of 6.4 million ha of forest (4,459,000ha) is privately owned and the forest area per owner is relatively very small. Due to forestry’s long term and low-income attribute, the forest owners are avoiding investment and proper management of their properties.

- The private owners lack technology and resources to properly manage their forests that the government is developing mechanisms to have the private properties entrusted from the owners and implement proxy tending activities.

- “A Day with Forest Owners” was held in July 2004 to raise commonality and awareness on the importance of private forest management among the private owners. This function was planned to be held regularly thereon.

? Current forest policy, forest management activity, and forest technology could be introduced to forest owners through such event and it will also provide an opportunity to exchange opinions and obstacles they face.

<Mountain Village>

- The results of the basic investigation done in 2003 showed that mountain village covers 46% of the country (4,569,000ha) and 58.5% of country’s total forest area. Although the mountain village holds an important role in national land conservation and agricultural/forest production, the population is merely 1.87million, only 3.9% of the total population.

- The Act on Promotion of Forestry and Mountain Villages was enacted in 2002 to facilitate development in the underdeveloped mountain villages.

? In July 2003, basic investigation on mountain villages nationwide was completed. The investigation was conducted to provide fundamental data needed in the establishment of the Basic Plan for Mountain Village Development.

? Base on the investigation, the Basic Plan for Mountain Village Development will be established by the first quarter of 2005. The Basic Plan will cover issues such as: comprehensive forest improvement, e.g. building forest resources in mountain villages and expanding management base; enhancement of local income by establishing and expanding eco-tourism by efficiently using recreation resources of forest; enhancement of road conditions and residential environment in mountain villages.

2.3. Interrelationship between Forest Protection and SFM in National Forest Plan and Forest Policy

- Conditions for revisions in the 4th National Forest Plan include SFM.
- The production oriented forest management paradigm is now converting into sustainable forest management principle that focuses on the multiple beneficial values of forest such as ecosystem, forest recreation, culture, etc.
- First step is to formulate criteria and indicators on the national level. At the same time, experiment forest for FSC certification will be in operation to strengthen the efforts on sustainable forest management implementation.

3. Rehabilitation and Conservation Strategies for Countries with Low Forest Cover

- Environmentally sound technology transfer and capacity building
- ? Korea facilitates regular bilateral cooperation with China, Mongolia, Myanmar, Indonesia, etc. Expert exchange and joint researches on rehabilitation and reforestation are conducted.
 - * Delegated experts: China-30 experts; Mongolia-1expert; Myanmar-1expert; Indonesia-2experts.
 - * Joint researches: Rehabilitation technology and ecosystem analysis on degraded land
 - * Training course: For government employees of affected countries on combating desertification

4. Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands and Promotion of Natural and Planted Forests

- Creation of new forest resources through plantation and recognizing their role in rehabilitation of environmentally critical areas.
- ? Korea was successful in re-vegetation of forests, however, their value as resource is still insignificant. Acknowledging the necessity for extensive **forest tending**, Korea focuses on forest resource development through forest tending activities.
- ? 1 million ha forest cultivation program is planned for 5 years from 2004 to 2008. The forests will be cultivated according to their unique functions.
 - * To promote supply of cleaner water, forest areas around the 5 major rivers (Han-gang, Nagdong-gang, etc.) will be further cultivated as water resource enhancing forests.
- Policies to meet increasing demand for wood and non-wood forest products and services, through sustainable forest management.

<Wood forest products>

? In order to enhance product quality and consumer protection, quality certification was implemented for wood products such as preservative treated timber, charcoal, and wood vinegar.

<Increased demands for forest services>

? Diverse activities to improve forest services are in progress: various forest recreation facilities have been established; “participation forests” promoting public tending benefits are developed; and school forests are being built jointly with NGOs.

? To address issues on water resources, policy on water supply is implemented through creation of protection watershed and implementation of forest projects that enhances water resource functions.

III. Preparation of the Report

- The national report was prepared in cooperation with Korea Forest Service, Korea Forest Research Institute, and other relevant bodies. Compared to the traditional economic aspect of the forest, ecological aspect is a newly emerging function that is given a great deal of significance. Acknowledging its importance, Korea will continue to develop new policies and provide sustainable improvement on them.
- The IPF and IFF covers extensive range of proposals for action, particularly, IPF has 149 and IFF has 144 items. These wide-range of recommendations have to be fully understood to avoid difficulties that may occur in implementation progress assessment of individual forest policy.
- Various suggestions will be considered for national forest policies and policy phase in will take effect according to the extent of their urgency.