

'Come out of the forest' to save the trees

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Forestry experts have called for a new approach to managing land and tackling climate change – challenging the ongoing debate that forests have to be sacrificed for the sake of rural development and food security.

Governments, policymakers and scientists worldwide have been experimenting for years with different approaches to managing rural landscapes, from watershed management to habitat restoration, but these efforts are rarely done in concert to address climate change challenges.

"It is time to look at new ways of solving old problems," said Peter Holmgren, Director General of the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in a keynote speech at Forest Day 6, a daylong event held on the sidelines of the United Nations [climate talks](#) in Doha.

"Climate change needs to be dealt with across sector boundaries. Forests and forestry must be looked at through the lenses of agriculture, [food security](#) and broader sustainable development. It is time for forestry to come out of the forest and contribute more broadly."

Andreas Tsveteraas, Senior Adviser to Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative, supported this view: "The challenge is to do both forest conservation and increased food production [and not at] the expense of forests. No doubt if a government has to choose between them, then the forests will always lose, so the challenge is to promote forest management in a way that goes hand in hand with feeding the population."

A landscape-based approach, which looks at the synergies and trade-offs of managing a broad resource mix, has been hailed as a new way to bring together the agricultural, forestry, energy and fishery sectors to better manage the world's resources while offering opportunities for climate adaptation and mitigation.

"The window to stay in a two-degree world is closing very rapidly," said Mary Barton-Dock, Director of [Climate Policy](#) and Finance at the World Bank.

And in the context of a [changing climate](#), she added, "A landscape approach is going to be essential to meet the growing need for food without invading forests." "Food security challenges are not something of the future," said Deborah Bossio, Soils Research Area Director at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT).

"We are moving beyond the era where land is plentiful and are now faced with increasing land scarcity. [Forest conservation](#) can contribute and be a part of climate-smart agriculture."

Nearly 4 billion hectares of forests cover the earth's surface, roughly 30 percent of total land area. Yet the world is in the grip of huge changes that are redefining pressures on forests, including urbanisation, increasingly meat-based diets, population growth and a booming demand for timber and agricultural products.

"Everything you thought you knew about deforestation in the 20th century is no longer true," said Doug Boucher, Director of Climate Research and Analysis at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

"Population growth has decreased all around the world in rural areas, yet we are seeing massive urbanisation and the growth of urbanised industries interacting with each other... so we have to be alert to

emerging drivers."

Keeping forest people's livelihoods on the climate change agenda

Wu Hongbo, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, highlighted invisible income forests provide to rural livelihoods.

"Formal cash contributions of forests to developing economies are at US\$326 billion. This is more than twice the size of total official development assistance (ODA) flows."

Ephraim Kamuntu, Minister for Water and the Environment in Uganda, highlighted the need to ensure that rural livelihoods are tackled as part of the climate change agenda.

"The challenges we are talking about tie intrinsically in with the eradication of poverty in our countries."

Forests play an essential role within this broad approach of addressing conservation, rural livelihoods, biodiversity and food security, said Barton-Dock.

"Trees are really still our heroes in that they are working across our needs for water, our need for carbon and for the needs of local people. Moving towards landscapes will help us move towards sustainability."

Today's event marks the first occasion that Forest Day broadens its agenda through the combined consideration of agriculture, forestry and land use, and their impacts on society. [Forest](#) Day is being held in conjunction with Agriculture, Landscapes and Livelihoods Day, under the theme of "Living Landscapes", with both events exploring the synergies, complementarities and trade-offs of landscapes to offer

sustainable solutions for [climate change](#) adaptation and mitigation as well as improved livelihoods.

More information: Video Webcasting: www.forestday.org/live
Blog: www.blog.cifor.org/cop18

Provided by Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)

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