



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

FOREST AND FARM FACILITY

Organised forest-farm producers mitigate climate change through adaptive resilience



Climate mitigation programmes and finance mechanisms like Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) must engage millions of forest farmers if they are to halt deforestation and restore forest landscapes. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been committed to the design of REDD+ strategies, monitoring, reporting and verification systems. But there is still a huge gap in channelling funds to rural actors to lead the response to climate change – in part because nobody is supporting the organisations that have been set up by those actors to make such responses possible.

The **Forest and Farm Facility (FFF)** is working to link forest and farm producer organizations with governments, REDD+ and other climate change programmes to make landscape restoration and an end to deforestation a reality.

Diversifying for adaptive resilience

Forest and farm producers often plant trees to diversify what they grow for sale. Sometimes it is fruit, nuts, spices, gums and resins, dyes and medicines. Sometimes it is fuelwood for others to cook with. Sometimes it is even timber if farmers can wait a while. This diversity gives them resilience to fluctuations in prices, because there will always be market gluts or shortfalls that bring risk to those selling only one product.

This diversity also gives them adaptive resilience to climate change, as varied trees not only improve soil and water conservation but also act as a fall-back crop if other annual crops fail. One such producer is Duong Van Huynh, a forest farmer from My Phuong commune, Bac Kan Province, northeast Viet Nam. He has planted fruit trees, magnolia timber and star anise spice trees. As a result, he is diversifying his income streams and protecting the soil on his sloping farmland.

Mitigating climate change

Increased tree planting also helps to soak up atmospheric carbon. At the scale of an individual forest farmer, this may not sound like a big deal. But forest and farm producer organisations can scale up these impacts by supporting diversification. Across Vietnam there are 1.4 million smallholder forest farmers like Duong Van Huynh, controlling a total of 3.4 million hectares. Almost all are affiliated within the Viet Nam Farmers Union (VNFU), which boasts a membership of more than 10 million farmers.

With support from the FFF, the VNFU is now piloting how best to scale up forest business groups such as the star anise group of Duong Van Huynh. But what is really exciting is that through the FFF, the VNFU and the United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) have now joined forces. It is these organised groups of millions of forest farmers that REDD+ finance mechanisms must engage if they are to halt deforestation and restore forest landscapes. Only through farmer organisations can such impacts be achieved at scale.

Worldwide relevance and scale



It is not just in Vietnam that the FFF is engaging farmers in ways that help combat climate change. In Bolivia, the FFF is supporting forest and farm producer organizations in three regions to engage with the government under the Framework Law of Mother Earth in a new Joint Mechanism for Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change. This will help mobilise producer organisations to participate in the decision-making platform and help become a joint mitigation and adaptation implementation mechanism.

In Guatemala, the FFF has helped establish the National Alliance of Forest Community Organisations, which comprises 10 regional and 400 local forest farm producer organisations. By helping them engage in both UN-REDD and Forest Carbon Partnership Facility REDD+ programmes, new options for incentivising forest restoration at scale are emerging, building on the success of incentive programmes negotiated and designed with inputs from forest farms themselves.

Forest and farm producer organisations make it possible

It is the sheer human agency of large producer organisations that can transform landscapes. The need by REDD+ mechanisms for support programmes like the FFF is urgent.

An estimated 1.5 billion hectares of land offer the potential to combine smallholder agriculture with trees, including agroforestry and buffer planting around settlements. Many of the world's 450–500 million smallholder farmers could be both beneficiaries of and contributors to these mosaic restorations, making up 85% of all the world's farms. But for REDD+ programmes to mobilise them requires respecting and supporting the organisations that they have set up on their own terms and infusing them with forest business know-how. As the advocacy campaign of the broader Mesoamerican Alliance of Forest People, also supported by the FFF, asked at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, "If not us, then who?"

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