



FIGURE 12 Subregional breakdown used in this report

<p>East Asia: China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea</p>	<p>South Asia: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka</p>	<p>Southeast Asia: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam</p>	<p>Oceania: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna Islands</p>
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NOTE: Statistics for the Russian Federation are included in the European region, where the capital is located. However, much of the forest area of the Russian Federation is technically in Asia, and we acknowledge that forest statistics for the region would increase significantly if the Russian Federation were included.

Asia and the Pacific

EXTENT OF FOREST RESOURCES

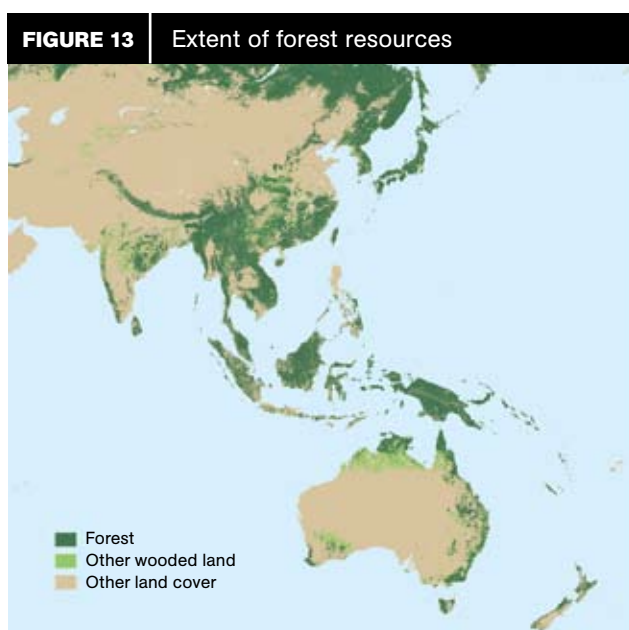
Forests and other wooded land together cover about one-third of the Asia and the Pacific region (Figure 13). Excluding the Russian Federation, forest area in 2005 was estimated at 734 million hectares, accounting for about 19 percent of global forest area. The region as a whole experienced a net increase in forest area of about 633 000 ha annually during 2000–2005 (Table 7). This is an important breakthrough, since the region had experienced a net loss of forest cover during the 1990s. The

improvement was largely the result of an increase of more than 4 million hectares per year in China, which has been investing heavily in afforestation in recent years.

Bhutan, India and Viet Nam also increased their forest area from 2000 to 2005. However, most other countries experienced a net loss. Southeast Asia experienced the largest decline in forest area, with an annual net loss of forests of more than 2.8 million hectares per year, about the same rate as had occurred during the 1990s. The greatest forest loss occurred in Indonesia, almost 1.9 million hectares per year, followed by Myanmar, Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

During the first five years of the twenty-first century, the variation among Asian countries in the net rate of change of forest area was dramatic; this variation is much more pronounced in Asia and the Pacific than in other regions. Several countries are losing forests at rates exceeding 1.5 percent per year; these are among the highest rates of loss in the world (Figure 14). On the other hand, forest area is increasing considerably in several countries, especially in China and Viet Nam.

Other wooded land is extensive, accounting for 13 percent of the land area in the region. The overall trend in other wooded land is downward, both in Asia and the Pacific and in the world, despite an increase in Southeast Asia. However, reporting on this category is not fully consistent from one country to the next, and it is difficult to monitor this category with remote sensing, so significant conclusions have not been drawn from the data.



SOURCE: FAO, 2001a.

