

Logging ban study

The FAO is organising a policy seminar to discuss the findings of a study on whether logging bans help conserve forests. The study is being undertaken by the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) as a follow up to the Asia-Pacific Forestry Sector Outlook Study.

Six country case studies and a regional overview are being prepared as part of the study. National consultants have been contracted to prepare case studies for China, New Zealand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Voluntary contributions are being provided by other APFC members. Direct financial support for the study is being provided by FAO, USDA Forest Service, DFID and the Weyerhaeuser Foundation.

Draft national case studies were scheduled to be completed by early 2000 and supplementary input was also solicited from other countries in the region to assist in preparing the regional overview report, which will be drafted by the May 2000 APFC meeting. A seminar to discuss the preliminary findings of the study and possible follow-up activities was scheduled to be held on 13 May, in Queensland, Australia, immediately before the 18th Session of the APFC.

IFA News

The Institute of Foresters of Australia has a new President, Heather Compton, who has replaced Professor Ian Ferguson (retired). At the board's two-day meeting in March, the board also welcomed two new members, Ross Penny, the new Victorian Division chair and Graham Wilkinson, the new Tasmanian Division chair.

The Registered Professional Foresters Scheme (RPF) was discussed and there are a number of administrative and management procedures to be put in place. It is intended that the scheme will be open for applications from 1 July 2000.

Membership categories have been reviewed to determine whether

they continue to provide the most appropriate arrangements for the IFA and members.

The board is keen to move forward the upgrading of the associate members to full voting members where they are eligible. A moratorium has been placed on new life memberships pending the development of a more financially viable arrangement. The processing of new memberships has been streamlined.

An IFA Student Network is being launched. The benefits from the network are seen as being improved communications between forestry students at the ANU, Melbourne and Southern Cross Universities, a focal point for industry to communicate with students, a co-ordination point between students associations, and a structure for IFA recruitment and involvement.

In financial matters, the IFA reports that GST will have to be applied to the 2000/2001 subscriptions. There is also a need to ensure the Institute's financial viability.

Arrangements for the Institute of Foresters of Australia Conference Program to be held during the Commonwealth Forestry Conference at Fremantle, WA in April 2001 are proceeding satisfactorily.

Network taking action on GE trees

The following statement was issued by the Native Forest Network and is published in the Journal as being of interest to members:

Activists from the Native Forest Network, today joined with the World Rainforest Movement in Uruguay, ACERCA (Action for Community and Ecology in the Regions of Central America), and Rainforest Action Network to publicly announce the launching of a major international campaign against genetically engineered trees.

This announcement was made at a press conference following attendance of Biodevastation 2000, a counter-conference and protest to BIO

2000, the International Biotechnology Meeting and Exhibition. The announcement was also made simultaneous to the beginning of "New Trees Grow Closer: The Ecological, Ethical and Scientific Issues of Forest Biotechnology", BIO's major Symposium at BIO 2000.

"The next 50 years will see a forestry endeavor worldwide profoundly shaped by biotechnology," the BIO agenda reads.

"Genetic engineering of trees poses a real threat to forest and their ecosystems," said Dr Ricarda Steinbrecher, a genetic scientist who works with the University of Liverpool. She continued, "Proper risk assessment is impossible; we neither know the stakes nor the odds."

Public relations experts for the biotech industry have said genetic engineering is no different from efforts to breed plants and animals to meet human needs, except the outcomes can be achieved more quickly. The truth is genetics can alter structures of life in ways that could never occur in nature, the consequences of which are unknown.

"GE trees present a tremendous threat to forests around the world," stated Patrick Reinsborough (in a statement from San Francisco read at today's Press Conference), Outreach Coordinator for the Rainforest Action Network.

"RAN is especially concerned about the threat of these designer trees to the world's rainforests, which is where many of the test plots of these trees are located," he continued.

Mick Petrie, NFN's campaigner on GE Trees, went on to say, "Additionally, because GE trees are still very close to their wild relatives, they are extremely susceptible to genetic pollution. Many of us see forests as diverse habitats providing the last refuge for the earth's declining biodiversity. The risks of genetic pollution in our remaining native forests are unknown, irreversible and potentially one of the greatest threats to biodiversity ever.

"Another key concern was the growing dominance of a few corporations with the power to affect all life on earth."