

The Global Forest Goals Report 2021

An overview of progress



United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: (i) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which States Members of the United Nations draw to review common problems and take stock of policy options; (ii) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint courses of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and (iii) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.

The United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs provides substantive support to the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), prepares analytical studies, and fosters dialogue to enhance cooperation and coordination on forest issues. Through technical assistance, the Secretariat supports Member States in building national capacities in forest financing and monitoring, assessment and reporting. The Forum is responsible for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030. The Secretariat assists the Forum in tracking progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan and disseminates this information through the Forum website.

Disclaimers

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. In addition, the designations of country groups are intended solely for statistical or analytical convenience and do not necessarily express a judgement about the stage of development reached by a particular country or area in the development process. The term “country” as used in the text of this publication also refers, as appropriate, to territories or areas. The term “dollar” normally refers to the United States dollar (\$).

Suggested citation

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat (2021).
The Global Forest Goals Report 2021

The full report along with this shorter “Overview of Progress” version are available on the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat website at www.un.org/esa/forests.

For further information about this report, please contact the Office of the Director, United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, New York, 10017, USA, by email at unff@un.org.

Cover photo: © Tomasz Juszcak/UNFFS

Copyright information
United Nations Publication
Sales No.: E.21.IV.3
ISBN: 9789211304282
eISBN: 9789214030515

Copyright © United Nations, 2021.

Contents

● 1. Introduction	2
● 2. Global Forest Goal 1	7
● 3. Global Forest Goal 2	11
● 4. Global Forest Goal 3	15
● 5. Global Forest Goal 4	19
● 6. Global Forest Goal 5	23
● 7. Global Forest Goal 6	27
● 8. Global Forest Goals	30
● 9. Progress by Targets	31
● 10. Issues for Future Consideration	32

Introduction





The United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF) was created by the Member States of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) to provide a global framework for action at all levels to sustainably manage all types of forests and trees outside forests, and to halt deforestation and forest degradation. At the heart of the Strategic Plan are six Global Forest Goals and 26 associated targets, all of which are voluntary and universal. The Goals fully encompass and build on the foundation of the four Global Objectives on Forests of the United Nations Forest Instrument (UNFI), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2007.

The historic agreement on the UNSPF was forged at a special session of the UNFF in January 2017 and subsequently adopted by the UNGA, through its Resolution 71/285 in April of that same year. The Strategic Plan set out, for the first time, a shared United Nations vision and mission on the world's forests.

A shared United Nations vision

The shared United Nations vision is of a world in which all types of forests and trees outside forests are sustainably managed, contribute to sustainable development, and provide economic, social, environmental, and cultural benefits for present and future generations.

A shared United Nations mission

The shared United Nations mission is to promote sustainable forest management and the contribution of forests and trees outside forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through strengthening cooperation, coordination, coherence, synergies, and political commitment and action at all levels.

The UNSPF vision, principles, and commitments align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which offer a global and universally agreed blueprint for achieving sustainable development. Like the SDGs, the Global Forest Goals are interconnected and integrate the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable forest management. Achievement of the Global Forest Goals is meant to foster and accelerate progress towards the SDGs, as well as other international forest-related instruments, processes, commitments, and objectives such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Forests in Times of Crisis

The world is combatting unprecedented, worldwide crises on multiple fronts, from the devastating impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, to the escalating impacts of climate change and a biodiversity crisis. For each of these complex global challenges, forests and forest-dependent people are both a casualty and an important part of the solution.

More than just a health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic is laying bare systemic vulnerabilities and inequalities in just about every economy and society. It is driving losses of lives and livelihoods, extreme poverty, inequality, and food insecurity, and it has put the 'Future We Want' further out of reach. It is estimated that world gross product fell by an estimated 4.3% in 2020—the sharpest contraction of global output since the Great Depression.¹ Such outcomes show that the pandemic is a global development emergency with devastating consequences for those already at risk of being left behind.

An estimated 1.6 billion people, or 25% of the global population, rely on forests for their subsistence needs, livelihoods, employment, and income.² Of the extreme poor in rural areas, 40% live in forest and savannah areas, and approximately 20% of the global population - especially women, children, landless farmers, and other vulnerable segments of society - look to forests to meet their food and income needs.³ For centuries, forests have provided socio-economic safety nets for people and communities in times of crises.

The COVID-19 pandemic is threatening the lifeline that forests so often provide. Economic contractions, disruptions to global trade and local commerce, and lockdown measures to contain the virus, have affected almost 2.7 billion workers, representing approximately 81% of the world's workforce.⁴ Forest-dependent populations are amongst this demographic. On the economic front, they have faced job loss, reduced income, diminished access to markets and information, and for many women and youth, a contraction in seasonal employment.⁵ Socially, many of these populations are already marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples, least able to access critical socio-economic safety nets. Many forest-dependent populations, especially those in remote or hard to reach places, have faced difficulties accessing healthcare or find that government assistance programmes and basic services are disrupted.⁶

Pandemic driven health and socio-economic outcomes have increased pressure on forests. To ease their growing vulnerability, many indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as returning migrants and urban workers, have retreated deeper into the woods to seek food, fuel, shelter, and protection from the risks of COVID-19. As more and more vulnerable people have turned to forest products and forest resources as a coping mechanism, these ecosystems are beginning to show signs of stress. Several regions now find the stability and viability of their forest sectors in jeopardy.⁷

The impacts of the pandemic are coupled with the escalating impacts of climate change and a biodiversity crisis – global emergencies with serious implications for forest ecosystems. Among its many findings, the 'Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services' of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) highlighted that one million species were at risk of extinction and that 100 million hectares of tropical forest were lost from 1980 to 2000. At the same time, climate change is jeopardizing the resilience of forest ecosystems and their ability to support ecosystem services worldwide. Though forests offer nature-based solutions to overcome these concurrent global challenges, they have also never been more at risk.