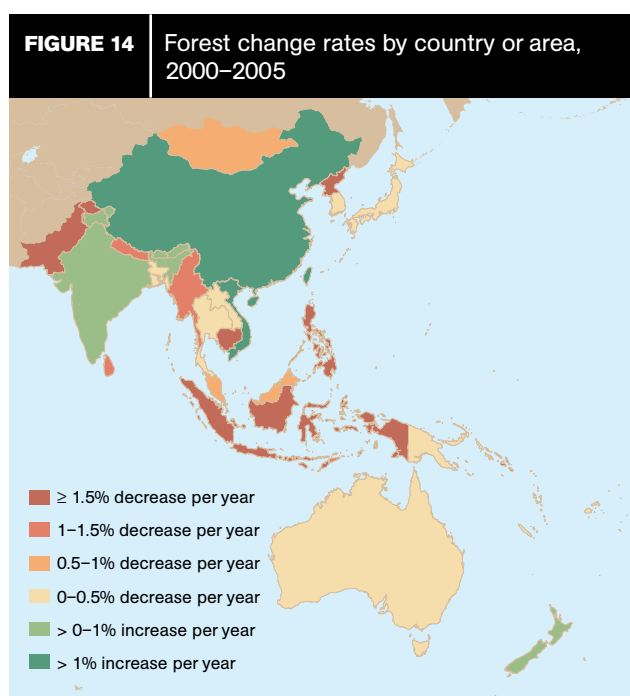
TABLE 7
Extent and change of forest area

Subregion	Area (1 000 ha)			Annual change (1 000 ha)		Annual change rate (%)	
	1990	2000	2005	1990–2000	2000–2005	1990–2000	2000–2005
East Asia	208 155	225 663	244 862	1 751	3 840	0.81	1.65
South Asia	77 551	79 678	79 239	213	–88	0.27	–0.11
Southeast Asia	245 605	217 702	203 887	–2 790	–2 763	–1.20	–1.30
Oceania	212 514	208 034	206 254	–448	–356	–0.21	–0.17
Total Asia and the Pacific	743 825	731 077	734 243	–1 275	633	–0.17	0.09
World	4 077 291	3 988 610	3 952 025	–8 868	–7 317	–0.22	–0.18

TABLE 8

Area of forest plantations

Subregion	Area (1 000 ha)			Annual change (1 000 ha)	
	1990	2000	2005	1990–2000	2000–2005
East Asia	29 531	35 518	43 166	599	1 530
South Asia	2 719	3 651	4 073	93	84
Southeast Asia	10 046	11 550	12 561	150	202
Oceania	2 447	3 459	3 833	101	75
Total Asia and the Pacific	44 743	54 178	63 633	943	1 891
World	101 234	125 525	139 466	2 424	2 788



All subregions within the broader Asia and the Pacific region experienced a substantial increase in forest plantations during 2000–2005, continuing the trend from the 1990s (Table 8). China led the way; Viet Nam, India, Indonesia, Australia, the Republic of Korea, Myanmar, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and New Zealand have also made significant investments in forest plantations in recent years.

Net forest cover in Asia and the Pacific is increasing, which is an encouraging sign. This net increase at the regional level is built mainly on large investments in forest plantations in several countries. However, the growth in plantations does not negate the continued loss of natural forests.

BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

In East Asia, the area of primary forests is fairly stable, having declined slightly in the 1990s and increased slightly since 2000. In South Asia, a negative trend has continued and accelerated over the past 15 years. In Southeast Asia,

the negative trend is consistent and very disturbing, exceeding a 2 percent loss of primary forest per year. In Oceania, a recovery of primary forests in the 1990s has been replaced by a negative trend since 2000.

The area of forest designated primarily for conservation has been increasing in the Asia and the Pacific region as a whole since 1990 (Table 9). Only in Oceania has there been a slight decrease since 2000, but there have been significant increases in Southeast Asia and East Asia. For the region as a whole, the area of forest designated for conservation of biological diversity is slightly over 10 percent. In the tropical forests of Southeast Asia, the area designated for conservation is almost 20 percent. This is a heartening trend.

While a regional increase in the area designated for conservation is a positive development, the following points may be noted:

- The fact that an area is designated primarily for conservation does not indicate the status of its vegetation.
- In some instances, the policies for managing conservation areas are not clear and/or the management of the conservation areas may not be very effective as a result of institutional weakness or lack of adequate resources.

