

IFFA Annual meeting 2017

Chair's Report on IFFA's Work in 2017

IFFA continues to express family forest owners' perspective on forestry issues at a large number of international events.

Our message is clear: sustainable management of family forests is carried out with best results when four basic conditions are in place: secure tenure, fair access to markets, good extension services, and strong associations. We have been privileged in recent years to have new members join IFFA from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. When we consider those four basic conditions in detail, the challenges faced by family forest owners may be very different from one continent to another. When we look at them as broad, general principles, they apply equally to all of us.

We were very active at UNFF12 in May in New York with a delegation of four, each contributing a statement to general discussion, with good references to family forestry issues in the final report of the session. We also organized a Side event on "More wood from sustainably managed forests" which we hope will make a contribution to helping bring this issue to the forefront in Climate Change negotiations.

A second major effort by IFFA last year was our involvement in the Conference of forest producer associations in Africa, held in September in Tanzania. Representatives from 14 countries were present, including significant numbers of women and youth, and a number of promising follow-up actions were identified. An additional concrete result for IFFA was the expression of interest by several associations in becoming members of IFFA.

In the Work Plan approved at last year's Annual Meeting, we proposed a specific target: clear recognition by COP23 of the UNFCCC on the importance of "More wood from sustainably managed forests" (now being referred to as "Sustainable Wood"). We learned that such an ambitious goal requires much sustained effort over several years. Perhaps another lesson is that while setting specific targets is a good idea, we should never lose sight of IFFA's core function, to bring the voice of family forest owners to all international discussions on global forestry issues. We must remember that achieving clear recognition and understanding of our message is long, slow work that requires persistence by a large team over a number of years. We can take some satisfaction from our efforts when we see that in international discussions of forestry issues, such as the "Halting Deforestation" Conference at FAO three weeks ago in Rome, serious people now consistently recognize family forest owners ("forest smallholders" as we have come to be called from a global perspective) as an important player in the future of the world's forests. We have had some good friends, allies, and partners in this effort and we must thank them also. In particular, we need to thank the Forest and Farm Facility. Opportunities to build new partnerships have also emerged such as with the ITTO and IUFRO. "Slow but steady" has gotten results. And, there is much more to do.

We will be moving our Secretariat after many years being hosted by the Norwegian Federation. We thank the Federation most warmly for being such a fine host for the past six years, and Ellen and Ivar for all of your hard work. IFFA cannot get results without an effective and dedicated Secretariat, and we have been very fortunate to have had such support.

I want to also thank my fellow Board members for your hard work. We have worked together in a spirit of genuine teamwork. This is an essential element in the progress we are making and I am very grateful to each of you.

Peter deMarsh

IFFA chair