This means that a resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic along with responses to the climate and biodiversity crises must be rooted in the world's forests. The path forward needs to be paved with greater sustainability and a greener, more inclusive economy – of which healthy forest ecosystems and forest-dependent communities are an integral part. Sustainably resourced and managed forests can bolster employment, disaster risk reduction, food security and social safety nets, for starters. They can also protect biodiversity and advance both climate mitigation and adaptation. And with regard to global health, safeguarding and restoring forests are among the environmental actions that can reduce the risk of future zoonotic disease outbreaks.

The Importance of Informed Decision-making

The need for timely, quality, and accessible data and statistics has never been more urgent. Data are essential for designing short-term responses as well as longer-term recovery measures. This is particularly true for the sustainable management of forests – in the context of the current pandemic and beyond.

Comprehensive forest monitoring, assessment, and reporting (MAR) is widely recognized as essential for informed and evidence-based decision-making. Systematic data is critical to understanding how forests contribute to livelihoods, poverty reduction, health and well-being, and sustainable development overall.

Global data collection on the world's forests dates back to the 1940s, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) completing its first assessment of the world's forest resources in 1948. At that time, the objective was to collect information on available timber supplies to meet post-war reconstruction demand. As interest in the state of forests grew and evolved, the scope of MAR on forests adapted to meet changing information needs. Today, the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) covers all the thematic elements of sustainable forest management, offering a comprehensive evaluation of forest resources and their condition, management, and use.



In addition, and since its inception in 2000, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) has gathered voluntary national reports from its Member States on progress made towards the implementation of sustainable forest management. Initially, the Forum tracked progress on the implementation of the proposals for action made by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (which preceded the UNFF). Following the adoption of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (later renamed as the United Nations Forest Instrument) in 2007, the focus of national reporting shifted to tracking progress on implementing the Instrument and achieving the four Global Objectives on Forests.

With the adoption of the UNSPF in 2017, UNFF national reporting began to focus on monitoring progress made in implementing the Strategic Plan, and its Goals and targets. The first round of voluntary national reporting on progress towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan proceeded from 2019 to 2020. The reports received from fifty-two Member States of the UNFF,⁸ among other data and sources outlined below, formed the basis for the drafting of this report.

The Path to the Inaugural Global Forest Goals Report

Recognizing the importance of voluntary national reports and the need to make effective use of the information contained in them, the UNFF, at its thirteenth session (UNFF13) held in 2018, requested the Forum Secretariat to prepare a concise flagship publication on progress towards achieving the Global Forest Goals of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030.

The Strategic Plan also invited Member States to, on a voluntary basis, determine their contributions towards achieving the Global Forest Goals and targets, taking into account their national circumstances, policies, priorities, capacities, levels of development, and forest conditions. These “voluntary national contributions” or VNCs, could include national actions and targets related to other international forest-related commitments and goals, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and actions to address climate change under the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. To date, 19 Member States of the UNFF⁹ have announced their VNCs towards achieving the Global Forest Goals and targets.

This inaugural report draws upon these 52 voluntary national reports (VNRs) and 19 voluntary national contributions (VNCs), representing 75% of forests in the world. This national information on progress towards the Global Forest Goals is supplemented with quantitative and bio-physical data primarily from FRA 2020.

The Global Forest Goals Report thus provides an initial overview of progress towards achieving the six Global Forest Goals and their 26 associated targets as contained within the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030. Each chapter features actions taken by countries, and an overview of progress towards each Goal and the associated targets, as well as some success stories that illustrate best practices.

Lastly, it is important to note that the Strategic Plan recognizes that achieving the Global Forest Goals and targets requires ambitious and transformational actions inclusive of all actors, at all levels. These entities include Member States, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), the United Nations system and other intergovernmental partners and stakeholders, regional and subregional organizations and processes, Major Groups, and other stakeholders. While this first report primarily focuses on the actions taken by Member States, future reporting intends to include data and information from the many other actors that play a vital role in sustainable forest management and in the world’s efforts to achieve the Global Forest Goals and targets.





Global Forest Goal 1

Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change.

Progress towards Global Forest Goal 1

Countries took a number of legislative and policy actions to implement Global Forest Goal 1, using existing forest laws and codes, as well as national forest programmes and strategies as their frameworks. Many countries recently reviewed or revised these instruments, thereby clearly indicating the priority they assigned to maintaining and/or creating the necessary infrastructure for achieving the Global Forest Goals and sustainable forest management in general. Further to these developments, stakeholder consultations were being built out to inform policy and, despite coordination challenges, countries were seeking to move beyond siloed approaches and to mainstream forestry considerations across other sectors such as those addressing energy, agriculture, climate change, and environment in general.