Regarding forest composition, the number of native forest tree species (Figure 15) and the existence or absence of threatened and endangered species, reliable and comprehensive data for these parameters are not available for most countries or for the region as a whole. About half the countries provided information on the composition and diversity of tree species.

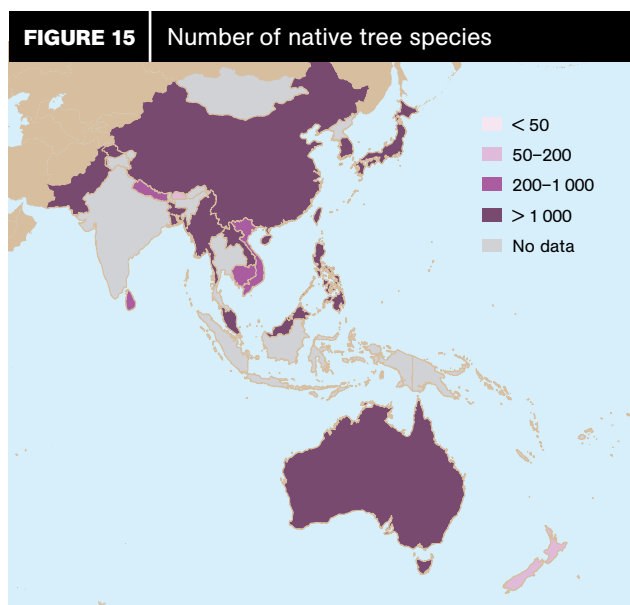
Based on this limited information, it can be seen that forest composition and the distribution of species differ widely within the region. As might be expected, countries with moist tropical forests have more tree species than more temperate countries. For example, the Philippines has an estimated 3 000 native tree species, compared with 105 in Bhutan (or, for that matter, with 180 in Canada).

The extent to which a tree species faces the threat of extinction is another useful parameter for assessing forest

TABLE 9

Area of forest designated primarily for conservation

Subregion	Area (1 000 ha)			Annual change (1 000 ha)	
	1990	2000	2005	1990–2000	2000–2005
East Asia	10 338	10 847	11 479	51	126
South Asia	14 911	16 966	17 265	205	60
Southeast Asia	31 814	35 574	40 025	376	890
Oceania	6 709	7 968	7 948	126	–4
Total Asia and the Pacific	63 772	71 355	76 717	758	1 072
World	298 424	361 092	394 283	6 267	6 638



biological diversity. In Asia and the Pacific, Indonesia has the largest number of critically endangered tree species (IUCN, 2000, 2004), with 122 such species, followed by Sri Lanka and Japan. Malaysia has the largest number of vulnerable species – 403. Asia and the Pacific as a whole ranks as one of the regions with the largest number of endangered and vulnerable species.

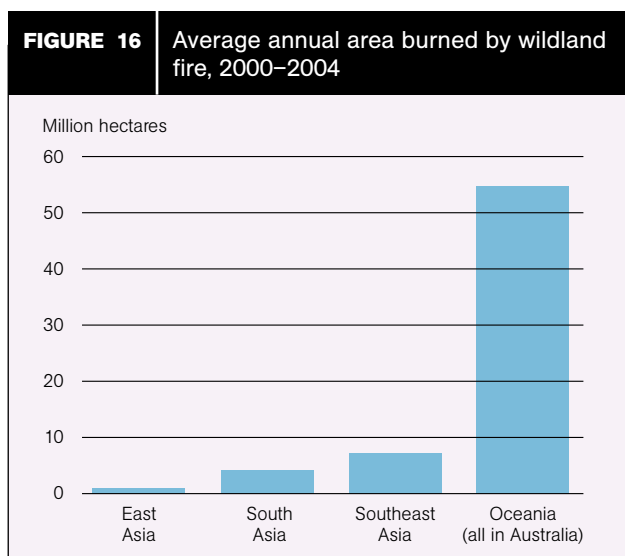
FOREST HEALTH AND VITALITY

Many of the countries did not report on forest fire (or the more inclusive “wildland fire”). Consequently, the estimated area burned in Australia dominates the regional statistics (Figure 16).

