

Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management

IFA Forestry Policy Statement 2.11

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates the use of internationally agreed criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management. Sustainable forest management involves managing a wide range of economic, social and environmental values for the long term. In Australia indicators need to reflect specific regional conditions, forest types and management approaches. To ensure consistency, forest owners should assess forest management against appropriate criteria and indicators covering the full range of benefits that forest ecosystems provide.

The Issue

Sustainable Forest Management should be the goal for all forests to maintain their full range of benefits: environmental, economic and social. The development of internationally recognised criteria and indicators provides a common understanding and framework for assessing sustainable forest management.

Background

The Montreal Process criteria and indicators have guided Australia's approach to sustainable forest management. The Montreal Process is the Workshop Group on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests. The criteria developed under this process describes the broad forest values that society seeks to sustain, while the indicators are more specific measures that can be used to assess changes over time.

Specific criteria and indicators should be considered in the context of other criteria and indicators. They assess the management of forests as ecosystems and recognise that sustainability cannot be defined by a single indicator.

Changes in the status and condition of forests over time, and the direction of change, are relevant to assessing sustainability. Monitoring changes in indicators is essential to evaluating whether and how progress is being made toward the sustainability of forest management.

Policy

The IFA supports and encourages:

- Forest managers to adopt internationally accepted criteria for forest sustainability, to enable review of existing practices and to promote continuous improvement in forest management
- The use of internationally accepted criteria for sustainable forest management in certification schemes for Australian forests.

The IFA considers that:

- Criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management should be continually reviewed and refined to reflect changing circumstances, new knowledge emerging through research, advances in technology, the increased capability to measure indicators and an improved understanding of what constitutes sustainable forest management on all forest lands and tenures
- Many forest owners, including governments, are not sufficiently recognising or investing in monitoring and data collection
- Within countries and individual regions, criteria and indicators will vary between land tenures, forest use and their applicability to native forest and plantations.