In line with this notion of moving beyond silos, international commitments in sectors other than forestry supported progress towards the Global Forestry Goals. Efforts to implement commitments and achieve objectives, for instance, on climate change, under the UNFCCC; biodiversity conservation, under the CBD; trade in wildlife, under CITES; and desertification, under the UNCCD, often buoyed efforts to meet the Global Forest Goals. For instance, the forest component of countries' Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement on climate change may make an important contribution to reversing the loss of forest cover worldwide. Similarly, CITES' focus on strengthening capacity to fight illegal logging, including by training and arming forest rangers and specialized prosecutors, helped sustainable forestry initiatives overall. Moratoriums on logging and log export bans, also under this Convention, were impactful.

Asia, Europe, Oceania appear to be on track to increase their forest area by three percent between 2015 and 2030, based on the net gains in forest area that were seen in these regions during 2010 to 2020. Africa and South America, however, were still losing forest area, although at a slower rate than in the past. With regard to sustainable forest management¹⁰, for most of the subregions, and most of the five sub-indicators used to monitor SDG target 15.2.1,¹¹ the data showed positive change into 2020, with only a few regions and sub-indicators showing little or negative change. Some countries set a national target to expand or maintain forest area or plant trees. Forest monitoring units and services were strengthened in most countries.

The world as a whole was on track to maintain its forest carbon stocks. However, in the regions of Africa and South America where deforestation was significant, the carbon stock decreased. Disturbances to forests caused significant impacts, and in the face of such challenges, it was not yet possible to determine whether countries had significantly strengthened forest resilience and adaptive capacity.

Progress towards Target 1.1

Forest area is increased by 3 per cent worldwide

Many regions on track to achieve target.

- ✓ Countries developed strategies to achieve Target 1.1.
- ✓ Countries made resources available, often in the context of programmes for climate change mitigation or national development.
- ✓ Asia, Europe, Oceania appear to be on track, based on net gains in forest area seen in these regions during 2010 to 2020.
- ✓ Africa and South America were not on track and were still losing forest area, although at a slower rate than in the past, despite the strategies and measures reported.



Progress towards Target 1.2

The world's forest carbon stocks are maintained or enhanced

Many regions on track to achieve target.

- ✓ Countries integrated action on forest carbon into broader climate action and funding to achieve target 1.2.
- ✓ In Africa and South America, where deforestation was significant, the carbon stock decreased, and these regions were not on track to maintain their forest carbon stock.

Progress towards Target 1.3

By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally

The world largely on track to achieve this target.

- ✓ Countries undertook many actions to achieve target 1.3, addressing all dimensions of sustainable forest management.
- ✓ Most of the subregions, and most of the five sub-indicators used to monitor SDG 15.2.1, showed positive change into 2020, with only some regions and sub-indicators showing little or negative change.

Progress towards Target 1.4

The resilience and adaptive capacity of all types of forests to natural disasters and the impact of climate change is significantly strengthened worldwide

Too early to conclude/insufficient data to determine progress towards this target

- ✓ Disturbances due to fire, insects, disease, and severe weather events significantly impacted forests, and the services and products they provided.
- ✓ Monitoring at the global level remained unsatisfactory.
- ✓ Some of these disturbances were attributed to climate change.
- ✓ Conscious of this threat, countries began taking steps to increase the resilience of their forests and to adapt their management to the changing situation, notably by improving knowledge and risk evaluation.





Global Forest Goal 2

Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including the livelihoods of forest-dependent people.

Progress towards Global Forest Goal 2

Actions reported by countries to attain Global Forest Goal 2 included programmes and projects as well as other activities that benefited forest communities and small forest-based enterprises. Generally, the development of the forest sector often helped vulnerable people, in particular rural populations. Given this link, many governments devised programmes and plans to promote rural employment, empowerment, and poverty eradication - and employed forests to drive the achievement of these objectives.

Based on country reporting, target 2.4 (the contribution of forests to social, economic, and environmental development) registered the most progress of all the GFG2 targets, especially with regard to employment and increased forest productivity. With slightly less, yet comparable levels of headway, target 2.2 (access to financial services for small-scale forest enterprises), target 2.1 (reducing extreme poverty), and target 2.5 (biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation) followed. Target 2.3 (food security) was the least addressed of the targets. Nevertheless, a number of countries, particularly developing countries, reported notable results on the contribution of forests to food security.

Progress towards Target 2.1

Extreme poverty for all forest-dependent people is eradicated

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✓ National reporting provided evidence that forests could meet subsistence needs and serve as a safety net in times of stress.
- ✓ More research is needed to understand how different types of forest-related practices, programs, and policies, can support or amplify the subsistence, safety net, and asset accumulation functions of forests.
- ✓ Much work remains to effectively measure progress towards the eradication of poverty in the highly vulnerable and diverse group of forest dependent people.

Progress towards Target 2.2

Increase the access of small-scale forest enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✓ Countries developed and listed many actions and measures for supporting small-scale forest enterprises, capacity building measures, and governance structures.
- ✓ Various countries discussed how they promoted and strengthened mechanisms and programmes to facilitate financing to small producers and enterprises.
- ✓ At present, there is no specific indicator to measure progress towards this target.

