

International Support to Forestry Research and Development

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The foresters all over the world have been vigorously advocating forest conservation for human welfare for many decades. They tried to tell all those who would listen, that forest have multiple benefits e.g. timber, fuelwood, fodder, wildlife, water and recreation. Their voice was truly one in the wilderness. They did not receive any particular attention and political support for a long time. The forestry problems were given a very low priority in national and international development programmes especially in the developing countries. On the other hand, agricultural and industrial development started attracting the attention of planners in the sixties. In seventies and early eighties, energy conservation caught their attention due to energy crisis and resultant high cost of fossil fuels. This crisis however, compelled some development planners to find out the possibility of extended use of biofuels including wood in place of fossil fuels in the developed countries. Some efforts were also directed towards establishment of energy plantations to reduce the need for fossil fuels and improve the lot of rural poor in third world countries. In the latter case, the efforts made little impact on existing energy situation due to a number of reasons. The financial inputs were rather small and that too scattered over large tracts of land. The requisite technical experience in developing woodfuel resources in rural areas on the farmers' land was also lacking on the part of foresters to counteract mounting social and economic pressures especially those which were due to tremendous increase in population. Their knowledge and experience was confined to large forests and plantations on state lands. Therefore, the situation has not changed much over the years and deforestation of tropical forests is continued on large areas all over the world. According to FAO's recent estimates, the forests in tropical countries are presently disappearing at a rate of 1.2 percent or almost 17 million hectares a year due mainly population growth and poverty.

Global concern for forests

The above situation has drastically changed in recent years because survival of forests on the planet earth is linked with preservation of healthy environment for human living. The environment has deteriorated not only due to large scale cutting and burning of forests but

also due to production of greenhouse gases by burning of fossil fuels. If continued at the current rate, it will result into global warming which will drastically affect physiography and climate on the earth and living conditions of plants, animals and human beings. It is this fear that has compelled Presidents, Prime Ministers, legislators, international donor agencies and general public in developed countries to give prominence to forestry issues. This global concern is quite recent though scientists and students started it in 1970. It is expected to continue in 1990s and 21st century. The evidence of this concern is apparent from the following:

In 1983 the General Assembly of the United Nations established the World Commission on Environment and Development under the leadership of Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway, to re-examine the world's environment and development problems and to formulate a global agenda for sustainable development by the year 2000. The Commission's report, "Our Common Future", was issued in 1987. It has raised considerable interest around the world and discusses many issues of relevance to global forestry.

In 1985, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and the World Resources Institute jointly issued a global Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) as a framework for an international response to tropical deforestation. The TFAP has been discussed at the highest levels of government worldwide. It is the single best plan for facilitating cooperation among foresters and others to promote sustainable development and protection of tropical forests. Of 125 countries with tropical forest resources, 79 countries including Pakistan are presently participating in this programme.

In February 1986, French President Mitterrand convened a ministerial level meeting in Paris to address deforestation and forest decline in Africa and Europe. It was attended by 8 heads of states or governments, 3 prime ministers, and numerous ministerial delegation from around the world. It was probably the greatest outpouring of political will and support for the plight of forests

ever recorded.

A substantial portion of the Economic Summit Conferences held in Paris in July of 1989 and in July of 1990 in Houston dealt with the global environment. The conference is held nearly every year to provide a forum for the heads of governments of the world's leading industrialized nations to discuss the major economic issues of the times. At these meetings, the global environment, including forestry, is a subject of major debate. Among other things, they have proposed a study of the state of the World's forests and an international convention on forests.

It is obvious from above that henceforth forestry would continue to receive political and material support in the coming years. The developing countries could expect a higher quantum of assistance from industrial countries for their forestry development programmes than they did in the past. Presently, there is a growing realization that forestry issues transcend national boundaries and international cooperation is needed to solve problems related to these issues. This was brought home to many Europeans when they observed damage to forests in one country from acid rains containing poisonous gases produced by industries of another country. International trade in timber and wood products from South to North is also being examined critically to control deforestation and maintain ecological balance of tropical forests in the countries which have these forests. In this regards, there is a severe criticism of policies of Malaysian and Brazilian Governments for exploitation of their tropical forest resources by the environmentalists in general and governments of industrial countries in particular. A rational approach to the management of tropical forests should be forthcoming in near future.

