



POLICY BRIEF

Environmental Economics Policy Forum for Ethiopia

February

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Policy brief - Policies to increase forest cover in Ethiopia: Based on a forest policy workshop, Addis Ababa, September 2007.¹

This brief is a summary of the main outcomes of a forest policy workshop on “Policies to increase forest cover in Ethiopia” held on 18-19 September 2007 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The workshop was organized by the Environmental Economics Policy Forum for Ethiopia based at the Ethiopian Development Research Institute and sponsored by the Environment for Development initiative of University of Gothenburg. The workshop attracted participants from federal and regional governments, non-governmental organizations, donors, research institutes and universities in Ethiopia and researchers/experts from other countries. During the one-and-a-half days of the workshop a number of papers were presented and discussed and future directions were discussed during a breakout session towards the end of the workshop.

Presentations included reviews of federal level forest policies and institutions, the state of forests and forest related policies for some of the regions of the country, forestry research and training in Ethiopia, lessons from experience of participatory forest management in Ethiopia, and some lessons from economics and international experience focusing on participatory forest management.²

The presentations were very rich in details regarding past and existing policies as well as empirical facts. Although it is impossible to summarize the workshop in one paragraph, the following narrative encapsulates an important strand of the presentations:

“Ethiopian forests have decreased gradually over a long period of time and cover today only 3.6% of the land. While the new forest policy has a target that the forest cover should increase to 9% within five years, this ambition is still not reflected in the actual situation in the regions where, despite large scale interventions, forest cover is still shrinking. In order to reach its forestry potential Ethiopia needs not only have an effective forestry service but also attract the investments from individuals, communities and commercial actors. For this to happen the following is needed: clear property rights, appropriate institutions and organization, technical support, and appropriate policies and clear guidelines.

The remainder of this brief presents the outcomes of the breakout sessions. The topic identified for discussion was “Policies to increase forest cover in Ethiopia”. The term “policy” was defined broadly to also include legislation, regulation, directives, guidelines and implementation. Under this broad topic specific issues discussed by each group were:

- Which forest types to focus on (state, community, commercial plantations, small scale individual plantations, farm forestry, co-management)?
- Which (aspects of) policies to focus on (property rights, marketing, energy consumption, biodiversity ...)?
- What are the knowledge gaps in general and research issues in particular?
- What should be done (recommendation on the way forward)?

Which forest types to focus on?

It was noted that all types of forests are important depending on the circumstances at hand. However, it was also agreed that private and community forests should be emphasized.

Potential improvements in efficiency associated with transfer of managerial responsibilities from the government to communities and the private sector was also stressed. Encouragement of small-holder and community forests was proposed to utilize the greatest potential of the land. Co-management of state forests and participatory forest management was mentioned as a particularly important alternative management option. Private commercial forestry should also be welcome and could make a positive impact particularly on dry lands.

The state has roles to play particularly in cases such as denuded watersheds and areas with significant biodiversity. However, in cases where there remain state ownership of natural forests and commercial plantations there is a need to properly manage these resources as issues such as lack of enforcement and corruption could be important. While some of the problems may be associated with policies and their implementation, others may have to do with availability of the necessary material and human resources. These problems should be identified and resolved.

It was also noted that in addition to forests, woodlands are also in danger. Moreover, attention paid to forests and plantations away from urban areas should not imply neglect of urban forestry.

Which (aspects of) policies to focus on?

Property rights and ownership is the critical issue. There is a need to make a distinction between land policy and forest property rights and examine the appropriateness of existing land use policy for forest/tree tenure. Open access situations in state and community forests may discourage private sector involvement in addition to its negative effect on the efficient management of state and community forests. More should be done on certification of land use and forests beyond what is currently done, since the focus so far has been on agricultural lands.

Implementation of policies should be in line with guidelines. Forest development based on concession and fuel wood production by individuals should be encouraged.

While there are problems with state forests, it is also important to carefully examine the alternatives. Given the high demand for land, if forest land is given to communities or the private sector/individuals it may be changed to other land uses.

Particular constraints identified for community plantations are: lack of clear property rights; market constraints (e.g. market information, permit requirement to sell trees, etc.); limited capacity associated with local level extension and professional support; institutional organization and capacity; and insufficient research.

Constraints identified for state forestry are: Institutional organization and capacity; research capacity; implementation capacity; limited integration between and within sectors (forestry extension, research, but also energy etc).

It was also noted that in general marketing issues are very important.