Progress towards Target 2.3

The contribution of forests and trees to food security is significantly increased

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✓ Countries reported many actions to increase the contributions of forests, trees, and agroforestry to food security.
- ✓ Coherent data remained a challenge as these contributions were not included in forest inventories or national statistics, despite being well known and described at the local level.
- ✓ While ecosystem services provided by forests, trees, and agroforestry supported agricultural production, there were multiple dimensions, each involving complex interactions that made measurement extremely difficult.
- ✓ The full scope of contributions from forests to food security was often undervalued, and the socio-economic benefits were particularly difficult to measure, leading often to the underestimation of the role of sustainable forest management in meeting broader development goals.



Progress towards Target 2.4

The contribution of forest industry, other forest-based enterprises and forest ecosystem services to social, economic and environmental development, among other things, is significantly increased

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✓ Countries reported many actions, however whether these contributions of the forest industry, other forest-based enterprises, and forest ecosystem services to social, economic, and environmental development were significantly increased was difficult to measure.
- ✓ Forest sector employment was greatly underestimated due its informal nature. For instance, although the woodfuel industry created jobs for tens of millions of households in developing countries, due to its informal nature, its value remained largely unreported.
- ✓ Developed countries provided many examples on increasing productivity, diversifying the products generated and producing them more efficiently through environmental and management practices, and increasing the economic benefits generated.
- ✓ While timber products were easiest to quantify in economic terms, valuing and calculating the revenue from the social and environmental benefits of forests, remained a challenge.

Progress towards Target 2.5

The contribution of all types of forests to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation is enhanced, taking into account the mandates and ongoing work of relevant conventions and instruments

All regions on track to achieve target.

- ✓ The majority of reported country actions supported the achievement of other international forest-related commitments, in particular those under the CBD.
- ✓ As of 2020, CBD Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 (to protect at least 17% of the world's terrestrial area by 2020) was exceeded for forest ecosystems at the global level and for most regions.
- ✓ According to FRA 2020, since the 1990s, all regions of the world steadily increased forests managed for biodiversity conservation.





Global Forest Goal 3

Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests.

Progress towards Global Forest Goal 3

Many countries reported on their forest legislation, codes, and policies, which had specific provisions addressing protected areas (target 3.1), sustainable forest management (target 3.2), and the promotion of markets for products from sustainably managed forests (target 3.3).

The area of protected forests grew globally by approximately three million ha per year between 2010 and 2020, with increases in every region. As countries created new protected areas, they put in place legal and institutional measures to protect them, actions that were also in accordance with international commitments, notably the Aichi Targets. Countries built capacity, for instance to implement the provisions of CITES, and in this vein, some pursued stronger measures against illegal logging, including better enforcement.

In many cases, national and subnational institutional structures were adapted with revised definitions of the roles of forest services to aid forest management and protection. Sometimes the relations between the national and subnational levels were modified. Local (community) commissions, community forests, and other mechanisms for increased participation of stakeholders were put in place. Further, institutions with environmental mandates were increasingly involved in policy discussions on forests. For instance, action on land tenure – namely mechanisms such as conservation easements and land purchased by the state – spurred progress towards GFG3.

Many countries encouraged or legally required long-term forest management plans, which were often required for certification programmes. The area of certified forest increased very rapidly between 2000 and 2010 but slowed thereafter. Other developments also supported progress towards longer-term and sustainable management: countries used spatial development plans to address forest issues alongside those of other sectors; and national systems of criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management were developed.

Further, a wide range of planning approaches were applied. Such approaches included improved classification of protected areas, manuals for providing conservation services, research into wildlife habitat, designation of trans-frontier conservation areas and targets for biodiversity conservation and Red Lists. Systems and protocols included wood tracing systems, legality assurance systems, transboundary wildlife management protocols, and verification protocols. Research related tools included research and development on wood buildings, sustainability reporting and resource assessment, improved mapping, the use of remote sensing, global information systems (GIS), and socio-economic surveys.

Overall, the volume of wood harvested from certified forests was estimated at nearly 700 million m³ or 38% of global industrial roundwood production¹²; and 97 countries and territories (84% of world forest area) had traceability systems for wood products at the national or subnational levels.¹³ Further, several countries implemented significant plantation programmes. On the demand side, countries promoted the consumption of sustainably produced wood, encouraged the certification of public and private forests, and promoted the use of certified products.



Progress towards target 3.1

The area of forests worldwide designated as protected areas or conserved through other effective area-based conservation measures is significantly increased

Many regions on track to achieve target.

- ✔ Most regions were on track to significantly increase the area of protected forest between 2015 and 2030. Africa, Asia, and South America already exceeded Aichi Biodiversity Target 11.

Progress towards target 3.2

The area of forests under long-term forest management plans is significantly increased

Many regions on track to achieve target.

- ✔ Between 2015 and 2030, most regions were on track to significantly increase or maintain the area of forest under long-term management plans.

Progress towards target 3.3

The proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests is significantly increased

All regions on track to achieve target.

- ✔ The area of certified forest expanded, as did the supply of wood from certified and other sustainably managed forests.
- ✔ All regions were on track to significantly increase the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests.



