



Shaping the global agenda for forests and climate change

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Olive Convention Centre, Durban, South Africa
Coinciding with the UNFCCC COP 17



agriculture,
forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

***** MEDIA ADVISORY *****

Protecting forests, fighting climate change: Moving from REDD+ policy to practice

Journalists are urged to register now to attend Forest Day by emailing cifor-mediainfo@cgiar.org

With [new](#) research showing that forests may absorb up to a third of all fossil fuel emissions, more than 1,000 leading experts, activists, government negotiators and global leaders will gather on the sidelines of the U.N. climate summit in Durban next month to discuss how forests and forest resources can be better harnessed to slow the pace of global warming and help communities adapt to the changing environment.

Forest Day – which has become one of the leading annual global platforms on forests and climate change -- will have a special focus this year on the role of African forests in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Scientists have warned that Sub-Saharan Africa may be among the hardest hit regions by climate change. The continent has already been struck by a string of climate-related disasters, most recently the drought-induced famine in the Greater Horn of Africa. Experts [say](#) forest destruction and other forms of human-caused land degradation have transformed vast areas of once grazeable and farmable land into lunar-like landscapes.

Having the U.N. climate talks in South Africa this year – along with Forest Day -- gives stakeholders on the continent a significant opportunity to press the world to move ahead with concrete actions to combat climate change, as well as to guarantee resources to help some of the poorest nations adapt to an already changing climate.

Participants at Forest Day, now in its fifth year, will debate the latest in the U.N. negotiations on REDD+, (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries), a year after governments at the 2010 climate talks in Cancun agreed to officially include the REDD+ mechanism in the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Proponents hope the world's forests will be safeguarded by channeling billions of dollars from rich countries to developing ones through REDD+. However, critics fear the plan could be undermined by poor design, weak governance, corruption and a lack of clarity over land or resource ownership. There are concerns this could lead to land grabs or impinge on the traditional rights of forest-dependent communities.

The debate has special relevance for Africa, which is home to the world's second-largest rainforest, in the Congo Basin, parts of which are untouched. At the same time, Africa's dry forests, which are being rapidly destroyed, play a critical role as a last line of defense against creeping desertification. And both dry forests and rainforests are major sources of goods and services for the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people.

Forest Day is convened by the Center for International Forestry Research on behalf of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. The year's event is hosted jointly with the Government of South Africa, through the Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries. Last year's Forest Day in Cancun attracted more than 1,500 people, including 106 journalists and 276 climate change negotiators, and featured the Mexican President as keynote speaker. **For more information, visit www.ForestDay.org**

The **Collaborative Partnership on Forests** (CPF) is a voluntary arrangement among 14 international organisations and secretariats with substantial programmes on forests (CIFOR, FAO, ITTO, IUFRO, CBD, GEF, UNCCD, UNFF, UNFCCC, UNDP, UNEP, ICRAF, WB and IUCN). The CPF's mission is to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forest and strengthen long-term political commitment to this end.

The **Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries** strives towards a united and prosperous agricultural sector, with the aim of supporting sustainable agricultural development. The departmental values are underpinned by the ethos of "Vuk'uzenzele". The direct interpretation of self-reliance is built upon to capture the spirit of South Africans as people who want to help build a better life for all.

The **Center for International Forestry Research** (CIFOR) advances human wellbeing, environmental conservation and equity by conducting research to inform policies and practices that affect forests in developing countries. CIFOR helps ensure that decision-making that affects forests is based on solid science and principles of good governance, and reflects the perspectives of developing countries and forest-dependent people. CIFOR is one of 15 centres within the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research.

For more information contact:

Mr Steve Galane
Acting Chief Director: Stakeholder Relations and Communications
Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
Tel: +27 12 319 7960
Fax: +27 12 319 6943
Mobile: +27 83 635 7346
E-mail: SteveGal@daff.gov.za