The following trends were observed in comparing two periods, 1988–1992 and 2000–2004 (FAO, 2006d):

- In East Asia, wildland fire increased in terms of scale, frequency, extent of damage and cost of fire suppression. Factors contributing to this trend include increases in periods of drought, climatic variability and population.

- In South Asia, fire is commonly used to clear land, and runaway agricultural fires are the cause of most uncontrolled wildland fires. Over 90 percent of the area burned in South Asia is in India, where significant efforts have been made to prevent and manage wildland fire over the past 20 years.
- In Southeast Asia, wildfires dominated the headlines in the late 1990s, when hot, dry climatic conditions favoured the outbreak of thousands of uncontrolled fires, which burned for months, resulting in smoke pollution that caused serious health and economic damage to the region. This led to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, signed by all association member countries in 2002, which entered into force in 2003. However, Indonesia, which has the most significant fire problem in Southeast Asia, has not ratified the agreement.
- In Oceania, the record fire season of 2002/03 in Australia was one of the largest disasters in the country’s history, resulting in loss of human life and astronomical economic damage. Many of the fires were set by arsonists, and the combination of heat and drought were such that many fires were not brought under control for several weeks.



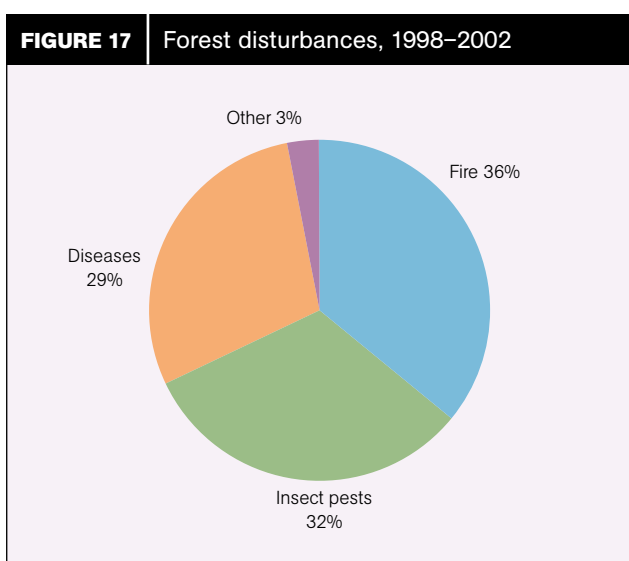
SOURCE: FAO, 2006d.

The problem of fire is increasing in all subregions. The problems in Southeast Asia are perhaps the most salient in that moist tropical forests were previously considered sheltered from fire. However, in the last two decades the subregion has experienced huge fires, mainly resulting from poor logging and agricultural practices. In the region as a whole, fires have caused massive problems, affecting human health and causing economic losses to the tourism and transport industries. Appropriate preventive measures are needed.

While fire gets the most attention in the media, studies indicate that forest pests and other disturbances may have a more widespread impact than fire in Asia and the Pacific. The Asia–Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (APFISN) has been created to address these concerns.

Disturbances to forests by pests and abiotic factors significantly affect productivity. Preliminary research indicates that economic losses resulting from invasive plant species alone may total hundreds of billions of dollars.

More than 10 million hectares of forest were reported to be affected by insect pests annually (average 1998–2002), and more than 9 million hectares by diseases during the same period (Figure 17).



Serious outbreaks of *Anophlophora glabripennis* (Asian longhorn beetle) and *Dendrolimus sibiricus* (Siberian caterpillar) have caused significant concern both within the region and to international trade partners. Eucalyptus rust (*Puccinia psidii*), which is considered the most serious threat to *Eucalyptus* plantations worldwide, was the subject of an international workshop in Bangkok in October 2004. Other serious forest pests in the Asia and the Pacific region include *Heteropsylla cubana* (which damages some species of Fabaceae, including *Leucaena leucocephala*), *Corticium salmonicolor* (which damages a wide range of hosts, including *Acacia* spp. and eucalypts) and *Hypsipyla robusta* (which is a major pest of some high-quality timber species, particularly of the family Meliaceae, such as *Toona* spp., *Swietenia* spp. and *Khaya* spp.).