© Eskinder Debebe / UN Photo



Global Forest Goal 4

Mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation and partnerships.

Progress towards Global Forest Goal 4

Voluntary country reporting showcased country efforts to advance and diversify finance and to promote cooperation and partnerships across all levels of governance in support of forestry objectives. Countries marshalled financial resources for sustainable forest management, with most indicating that they had mobilized more public funds from national and international sources than from private sources, perhaps because stronger incentives were needed to invest in sustainable forest management. The majority of reporting countries developed and implemented financial strategies to achieve SFM, putting forth and reviewing legislation and policies on investment and finance. The actions taken signaled a growing commitment to increasing, accessing, and mobilizing forest financing at national and international levels.

All respondent countries pursued international cooperation as a way to foster innovation and partnerships in technology and science. Countries provided technical assistance, pursued innovation, shared information with the public through digital platforms, and strengthened forest governance. A greater emphasis placed on research and science in support of SFM indicated that the availability and multidisciplinary aspect of forest-related information was improving, although much more remained to be done in developing countries.

Despite these positive signs and outcomes, financing for forests remained well below what was needed to achieve the Global Forest Goals, especially in developing countries. Almost all developing countries identified a lack of resources, especially financial resources, as a major obstacle to reaching GFG1, and more than 25% of developing countries submitting national reports, reported that inadequate funding hindered their progress towards achieving GFG 2.

Progress towards Target 4.1

Mobilize significant resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance such management, including for conservation and reforestation

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✔ In their voluntary reporting to UNFF, countries demonstrated their growing commitment to increasing, accessing, and mobilizing forest financing at national and international levels.
- ✔ The majority of countries reporting to UNFF shared that they were able to mobilize increased financial resources for the implementation of SFM.

Progress towards target 4.2

Forest-related financing from all sources at all levels, including public (national, bilateral, multilateral and triangular), private and philanthropic financing, is significantly increased

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✔ Countries reporting to UNFF launched numerous initiatives to increase finance for SFM and their forestry objectives, indicating progress on this target.
- ✔ Assessing the full scale of global forest financing was difficult because information was dispersed over a wide range and a large number of public institutions, private sector entities, multilateral development organizations, international NGOs, and foundations.
- ✔ Further, protocols for providing information on forest finance had yet to be developed.



Progress towards target 4.3

North-South, South-South, North-North and triangular cooperation and public-private partnerships on science, technology and innovation in the forest sector are significantly enhanced and increased

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✓ Countries reporting to UNFF shared that they used international cooperation to promote sustainable forest management.
- ✓ Initiatives highlighted engagement with other governments, the private sector, communities, and civil society organizations.
- ✓ Countries emphasized sharing lessons learned in SFM. The exchange of data and information supported progress towards the entire suite of GFGs under the UNSPF.

Progress towards target 4.4

The number of countries that have developed and implemented forest financing strategies and have access to financing from all sources is significantly increased

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✓ Most countries reporting to UNFF shared that they had developed or implemented forest financing strategies for SFM and the UN Forest Instrument.

Progress towards target 4.5

The collection, availability and accessibility of forest-related information is improved through, for example, multidisciplinary scientific assessments

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✓ Countries reported a wide range of initiatives for generating and disseminating technical and scientific information to strengthen sustainable forest management.
- ✓ Much more needed to be undertaken in developing countries to grow the development and use of science for SFM.





Global Forest Goal 5

Promote governance frameworks to implement sustainable forest management, including through the United Nations forest instrument, and enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Progress towards Global Forest Goal 5

Countries informed on the actions they took to achieve GFG5, describing the governance frameworks in their countries to support sustainable forest management and enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda. Overall, countries reported that:

- ✔ forests were integrated into national sustainable development plans and/or poverty reduction strategies;
- ✔ forest law enforcement and governance were enhanced;
- ✔ policies and legal frameworks were in place to promote sustainable forest management; and
- ✔ a wide range of measures were operating to improve policy coherence and involve stakeholders, communities, and indigenous peoples.

Countries increasingly recognized the contribution of forests to national sustainable development strategies, with all reporting countries making strides towards improved cross-sectoral coordination in government agencies and expanded stakeholder engagement in policy formulation, planning, and implementation. National forest programmes, or their equivalents, helped articulate this cross-sectoral collaboration. It became more common for national land use planning processes to integrate forest management issues alongside other land uses.

Further, donor countries highlighted their support for actions that improved forest law enforcement and governance. Countries demonstrated their commitment to dealing in legal timber and forest products by pursuing technical measures to monitor and trace wood flows and various other means to keep illegal products out of markets.

Progress towards Target 5.1

The number of countries that have integrated forests into their national sustainable development plans and/or poverty reduction strategies is significantly increased

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✔ Nearly all reporting countries shared that they had integrated forests into their national sustainable development plans and/or poverty reduction strategies.

Progress towards target 5.2:

Forest law enforcement and governance are enhanced, including through significantly strengthening national and subnational forest authorities, and illegal logging and associated trade are significantly reduced worldwide

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✔ Countries enacted many complementary but varied measures to reach target 5.2, with the intention of significantly strengthening national and subnational forest authorities and combatting illegal logging and related trade.
- ✔ The absence of international standards or definitions made it difficult to compare and assess the effectiveness of measures meant to reduce illegal logging and related trade worldwide.



