Information on tree genetic resources vital for conservation and sustainable management of forests

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Urgent action is needed by countries to better manage forest genetic resources, to ensure that people can continue to rely on these resources for their nutrition, livelihoods and resilience over the long term. Ready access to relevant and reliable data is crucial to this endeavour.

The first-ever edition of The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources, released on 3 June 2014 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), calls on countries to improve their data gathering and research to support the conservation and sustainable management of the world's forest genetic resources.

World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) scientists Ramni Jamnadass and Ian Dawson contributed to the new FAO report. Jamnadass, who leads ICRAF's global Tree Genetic Resources program, says an online Agroforestry Species switchboard hosted by ICRAF and incorporating the tree genetics database Agroforestree, allows anyone to quickly and easily access data and information on over 20,000 tree species.

"The switchboard enables quick and efficient access to information on tree species' ecology and distribution. It also harvests multiple databases for information on tree products and services, propagation, management, pests and diseases," says Jamnadass.

"Reliable data on the status and trends of forest genetic resources are

required for decision makers and stakeholders," says FAO. "Such data are needed at all levels to support decision-making that will enable sustainable management of forest resources."

The new FAO report concludes that in order to improve access to information on forest genetic resources, establishment and strengthening of information systems are urgently needed, including databases to store and share knowledge on uses, distribution, habitats, biology, and morphological and genetic variation of species and species populations.

"The contribution of forests and trees to boosting food security, reducing poverty, and promoting sustainable development depends on the availability of a rich diversity of tree species," states the report.

More information: Download the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources report at www.fao.org/forestry/fgr/64582/en/

Provided by World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)

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