At the regional level, it is difficult to assess the effects of biotic agents on forests, in part because of the lack of baseline data and under-reporting of outbreaks. In some cases, national information may exist but is not readily accessible. Reporting was quite complete for mainland Asia, but for Oceania the only information supplied on non-fire disturbances was on storm damage caused by wind, with no information provided on pests or other biotic disturbances. Monitoring of disturbance events is often done only after significant losses have occurred in forestry production or trade.

Despite the problems of information availability and reliability, it can be concluded that the health and vitality of forests in the region are under stress from insect pests, disease, invasive plants and uncontrolled fire. One of the keys to sustainable forest management is to improve the understanding of these processes and the capability to manage and control them.

PRODUCTIVE FUNCTIONS OF FOREST RESOURCES

In Asia and the Pacific, 37 percent of the total forest area is designated primarily for production, as compared with the global average of 34 percent (Table 10).

TABLE 10
Area of forest designated primarily for production

Subregion	Area (1 000 ha)			Annual change (1 000 ha)	
	1990	2000	2005	1990–2000	2000–2005
East Asia	126 821	119 688	125 488	–713	1 160
South Asia	18 061	16 545	16 084	–152	–92
Southeast Asia	112 289	115 740	104 014	345	–2 345
Oceania	5 651	9 371	9 261	372	–22
Total Asia and the Pacific	262 822	261 344	254 848	–148	–1 299
World	1 324 549	1 281 612	1 256 266	–4 294	–5 069

At the regional level, the extent of forests designated for production was fairly stable in the 1990s, but has declined in the past five years. The downward trend has occurred both in Asia and the Pacific and in the world at large. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether this is a negative trend. It may be a sign that more area is excluded from productive purposes and set aside for conservation, or it may be an indication that productive forests are being cleared to convert land to non-forest uses.

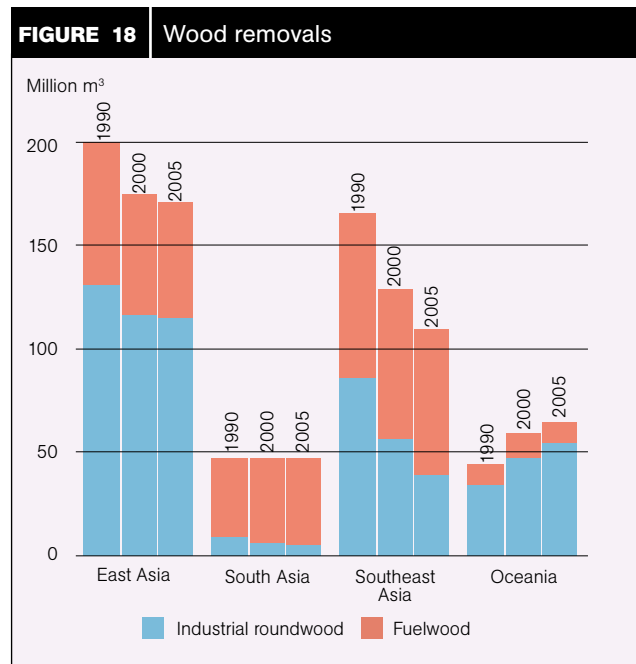
Growing stock is another indicator of forest productivity (Table 11). Country data suggest a decline in total growing stock in many countries, with the exception of countries with large investments in forest plantations. The net result at the regional level is a modest decline in total growing stock in cubic metres and in cubic metres per hectare.

Regarding trends in wood removals (Figure 18), about 40 percent of the wood in the region is used for fuel, the same as the global average. However, the importance of wood for fuel is highly variable throughout the region: in South Asia, 89 percent of wood is used for fuel, about the same as in Africa; the figure drops to 64 percent in Southeast Asia, 33 percent in East Asia and 16 percent in Oceania.

