



## 3.7 Forest and farm producers and forest landscape restoration

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### Introduction

Forest landscape restoration (FLR) aims to regain ecological integrity and enhance human well-being in deforested and degraded forest areas. It has the potential to provide multiple benefits, from increasing crop yields and improving water quality and availability at the local level, to mitigating climate change at the global level, while also contributing to local and national economies.

It involves people coming together to restore the functionality and productivity of degraded forest land. Depending on the specific geographical, biophysical, social and economic contexts, it can include a wide range of interventions. There is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Even though forest landscape restoration is sometimes perceived as a large-scale intervention, this is not necessarily the case. Most restoration opportunities are on, or adjacent to, agricultural or pastoral land, and an estimated 1.5 billion hectares (ha) of land offer the potential to combine forests with other land uses. This mosaic restoration (Figure 1) involves incorporating trees, including agroforestry, smallholder agriculture and buffer planting around settlements (Minnemeyer et al. 2011).

Many of the world's 450–500 million smallholder farmers and their communities can be both primary beneficiaries of and key contributors to these mosaic restorations. Making up 85% of all the world's farms (Nagayet 2005), smallholder farms would derive benefits from enhanced food production and the generation of multiple ecosystem goods and services, such as reduced erosion and increased availability of forest products. However, there are challenges to smallholder participation in landscape restoration, including insecure land tenure and rights; inadequate business development and market access; and lack of knowledge of suitable restoration techniques to implement it at scale.



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**Figure 1. Wide-scale and mosaic opportunities**

Source: IUCN and WRI

These challenges are often exacerbated by fragmentation or by smallholders' isolation. Farmers are isolated from policy makers whose decisions could help address security of tenure and rights as a precondition for restoration. They are isolated from markets and capital that create market incentives to invest in restoration. Farmers are also isolated from each other and from service providers who can provide technical support to deliver solutions at scale (adapted from Elson 2012).

Forest and farm producer organizations provide a logical entry point for positive, on-the-ground actions toward forest landscape restoration. These groups can provide a platform to demonstrate and lobby for improved tenure systems and access rights (to motivate implementation), facilitate access to markets and capital, and offer a structure for providing capacity-building services for their members. Macqueen, Buss and Sarocca (2012) identify a framework for action to invest in locally controlled forestry, applying to the various tasks that producer organizations can carry out to encourage smallholder participation in forest landscape restoration. Described as a cycle of investment for locally controlled forestry, it is based on the concept that "stronger commercial rights foster business capacity, which provides the foundation for enterprise-oriented organizations, which helps to attract asset investors, which further strengthens claims to commercial forest rights" (Macqueen, Buss and Sarocca 2012: 50). A critical need in this cycle is the organization of smallholders, which helps to create a favourable environment; in this case, for private or public investment in restoration activities.

Specific examples from Kenya (Box 1), Vietnam (Box 2) and Guatemala (Box 3) illustrate how producer organizations are well positioned to help smallholder farmers overcome the challenges of restoring forested landscapes. These three countries are committed to forest landscape restoration and are participants in the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF), a joint partnership of the Food and Agriculture Organization, International Institute for Environment and Development and International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This initiative works to strengthen service delivery to forest and farm producer organizations and raise their voice in policy debates.

### **Box 1. Community forest associations in Kenya**

To increase access to forests and be more involved in their management, local community forest associations (CFAs) are provided for in the Kenya *Forests Act, 2005*. They represent communities at the local and national level and can facilitate the process of landscape restoration. Associations help their members select the areas they want to co-manage, undertake a forest resource inventory, and identify areas to be rehabilitated through enrichment planting.

The largest of the country's 304 CFAs has 6,000 members and is made up of more than 100 community-based organizations. Even though CFAs face several organizational and capacity difficulties (KEFRI 2009), they contributed to the rehabilitation of 186,655 ha of forests between 2010 and 2011 (KFS 2011). Many CFA members are also part of the Farm Forestry Smallholders Producer Association and extend their tree growing to private farms and their own lands. Given the 2014 Forest Policy target to prepare a national strategy to increase and maintain forest and tree cover to at least 10 percent of the total land area, and for the rehabilitation and restoration of degraded forest ecosystems by 2030 (Ministry Of Environment, Water and Natural Resources 2014: ii), working with and supporting community forest associations to support forest landscape restoration should be strongly considered.

