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IFFA Position on UNFCCC Climate Change Convention COP 22 at Marrakech, Nov 2016

It was felt important to present the forest small holders perspective at the UNFCCC COP 22 in Marrakech. The focus of the discussions has been on halting deforestation and protecting forests as a sink and this have sometimes been used by parties who generally are against forestry.

This has to be corrected by IFFA spokespersons, coordinating our efforts with the Global Alliance for Community Forestry, and the International Alliance for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of Tropical Forests.

Improving livelihoods, sustainably managing forests, and fighting climate change must not be treated as separate problems, requiring distinct solutions. If that approach is taken, there is a big risk that the separate solutions will undermine each other, and the positive interactions and synergies from an integrated solution will be lost.

Non-managed, "protected" forest reserves from which local people have been excluded will have trees that reach climax stage and die and emit CO₂ in the decomposition process. Other means of improving livelihoods will have to be found, increasing the stress on other resources and budgets outside the forest.

Sustainable forest management can increase both forest stock and the production of forest products. Both of these increase carbon storage and reduce emissions of CO₂. Increased production of forest products improves livelihoods and increases the financing available for further improvements in SFM.

For forest smallholders/family forest owners and communities, these interconnected benefits require very specific incentives : secure land tenure, well-functioning forest producer associations and market access for wood. These are the drivers for establishing more trees than are harvested, increased uptake and storage of CO₂ and production of renewable raw material for construction, hygienic products, pulp, energy and many new products such as bioplastic, Nano-materials etc. All these forest products will provide a pathway from the fossil-fuel based society to the new bioeconomy.

IFFA will continue to strive to link this small holder perspective to the broader perspective of the SDGs, in particular poverty eradication and improved livelihoods, climate change, partnerships among governments, the private sector, food security, youth and women, employment, water, biodiversity and sustainable management of forests, in fact directly or indirectly all 17 SDG's.

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