For Asia and the Pacific as a whole, wood removals in 2005 were about 0.76 percent of growing stock, higher than the global average of 0.69 percent, but lower than Africa at 0.90 percent.

Within the region, the highest rates of wood removals as a percentage of growing stock are in East Asia and Oceania, 0.87 percent. The lowest rate is in Southeast Asia, 0.61 percent, whereas South Asia is at 0.76 percent, equal to the regional average. Variations among regions and subregions result from such factors as access, proportion of commercial species, effectiveness of management controls and the supply and demand for wood.

In consonance with global trends, productive forests in the Asia and the Pacific region have declined in the recent past. This trend is further reflected in terms of growing stock and wood removals, both industrial roundwood and fuelwood. However, in the absence of information on annual allowable harvests, it is difficult to establish if



current removals are sustainable. Because market demand and forest access are key determinants of the intensity of removals, areas that are easily accessible are more intensively logged than remote ones.

PROTECTIVE FUNCTIONS OF FOREST RESOURCES

The area designated for protection has been increasing for the region as a whole, resulting mainly from increases exceeding 4 percent per year in East Asia (Table 12). However, most countries in Oceania did not report on this parameter and, in fact, not all countries use this designation. Thus some protective functions may be included under “multiple purpose” (Figure 19).

Various countries have stepped up afforestation efforts with the primary objective of environmental protection. This includes afforestation of degraded areas for soil conservation, establishment of windbreaks and shelterbelts to protect agriculture areas, stabilization of sand dunes, and urban and peri-urban planting to improve amenity

TABLE 11

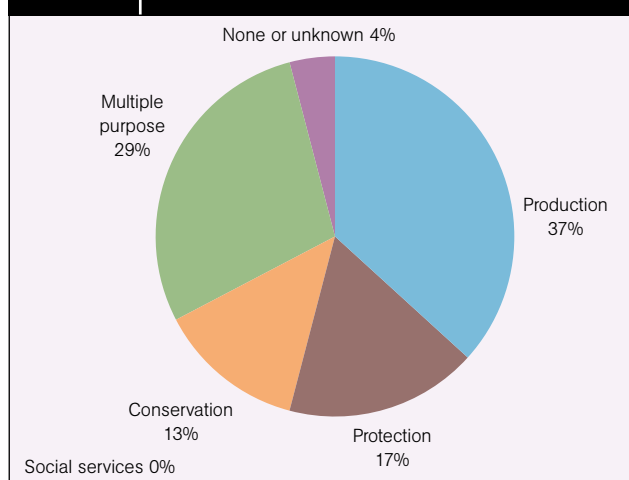
Growing stock

Subregion	Growing stock					
	(million m³)			(m³/ha)		
	1990	2000	2005	1990	2000	2005
East Asia	15 850	18 433	19 743	76	82	81
South Asia	5 714	6 237	6 223	74	78	79
Southeast Asia	26 909	21 063	17 981	110	97	88
Oceania	7 593	7 428	7 361	36	36	36
Total Asia and the Pacific	56 066	53 161	51 308	75	73	70
World	445 252	439 000	434 219	109	110	110

TABLE 12

Area of forest designated primarily for protection

Subregion	Area (1 000 ha)			Annual change (1 000 ha)	
	1990	2000	2005	1990–2000	2000–2005
East Asia	34 763	55 424	66 992	2 066	2 314
South Asia	12 065	12 021	11 991	–4	–6
Southeast Asia	45 357	46 886	47 106	153	44
Oceania	413	450	467	4	3
Total Asia and the Pacific	92 598	114 780	126 556	2 218	2 355
World	296 598	335 541	347 217	3 894	2 335

FIGURE 19 Designated primary functions of forests, 2005

values. The overall increase in this parameter in recent years has been led by East Asia and South Asia.