Community forest associations also advocate for and support the rights of communities in natural resource management and benefit sharing. They have formed the National Alliance of Community Forest Associations, which was active in the national government's work on new forest legislation. The alliance actively lobbies local and national bodies, including the KFS, and they influenced the elaboration of the *Natural Resource (Benefit Sharing) Bill (2014)*, which allots 60 percent of forest revenues to the national government and 40 percent to the counties.

### **Secure tenure and rights**

Experience has shown that granting clear rights to smallholders, communities and indigenous peoples favours sustainable forest management (Macqueen 2011). These rights include local decision making on forest management and broader land use, including freedom of association; secure land tenure; respect for customary use and traditional knowledge; and commercial use of forest resources.

For local stakeholders to commit to restoration interventions, they first must have guaranteed access to forest products or ownership of land and trees. If access to forest and tree products is guaranteed, individuals are more likely to be interested in restoring the landscape. Unfortunately, tenure insecurity and insufficient rights are still a reality for millions of forest producers.

Integrating well-organized producer organizations into local and national planning structures provides political strength due to the number of members they represent. An organization amplifies the credibility of individual voices in policy forums. In addition, representation of multiple stakeholders facilitates the development of stronger policy positions and the exchange of good practices and successful businesses with decision makers. Lamb and Chapman (2014: 234) observe: “A well-known risk of large-scale interventions is that the rights of local land users are overridden by central planning agencies for the sake of a supposed national benefit. Suitable institutional arrangements are needed to ensure appropriate policies are developed and implemented and that the rights of local communities are respected. Institutions are important to ensure policies are implemented and to allow coordination amongst landholders across a landscape.” Producer organizations are a logical choice to assist in lobbying local authorities and national policy makers to commit to landscape restoration, to change tenure systems, and to improve the recognition of the rights necessary to make that possible.

### Access to markets and capital

Many benefits derive from forest restoration, and smallholders have a range of motives for practising it. Some people seek food or water security and improved livelihoods; others may be more interested in increasing their supply of fuelwood or non-timber forest products for home consumption, or earning more revenue from timber and non-timber products from their farms.



Many farmers are isolated from markets and capital, which limits their business opportunities for forest products. Access to capital is necessary to undertake restoration and develop businesses based on the products that come from restored areas. However, obtaining financial support, especially from the private sector, is difficult for forest and farm producers. Investments are limited due to weak governance structures related to small forest businesses, insecure tenure, nonexistent collateral, weak business plans, and the high costs of sourcing from fragmented production sites such as individual farms.

When small producers organize themselves into cooperatives, associations or federations to aggregate production and make their supply more consistent, they increase their profile among buyers and their negotiating power in business deals. By grouping production, producer organizations can also increase access, processing capacity, and economies of scale in storage and distribution. Producer organizations can also help their members understand

the kind of markets and returns that result from planting specific trees for timber or non-timber products.

Smallholders also become more attractive to investors by organizing themselves. Scattered smallholdings are a disincentive for investors because of the transaction cost of finding and reaching individual producers to negotiate deals (Macqueen, Buss and Sarocca 2012). Producer associations may engage in direct business-to-business investment, develop their own internal savings and loans processes, or create their own internal investment funds. By helping create realistic opportunities to generate revenue from tree products, producer organizations can motivate smallholders to plant trees as another cash crop.

### Box 2. The Viet Nam Farmers' Union

In 1998, the Government of Vietnam launched the Five Million Hectare Reforestation Program, which aimed to increase national forest cover to 43% by 2010. To stimulate tree planting by smallholders, one of the initiative's key measures was to allocate land directly to households. By 2013, 3.4 million ha of forest had been allocated to more than 1.4 million smallholders. However, these efforts to secure tenure have not been sufficient to deliver the expected number of newly planted trees, in part because there are many other potential disincentives.

Smallholders face low prices and have low processing capacities for timber and timber products, and international market access has been limited because smallholders cannot afford to meet certification requirements. Collective management through a producer organization could be structured to build capacity to meet quality and certification requirements, and give smallholder the strategies to earn higher prices for their products. The Viet Nam Farmers' Union (VNFU) has helped ten million farmers in the country to overcome similar challenges in the agriculture sector (FFF 2014). It is now working to organize smallholders who produce timber into producer organizations, and has begun work to support smallholder efforts to earn certification for their forest products.