Policies associated with energy consumption that could influence fuel efficiency and tree planting by individuals were also considered important.

The importance of biodiversity and the fact that in some cases biodiversity in forest priority areas are the main remaining gene pools was also noted.

The need for better planning, monitoring and evaluation in order to identify more relevant outcome indicators was also stressed.

What are the knowledge gaps?

General knowledge gaps and limitations in the following areas were identified: standing stocks, deforestation rate, plantation rate and annual increment; management plans; economic contribution of forests to GDP (e.g. natural resource accounting); international market information; propagation of indigenous trees and seed availability; sharing of information and networking; impact of different policies and interventions; who is doing what and where?; biological and economic research on forest products (e.g. NTFPs) and case studies on different regions and different property right arrangements; situation of inaccessible forests; forest product market chain; impact of land use change on livelihoods of local community; relationship between community forestry and private forestry (e.g., does regulated access encourage tree planting?); evaluation of participatory forest management experiments, including sustainability, efficiency, use rights, equity, practicability; institutional set-up of forestry service.

Gaps identified in community based forests are: management of different kinds of forests under different environments and relative profitability of various land uses and equity issues.

For state forests the following gaps were identified: proper management and planning; information about potential uses and management of natural forests for multiple purposes; propagation of indigenous trees and seed availability (on which there is a lot of information but it is not easy to disseminate this information and seeds).

Recommendations on the way forward

The following recommendations emanated from the workshop:

- Set up a national forest program.
- Revisit the current institutional setup in order to promote communal and state forests. There is a need to carefully support the evolution of community institutions for forest management and for effective management and use of state forests.
- Clear property rights needed: there is a need to clarify land use in forest areas and forest property rights.
- There is also a need to identify constraints associated with forest development and conservation such as marketing.
- Institutionalized and periodic forest inventory system that includes proper management; this may require assigning institutions and coordination. Possible institutions/organizations that could participate in this endeavor include Central Statistical Agency (CSA), Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD).
- Prepare an updated land use master plan.
- Create a more stable and strong institutional set-up and important to coordinate efforts. This requires vertical harmony (between federal and regional institutions) and horizontal harmony (across sectors both at Federal and regional levels) and also coordination with other institutions such as non-governmental organizations.
- Strengthen institutional and human capacity at various levels in the forest sector.
- Policies, laws and regulations should be in place together. Thus, there is a need to develop regulations, directives and detailed guidelines to follow the new forest policy. All stakeholders should participate both at federal and regional levels in the preparation of policies and guidelines. Policies should be reviewed continuously. Harmonization of different policies in the country is needed.
- Put in place a strong networking and information system among researchers, extension and policy makers (higher learning institutions are isolated). This could lead to a research program that can assist forest development.

- Research should focus on and address immediate forestry issues to meet the needs of people and extension.
- Proper valuation of forest resources is necessary.
- A socio-economic database on forest resources is needed.
- Study the impact of resettlement.
- Integration of forestry with other farm activities necessary.
- Political and administrative support needed.

Revenues collected from forestry activities should go back to forestry development and conservation.

¹ The workshop was organized by the Environmental Economics Policy Forum for Ethiopia and sponsored by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency through the Environment for Development initiative. For details see the proceedings of the forest policy workshop at the website of the Ethiopian Development Research Institute at www.edri-et.org or at the website of EfD at www.efdinitiative.org/centers/ethiopia or copies can be requested from the Environmental Economics Policy Forum for Ethiopia via email: eepfe-edri@ethionet.et.

² The workshop started with an opening speech by H.E. Mr Neway Gebre-ab, Director of the Ethiopian Development Research Institute and Chief Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister; a keynote speech by H.E. Mr Yacob Yala, State Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and welcome remarks by Dr Mahmud Yesuf, coordinator of the Environmental Economics Policy Forum for Ethiopia and Dr Gunnar Köhlin, Director of the Environment for Development initiative at the University of Gothenburg.

This brief is a summary of the main outcomes of a forest policy workshop on "Policies to increase forest cover in Ethiopia" held on 18-19 September 2007 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. For further information contact the EEPFE secretariat at eepfe-edri@ethionet.et. This and other EEPF's policy briefs are on EDRI's website and can be available at www.edriethiopia.org or at Environment for Development initiative's website at www.efdinitiative.org/centers/ethiopia. Ideas expressed and recommendations made in this policy brief are those of the authors and don't necessarily represent the opinions of EEPF or EDRI.