Progress towards target 5.3:

National and subnational forest-related policies and programmes are coherent, coordinated and complementary across ministries, departments and authorities, consistent with national laws, and engage relevant stakeholders, local communities and indigenous peoples, fully recognizing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✔ Almost all countries in the world had policies and legal frameworks to promote sustainable forest management.
- ✔ Countries reported a wide range of measures meant to improve policy coherence and involve stakeholders, local communities, and indigenous peoples in these policies and frameworks.
- ✔ Further analysis was needed to determine the full impact of these policies, frameworks, and measures.

Progress towards target 5.4:

Forest-related issues and the forest sector are fully integrated into decision-making processes concerning land use planning and development

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✔ Most reporting countries had land use planning systems in place that integrated forest issues.
- ✔ Further analysis was needed to ascertain the effectiveness of these land use planning systems and whether forestry issues/measures were successfully incorporated.





Global Forest Goal 6

Enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues at all levels, including within the United Nations system and across member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as across sectors and relevant stakeholders.

Progress towards Global Forest Goal 6

Adoption of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests in 2017 provided the foundation for advancing coordinated and collaborative actions globally, nationally, and locally on forest issues. Within and outside of this framework, countries reported on a variety of mechanisms to expand stakeholder involvement in reaching forest-related goals and objectives. At the national level, 47 out of 52 responding countries stated that forests were integrated into their national sustainable development plans and/or poverty reduction strategies: this included programmes implemented through the UN System. Many countries cited institutions, organizations, and agencies involved in collaborative work on forests and provided examples of best practices and existing cross-sectoral mechanisms canvassing forest-related issues. In nearly all reports, governments planned and implemented activities related to forests in close collaboration with civil society, the private sector, and local authorities.

The work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) also helped advance progress towards GFG6 at the international level. Achieving forest policy coherence and complementarity at the international level will largely depend on the guidance and resources provided by the governing bodies of the UN entities and CPF member organizations, many of which are comprised of largely the same Member States. Further studies are needed to explore additional areas for improving coordination and collaboration.

Progress towards Target 6.1

Forest-related programmes within the United Nations system are coherent and complementary and integrate the global forest goals and targets, where appropriate

Many actions reported towards this target

- ✓ The UN System put in place a wide range of general coordination measures applicable to forest-related programmes.
- ✓ Further analysis was needed on whether forest-related programmes in the UN System “are coherent and complementary and integrate the global forest goals and targets, where appropriate.” No agency was tasked with coordinating programmes that supported progress towards the Global Forest Goals.

Progress towards Target 6.2

Forest-related programmes across member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests are coherent and complementary and together encompass the multiple contributions of forests and the forest sector to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✓ The fifteen-member Collaborative Partnership on Forests was instrumental in developing programmes for joint implementation and served as a coordination mechanism at the implementation level.
- ✓ The Collaborative Partnership on Forests carried out a number of activities to improve the coherence, complementarity, and comprehensiveness of international forest-related programmes, however further analysis was needed to assess progress towards this target.

Progress towards Target 6.3

Cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation to promote sustainable forest management and halt deforestation and forest degradation are significantly enhanced at all level

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✓ Nearly all reporting countries took action at the national and international levels to enhance cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation and to promote forests and sustainable forest management.
- ✓ Many countries provided numerous examples of existing cross-sectoral mechanisms for forest-related issues and cited the involvement of a variety of stakeholders.



Progress towards Target 6.4

A greater common understanding of the concept of sustainable forest management is achieved and an associated set of indicators is identified

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✔ Reporting countries described an array of communication initiatives focused on outreach to the general public, special events, and youth education to improve understanding and awareness of sustainable forest management.
- ✔ Forest authorities were actively involved in creating educational and environmental programmes and developing entire suites of communication products showcasing the benefits of forests to society and the planet.
- ✔ Forest agencies provided open access to online data, which supplied details related to forest operations and standards for plantations as well as explanations of emissions-trading schemes for forestry and forest funding.
- ✔ Most countries reported using criteria and indicators (C&I) for sustainable forest management.

Progress towards Target 6.5

The input and involvement of major groups and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the strategic plan and in the work of the Forum, including intersessional work, is strengthened

Many actions reported towards this target.

- ✔ Reporting countries highlighted how they were involving Major Groups and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the UNSPF 2017-2030 and in their sustainable forest management initiatives.
- ✔ Almost all countries reported planning forest activities in close collaboration with, and with the participation of, Major Groups and other relevant stakeholders.

Global Forest Goals



Global Forest Goal 1

Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change.



Global Forest Goal 2

Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent people.



Global Forest Goal 3

Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests.



Global Forest Goal 4

Mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation and partnerships.



Global Forest Goal 5

Promote governance frameworks to implement sustainable forest management, including through the United Nations forest instrument, and enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Global Forest Goal 6

Enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues at all levels, including within the United Nations system and across member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as across sectors and relevant stakeholders.



