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CPF

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP ON FORESTS

**Organization-Led Initiative in Support of
the United Nations Forum on Forests**

Forest indicators in the Global SDG Indicator Framework

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The global SDG indicators process

- UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) responsible for developing SDG monitoring framework
 - Established an Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDG) to prepare an initial proposal and oversee this work
 - 28 countries as members, representing regions; International organizations only as observers
- 47th UNSC (March 2016) approved the global indicator framework “as a practical starting point”
 - 230 unique SDG indicators to monitor the 169 targets
 - Requested the IAEG-SDG to continue refining the indicator framework - the IAEG-SDG has since been focused on:
 - ✓ Classifying indicators into 3 Tiers depending on the level of methodological development and data availability,
 - ✓ Particular attention on Tier III indicators: work-plans for developing an internationally agreed methodology
 - ✓ Identifying indicators where minor ‘refinements’ or more incisive ‘revisions’ may be needed, including possible additional indicators

Forest indicators included in the global list

- Out of the 230 SDG indicators, 3 forest-related indicators:
 - **15.1.1** Forest area as a percentage of total land area (Tier I)
 - **15.2.1** Progress towards sustainable forest management (Tier III)
 - **15.4.2** Mountain Green Cover Index (Tier II)
- FAO identified as “custodian” agency. As such, it is responsible for:
 - » collecting data from national sources and reporting at global level
 - » further methodological development and documentation
 - » contributing to statistical capacity development
 - » coordinating with other relevant stakeholders
- For indicator 15.1.1 (Tier I):
 - analysis of regional and global aggregates already reported in the 2016 SDG progress report
 - country data published on the IAEG-SDG website

Recent developments (4th IAEG-SDG, 15-18 Nov.)

- As custodian agency for 15.2.1, FAO has been working since April to finalize the methodology for this indicator.
- Work-plan submitted to the IAEG-SDG in June with the indicator classified as Tier III, due to the uncertainty over how to aggregate the different components:
 - Sub-indicator 1 - Forest area annual net change rate
 - Sub-indicator 2 – Above-ground biomass stock in forest
 - Sub-indicator 3 – Proportion of forest area located within legally established protected areas
 - Sub-indicator 4 – Proportion of forest area under a long-term forest management plan
 - Sub-indicator 5 – Forest area under an independently verified forest management certification scheme
- Based on the discussions at the 3rd IAEG-SDG, where countries had expressly rejected the use of composite indices, FAO proposed a ‘dashboard’ approach whereby each sub-indicator would be assessed separately using a traffic-light system.

Recent developments (4th IAEG-SDG, 15-18 Nov)

- Based on their assessment of the Tier III work-plans that agencies had submitted, at the 4th IAEG-SDG meeting, member countries selected a limited number of indicators to try to 'fast-track' their upgrade to Tier II status.
- FAO was invited to make the case for upgrading 15.2.1, in recognition of the fact that some of the sub-indicators are well established and have quasi-universal country coverage
- As a result of FAO's intervention, the IAEG-SDG decided to upgrade the indicator to Tier II status.
- Key difference between Tier II and Tier III status:
 - No need to establish a process to develop an internationally agreed methodology
 - Possibility of officially reporting global, regional and country data, as well as to include a storyline in the next SDG report

Tier II status yes, but...

- Despite the upgrading of 15.2.1 to Tier II, the IAEG requested FAO to deliver a new proposal by mid-January
- The IAEG-SDG does not accept the title of the indicator and suggests to consider its respective components as standalone SDG indicators
- To implement these recommendations several issues to be solved:
 - a) The first sub-indicator to be dropped, given that it is equivalent to 15.1.1
 - b) The sub-indicator on forest certification would need to be reconsidered, as it does not fulfil key criteria for the SDG indicators: it is not policy-relevant, as does not reflect policies by national governments; it is not universally applicable.
 - c) Overall, the social and economic dimension of sustainability are not well covered – there may be a need to consider an additional indicator.
 - d) There will still be a need to combine the information at the time of reporting and craft a narrative about progress against the target.

The role of National Statistical Offices

- An overarching issue affecting all the forestry indicators is the non-involvement or even awareness of the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) in the reporting process.
- As for SDG monitoring, NSOs have been conferred an elevated role in coordinating the entire SDG reporting effort at country level and providing a quality assurance safeguard.
- At the IAEG-SDG, countries are represented by the Chief Statisticians or other senior officials from NSOs.
- It is therefore critical for data suppliers on forest indicators to establish closer links with the NSO:
 - ✓ Data at global level could be reported through the NSO, or at the very least, the NSO should be copied in data transmission;
 - ✓ A global written consultation could be organized to validate the methodology of 15.2.1, to which NSOs should be invited.

Some observations on the “core set of forest indicators” for Agenda 2030

- Global SDG indicators are meant to form a core set of comparable metrics that all countries should report on.
- They certainly can be complemented with additional thematic indicators to provide a more comprehensive assessment of a particular sector/phenomenon
- However, additional thematic indicators should abide by the same key criteria as SDG indicators (policy-relevant, methodologically sound, measurable, feasible, etc.) and go through the same consultation process
- Commitment not to overburden countries: adoption of new data sources/technologies should be encouraged (High resolution satellite imagery will likely be a game-changer for forest indicators)

FAO commitments: next steps

- FAO leading the methodological development of the forest-related indicators; New proposal submitted to the IAEG-SDG; Global consultation to ensure buy-in by countries and NSOs.
- FAO responsible for global data collection and reporting
- **Initially** two main types of capacity development activities are planned in 2017:
 - ✓ E-learning courses: to raise awareness on what is expected from countries, and on what support FAO can provide. E-learning courses are meant to have a very broad outreach (all countries, not only data providers but also policymakers and other relevant stakeholders).
 - ✓ Training workshops: to create a pool of experts that could subsequently assist other countries in their respective regions through South-South cooperation.
- FAO will also seek to mobilize additional funding in order to roll-out comprehensive regional training workshops and to provide technical assistance to countries for the adoption of the indicators