International Support of Forestry Research

When forestry development was a neglected subject in the past then forestry research was more so. However, with increasing global concern for forests in the recent past, several initiatives have been taken by donors at international and regional level to provide support to forestry research in the developing countries. The first attempt in this regard was made in the World Bank/FAO document: "Forestry Research Needs in Developing Countries — Time for Reappraisal" which was presented at the XVIIth Congress of International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO) held at Kyoto, Japan in 1981. It recognized that a new impetus was needed for forestry research in these countries for development of forestry to meet the basic needs of rural people to improve their income and restore ecological balance. Since then, a number of international agencies

have funded regional and bilateral projects on forestry research in Asian, African and Latin American countries. Some of these projects are the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) for effective introduction of Australian trees in developing countries; the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for establishment of ASEAN - CANADA Tree Seed Centre in Thailand, and the ASEAN Forest Management Institute in Malaysia; the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) programme covering seed collection and production as well as selection and conservation of certain forest species; FAO programme of Regional Wood Energy Development, Watershed Management and Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP); the Ford Foundation, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) for regional cooperation in research on forestry and farming systems; the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) networks dealing with bamboo and rattan; the International Council for Research in Agro-forestry (ICRAF) promoting agro-forestry research; the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) assisting individual countries with projects on forestry research; the Nitrogen Fixing Tree Association (NFTA) for specific and provenance trial networks; the Oxford Forestry Institute (OFI) and its Federal Forest Service supporting a large number of forestry research projects on multipurpose and fuelwood species, agro-forestry and tropical ecosystem conservation. The Asian Development Bank and the World Bank are also supporting research components in several of their forestry programmes.

The process received impetus at Bellagio I meeting in 1986 chaired by the then Finance Minister of Pakistan Dr. Mehboob-ul-Haq. A meeting of an International Task force on Tropical Forestry Research was also established in February 1988. The Task Force reviewed past efforts and concluded that significant additional investment in forestry research was needed for human welfare and to sustaining development efforts in forestry as well as other fields such as agriculture, energy, and industrial development. It suggested expanded research in the following five fields:

- Agroforestry and watershed management including tree/food crop and pasture interactions, fuelwood production, quantification of upstream/downstream inter-relationships etc.;
- Natural forest ecology and management research with emphasis on maintenance of biological diversity, identification, collection and storage of germplasm and sustainable management practices;
- Tree selection, improvement and establishment

research especially nitrogen fixing trees, salt/stress tolerant species etc.;

- Utilization and market research consisting of dissemination of technologies useful to local communities; and
- Policy and socio - economic research which includes policy reforms to reduce the rate of deforestation and promote tree growing by rural people.

The Task Force considered seven institutional options for creating a future framework for coordinating and expanding forestry research and recommended the establishment of a new mechanism to be named: International Tropical Forestry Research Council, with a Technical Advisory Committee, an Executive Secretariat and regional coordinators. However, Bellagio II meeting in 1988 considered the recommendation of the Task Force and instead suggested that the responsibilities of CGIAR be expanded and a separate Technical Advisory Committee be constituted for forestry research. This meeting also felt that in the immediate future, there should be no diminution in the flow of resources while the way for incorporating forestry into the CG system (CGIAR) is being paved. More recently, the meeting of CGIAR held at Canberra, Australia from May 29 - June 2, 1989, expressed broad support to the proposal to incorporate forestry research in the CG system.

Conclusion

The awareness about importance of forests for healthy environment and sustainable development is slowly increasing in Pakistan. A Forestry Sector Master Plan is being prepared under Tropical Forestry Action Plan of FAO by the Government of Pakistan with the assistance of Asian Development Bank and United Nations Development Programme. The plan, when completed in about two years time, would provide a framework for development of our meagre forest resources over a period of 25 years with twin objectives of (i) meeting Pakistan's future demand for forest and range products; and (ii) reversing the process of deterioration of country's natural resource base and environment. These are stupendous tasks, and

Pakistan would need considerable internal resource allocation and external assistance to implement the plan. This would be possible only if there is sufficient political support within the country for executing a large forestry development programme. This is presently lacking. The forestry community has great responsibility in this regards and should therefore start creating it.

In spite of considerable international support, the forestry research institutions in Pakistan also continue to face a number of problems in implementing their forestry research development programmes. These consist of absence of infrastructural facilities, delays in recruitment of personnel for advance training, shortage of local funding and lack of motivation of research and technical staff. Pakistan is a developing country and is facing problems of forestry research similar to those of other developing countries. There is a noticeable absence of cooperation in this field among countries of the region. Therefore considerable efforts would be needed in coming years to improve forestry research which is essential for development of forestry in the country to meet basic needs of the people for fuelwood, fodder and timber as well as to improve the environment. However, advancements in both forestry research and development in Pakistan are depended upon national will and political support as well as continued international assistance.

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