Progress by Targets

	World largely on track	Many regions on track	Many actions taken	Too early / insufficient data
Global Forest Goal 1				
1.1 Forest area is increased by 3 per cent worldwide		✓		
1.2 The world's forest carbon stocks are maintained or enhanced		✓		
1.3 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally	✓			
1.4 The resilience and adaptive capacity of all types of forests to natural disasters and the impact of climate change is significantly strengthened worldwide				✓
Global Forest Goal 2				
2.1 Extreme poverty for all forest-dependent people is eradicated			✓	
2.2 Increase the access of small-scale forest enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets			✓	
2.3 The contribution of forests and trees to food security is significantly increased			✓	
2.4 The contribution of forest industry, other forest-based enterprises and forest ecosystem services to social, economic and environmental development, among other things, is significantly increased			✓	
2.5 The contribution of all types of forests to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation is enhanced, taking into account the mandates and ongoing work of relevant conventions and instruments	✓			
Global Forest Goal 3				
3.1 The area of forests worldwide designated as protected areas or conserved through other effective area-based conservation measures is significantly increased		✓		
3.2 The area of forests under long-term forest management plans is significantly increased		✓		
3.3 The proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests is significantly increased	✓			
Global Forest Goal 4				
4.1 Mobilize significant resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance such management, including for conservation and reforestation			✓	
4.2 Forest-related financing from all sources at all levels, including public (national, bilateral, multilateral and triangular), private and philanthropic financing, is significantly increased			✓	
4.3 North-South, South-South, North-North and triangular cooperation and public-private partnerships on science, technology and innovation in the forest sector are significantly enhanced and increased			✓	
4.4 The number of countries that have developed and implemented forest financing strategies and have access to financing from all sources is significantly increased			✓	
4.5 The collection, availability and accessibility of forest-related information is improved through, for example, multidisciplinary scientific assessments			✓	
Global Forest Goal 5				
5.1 The number of countries that have integrated forests into their national sustainable development plans and/or poverty reduction strategies is significantly increased			✓	
5.2 Forest law enforcement and governance are enhanced, including through significantly strengthening national and subnational forest authorities, and illegal logging and associated trade are significantly reduced worldwide			✓	
5.3 National and subnational forest-related policies and programmes are coherent, coordinated and complementary across ministries, departments and authorities, consistent with national laws, and engage relevant stakeholders, local communities and indigenous peoples, fully recognizing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples			✓	
5.4 Forest-related issues and the forest sector are fully integrated into decision-making processes concerning land use planning and development			✓	
Global Forest Goal 6				
6.1 Forest-related programmes within the United Nations system are coherent and complementary and integrate the global forest goals and targets, where appropriate			✓	
6.2 Forest-related programmes across member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests are coherent and complementary and together encompass the multiple contributions of forests and the forest sector to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development			✓	
6.3 Cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation to promote sustainable forest management and halt deforestation and forest degradation are significantly enhanced at all level			✓	
6.4 A greater common understanding of the concept of sustainable forest management is achieved and an associated set of indicators is identified			✓	
6.5 The input and involvement of major groups and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the strategic plan and in the work of the Forum, including intersessional work, is strengthened			✓	

Issues for Future Consideration



The Global Forests Goals Report originated from Member States' submissions of national data and information in the form of 52 voluntary national reports (VNRs) and 19 voluntary national contributions (VNCs), representing 75% of forests in the world. These updates on progress towards the Global Forest Goals and targets paint a vibrant picture of ambitious and inspiring action on the ground and around the world. These narratives, combined with the quality data of the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020, indicate that despite the many challenges that countries face, progress is being made towards all six Global Forest Goals and their associated targets. It is expected that as more countries participate in future reporting cycles, a broader overall assessment of progress will emerge.

In their reporting, countries elaborated a number of obstacles they were working to overcome. Key challenges ranged from broader global issues such as the growing impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation to challenges like forest financing, illegal trade, and capacity building, all of which fell under the means of implementation for sustainable forest management.

When it comes to tracking progress towards the Global Forest Goals, a lack of standardized and comparable data and statistics remains a challenge for some targets. For instance, while many countries recognize forest degradation as a major issue, there is no agreed-upon standard definition of what constitutes forest degradation. Similarly, while the resilience and adaptive capacity of forest ecosystems is a desirable characteristic, especially in the context of climate change, biodiversity protection, and for preventing future pandemics, there is currently no objective and quantifiable way of measuring "resilience and adaptive capacity."

Furthermore, a lack of data related to the socio-economic benefits that forests provide to critical development issues such as poverty eradication and income generation, employment, health, and food security are compounded by the fact that, often, these forest-driven benefits accrue to informal sector – where they are even harder to measure. Lastly, there is a lack of reliable data on forest funding due to limited understanding of the financial landscape associated with managing all types of forests, including forest contributions to local, national, and regional development.

With so much at stake, it is critical that countries continue to strengthen their capacities to capture data, and that they receive adequate and sufficient funding to do so. Towards this end, important data innovations are also taking place.

For instance, work on the Global core set (GCS) of forest relevant indicators is an important development for the assessment of progress. The GCS, which includes SDG indicator 15.2.1,¹⁴ advances a common understanding of sustainable forest management by identifying key factors that need to be measured to assess global progress and trends toward sustainable forest management. It thus also helps provide a means for demonstrating the full contribution of forests to achievement of all the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda overall.

