

Education is a key lifeline for world's forests

New survey points out that forest education must be strengthened to meet global challenges

22 June 2021, Rome - Forest education at all levels – from primary schools to universities – is insufficient in many countries of the world, according to the results of a global survey led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Tropical Timber Organizations (ITTO) and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) with the support of other international and regional partners.



Forestry education needs to be improved, according to new survey.

According to the survey, more must be done to improve forest education in many parts of the world. While forest education has evolved and the number, diversity and qualifications of graduates have increased in most regions, forest education resources are insufficient or limited in large parts of the global South.

The survey also found that, in most regions, primary and secondary schools are not effectively educating students about forests and trees, or motivating them to pursue forest-related studies and careers. Graduates' understanding of cultural and social aspects of forest and tree management is often limited. Innovative teaching approaches, digital tools and online learning resources are not adequately employed in many regions, and forest education in entrepreneurship and for the preparation of students for the growing green jobs sector is not sufficient in most regions.

"The sustainable management of forests and trees is crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We must reverse deforestation and forest degradation and manage forest resources sustainably," said FAO Deputy-Director General Maria-Helena Semedo in her opening speech at the event. "To do this, we need a well-trained cadre of forest managers, workers, policy makers, scientists and educators. We also need the rich and valuable forest knowledge and skills of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. We urgently need to strengthen all levels of formal education - the forest workforce of the future."

International Conference on Forest Education

Key findings of the survey were unveiled at the International Conference on Forest Education, a three-day event running from 22 – 24 June to shine a light on the important role forest education plays in maximizing the contributions of forests and trees to the Sustainable Development Goals, and for overcoming the growing disconnect between people, nature and forests. The conference is organized by FAO, ITTO and IUFRO, and is supported by the Government of Germany.

During the event, [participants](#) discussed the current state of forest education, sharing their experiences and perspectives through discussions of key challenges, needs, opportunities and initiatives to strengthen forest education. It was agreed that robust forest education and training programmes are vital if we are to reduce the rate of deforestation and forest degradation, protect and restore ecosystems, mitigate and adapt to climate change, and realise the full contributions of forests and trees to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Participants took advantage of the event to endorse a global Call to Action on forest education. The aim is to raise awareness of the need to strengthen policies and strategies to improve forest learning at all levels of education, heighten awareness of the societal importance of careers in forestry, and improve understanding of traditional and indigenous forest-related knowledge.

Steve Johnson, ITTO's Officer-in-charge, endorsed the Call to Action saying that "forests are where most of us learn about the importance of nature in our lives."

"Education and training on forest management is also crucial to ensure forest sustainability and productivity into the future, as well as for developing an informed population that appreciates the many complexities of Sustainable Forest Management. ITTO will continue to contribute to forest education and training throughout the tropics, including through our ground-breaking fellowship program that commenced making awards nearly 30 years ago" he added.

IUFRO President John Parrotta also confirmed the need to strengthen forest education globally. "IUFRO seeks to advance updating of forestry related curriculums, promote innovative and improved teaching approaches and techniques, and help address key gaps in forest education worldwide," he said.

The Call to Action will be open online for a short period after the event to encourage other stakeholders and actors to endorse the message.

Launch of Forest Education Partnership

The three-day event concluded with the launch by the [Collaborative Partnership on Forests](#) of a [Joint Initiative on Forest Education](#), which aims to catalyse action, generate increased awareness and support, and foster partnerships for forest education. In doing so, it plans to establish a Forest Education Partnership, launch an online platform to facilitate information dissemination and networking on forest education, work to improve forest education curricula and training systems and run a global communications campaign to encourage young people to pursue forest-related careers.

News article by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO),
<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1413180/>