With support from FFF, the farmers' union initiated a process of Market Analysis and Development in January 2015 to assist smallholders in assessing new business opportunities. In helping them become more organized, the VNFU also increases access to processing facilities for smallholders who plant trees and strengthens their position in the market. If farmers' prospects for increasing revenues improve, they are likely to have renewed motivation to plant trees.



## Small-scale actions for a big impact

With smallholder farmers constituting a significant portion of the world's population, and 1.5 billion ha available for mosaic restoration, work must be done at scale to guarantee the necessary impacts at the landscape level. Supporting a few individuals through one-off projects to develop agroforestry systems or small plantations will not be enough.



Smallholders often need extension services and capacity building for diverse activities, such as species selection, seedling handling, planting techniques, and effective and sustainable forest management, especially to participate in initiatives that extend beyond their own farms.

Interventions at a local level, such as tree planting, agroforestry or natural regeneration, require at least some technical skills, and producer organizations are well placed to build the necessary capacity of millions of smallholders.

They can leverage their private- and public-sector networks and provide various types of support, from assistance in tree planting with forestry research institutes to training in processing with commodity-specific associations.

In addition, when producer organizations engage in forest landscape restoration, their members will be able to monitor and potentially coordinate various actions at the landscape level. This will give restoration efforts a more integrated approach, instead of repeating single, small-scale and often inadequate interventions. For example, producer organizations can help farmers select tree species with a good market value, or those that produce edible products. This would be particularly useful in areas that are isolated or lack food security. In this way, they can transform individual interventions into broader landscape initiatives.

### Box 3. Building scale in Guatemala

Guatemala has pledged to restore parts of its degraded land under the Bonn Challenge, an international initiative that calls for the restoration of 150 million ha of deforested and degraded lands by 2020. In its forest landscape restoration strategy, the government is working with partners on a national plan to promote restoration through developing cocoa agro-chains in the South Petén and the Northern Transversal Strip, and along the southern coast of the country. It based this decision in part on experience in Lachua, where an alliance of community forestry groups called FUNDALACHUA has helped local cocoa farmers gain access to buyers in the lucrative markets of the United States and Europe.

FUNDALACHUA provided training in seedling production, plantation management, and drying and fermentation techniques to meet the high quality standards required by international markets. This helped stimulate groups to restore 379 ha of degraded lands with cocoa agroforestry systems. As a result, the government committed US\$1.2 million to provide technical assistance to restore an additional 560 ha.

## Conclusions

Smallholders could clearly implement and benefit from forest landscape restoration around the world. However, to unlock this potential they need enabling conditions such as secure tenure, incentives in the form of increased revenue or improved food security, and the capacity to implement restoration on their farms and on a wider scale.

Forest and farm producer organizations can support a policy environment that ensures that smallholders benefit from landscape restoration. When smallholders are organized, they can amplify their political voice and power and work toward more secure rights. Working through organizations also gives them access to markets, helps them to obtain better deals, and attracts investments. The wide array of services that producer organizations can offer, the diversity of their constituencies, and their public and private networks can together build capacity and trigger impacts at a landscape level.

Producer organizations are a key part of supporting forest landscape restoration interventions where local control is at the centre, while increasing their profile at the national level and in regional and international initiatives. Producer organizations can provide their members with a link to targeted technical and business services that can help them overcome obstacles to effective restoration. At the national level, associations can provide services and lobby policy makers to improve the legal and economic measures that affect their members. At regional and international levels, they can lobby for the recognition of the rights of smallholders and for investment in local interventions by the public and private sectors. International and regional producer organizations influence global policy and provide opportunities to encourage learning among regions and groups. International aid agencies, national governments and the private sector should consider producer organizations as a means to support, implement and invest in forest landscape restoration.

The Forest and Farm Facility believes in the strength of producer organizations, and supports building their service delivery and increasing their policy voice. It has created a policy brief that outlines ways to boost this support (FFF 2014). Governments and development partners working to achieve locally-controlled forestry should create enabling policy environments for producer organizations and include specific measures to increase access to financing and markets for groups and their members.



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