Further, the adoption of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting—Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EA) by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2021 was a major step to ensure that natural capital like forests is recognized in economic reporting. A key aspect of ecosystem accounting is that it allows the contributions of ecosystems to society to be expressed in monetary terms so these contributions can be more easily compared to other goods and services, thus expanding the notion or moving beyond GDP as an inclusive measure of wealth. As a result, decision-makers will soon have an integrated way to value the ecosystem services that forests provide to the local economy, social well-being, and livelihoods, as well as globally with regard to carbon storage, biodiversity protection, water filtration, and disaster risk reduction. According to some estimates, these values could reach the trillions.¹⁵ Innovations such as these will support progress towards the Global Forest Goals, among many other environmental objectives.

Against this backdrop of challenges and possible solutions, the world is still contending with the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 Financing for Sustainable Development Report (FSDR) warns that COVID-19 could lead to a lost decade for development. The report notes that approximately half of the least developed and other low-income countries were at high risk of or in debt distress before COVID-19 – a situation set to worsen as tax revenues fall and debt levels rise due to the pandemic. In this context, developing integrated national financing frameworks (INFFs) can help countries to overcome impediments, manage risk, increase investment, and achieve longer-term sustainable development priorities.

While official development assistance rose in 2020 to help support pandemic responses in developing countries, there are growing concerns that the global recession, especially in donor countries, could eventually lead to reduced international public financing for forests. At the regional level, the pandemic is already creating challenges for forest financing in Africa, the Asia-Pacific region, and for some countries in Latin America, where limited public resources are being spent on the most immediate public health needs. Pandemic-related lockdown measures are also disrupting data collection on forests.

Looking ahead, countries have underscored that the challenges to achieving the Global Forest Goals are both numerous and enduring – with the pandemic serving as the latest global threat. But in Nature there is always hope. Forests are a solution to climate change. Their management and preservation will restore biodiversity and help protect us from future disease outbreaks. Healthy forests will also ensure we will have the clean air, freshwater, shelter, and food that all life on Earth needs to flourish.

The centrality of forests to global well-being has never been more evident – and now, above all, this recognition must be met with collective action. This report highlights a number of successes and positive trends towards achieving the Global Forest Goals – and this momentum must be accelerated and taken into the Decade of Action, because a more sustainable, equitable, and greener future must be one that is rooted in the world's forests.



Endnotes

- 1 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), “World Economic Situation and Prospects 2021”. Available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-2021/>
- 2 UN General Assembly, “United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030”. A/RES/71/285. Available at: <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=A/RES/71/285> and UN Economic and Social Council, “United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030 and quadrennial programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2017–2020”. E/RES/2017/4. Available at: <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=E/RES/2017/4>
- 3 Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), “The State of the World’s Forests 2018”. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/19535EN/>
- 4 Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), “World Economic Situation and Prospects 2021”. Available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-2021/>
- 5 UN Forum on Forests, “Impact of the pandemic on forests and the forest sector: Note by the Secretariat”, E/CN.18/2021/7. Accessible at: <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=E/CN.18/2021/7>
- 6 Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) Forestry Technical Network Webinar, “Social protection for forest-dependent communities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic”, Presented by Thaís Linhares-Juvenal, Senior Forestry Officer FAO Forestry Technical Network Webinar, 22.07.2020. Available at: www.fao.org/forestry/49810-0e3cf49a1603cf7fc3ecb119381623888.pdf
- 7 UN Forum on Forests, “Impact of the pandemic on forests and the forest sector: Note by the Secretariat”, E/CN.18/2021/7. Accessible at: <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=E/CN.18/2021/7>
- 8 Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, China, Côte D’Ivoire, Eswatini, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, the State of Palestine, Panama, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, Serbia, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and Zimbabwe.
- 9 Australia, Canada, China, Ecuador, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Liberia, Madagascar, Morocco, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Thailand, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.
- 10 It is difficult to measure “progress towards sustainable forest management” because there is no single quantifiable and measurable characteristic that fully encompasses all of its dimensions. For this report, the approach used was the same as that used to monitor progress towards SDG target 15.2.1, which is built on a “dashboard” of five sub-indicators: (i) Forest area annual net change rate; (ii) Above-ground biomass stock in forest; (iii) Proportion of forest area located within legally established protected areas; (iv) Proportion of forest area under long-term forest management plans; and (v) Forest area under independently verified forest management certification schemes.
- 11 Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), “Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020”. Figure 4: Traffic-light dashboard for sub-indicators of indicator 15.2.1, 2020. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9825en/>
- 12 This refers to the volume of wood harvested from certified forests, which enters the supply chain, not the volume of certified and labelled wood products, subject to a chain-of-custody certificate, which reaches the consumer. The latter is considerably less than the harvest from certified forests but is not yet measured.
- 13 Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), “Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020”. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9825en/>
- 14 Indicator SDG 15.2.1 on “progress toward SFM” includes five sub-indicators, all of which are part of the global core set.
- 15 World Bank Group, “Illegal Logging, Fishing and Wildlife Trade: The Costs and How to Combat It”. Available at: <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/422101574414576772/illegal-logging-fishing-and-wildlife-trade-the-costs-and-how-to-combat-it>

For more information
<https://www.un.org/en/desa/products/publications>



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



9 789211 304282