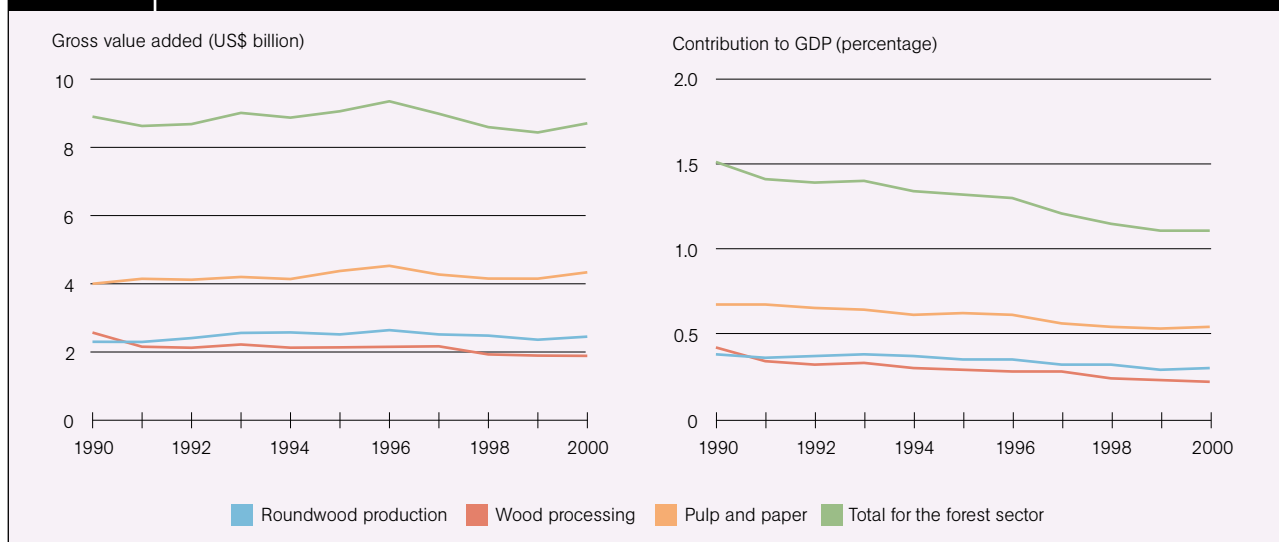
A number of Asian countries are increasing the area of forest designated for protection and of forest plantations for protective purposes. However, the benefits of these protective functions have yet to be quantified or valued in financial terms and are rarely taken into account in

assessing forest benefits. While it may be difficult, there is a need to develop markets for the protective functions of forests.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FUNCTIONS

There was a significant drop in the value of wood removals in Asia and the Pacific during the 1990s, primarily owing to the economic downturn late in the decade. The region accounts for about 24 percent of the forest sector's contribution to the global economy (roundwood production, wood-processing industries and pulp and paper). Including Oceania, the value added in Asia and the Pacific is about the same as that of Europe. Moreover, the contribution of the forest sector to total GDP is about the same as in the world at large, 1.2 percent.

The forest sector contributed an estimated US\$85 billion to the economies of Asian countries in the year 2000 and more than US\$5 billion to the economies of Oceania. During the 1990s, the value added in the forest sector of Asia and the Pacific remained relatively stable in real terms (Figure 20). In many countries, the value added in roundwood production is low, but the

FIGURE 20 Trends in value added in the forest sector, 1990–2000

development of competitive wood-processing and pulp-and-paper subsectors has made an important contribution to economic growth.

Faster developments of other sectors of the economy in all subregions led to a decline in the forest sector's contribution to GDP. This trend is occurring in most regions of the world, with the exception of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Asia and the Pacific region is the biggest net importer of forest products in the world. But the gap between imports and exports has remained relatively stable at about US\$15 billion since the late 1990s (Figures 21 and 22). A rapidly developing secondary wood-processing sector (furniture, etc.), based on imported primary products and plantation timber, suggests that this trend will continue.

The region is the largest exporter of NWFPs (especially bamboo and rattan), amounting to some US\$2–3 billion annually.

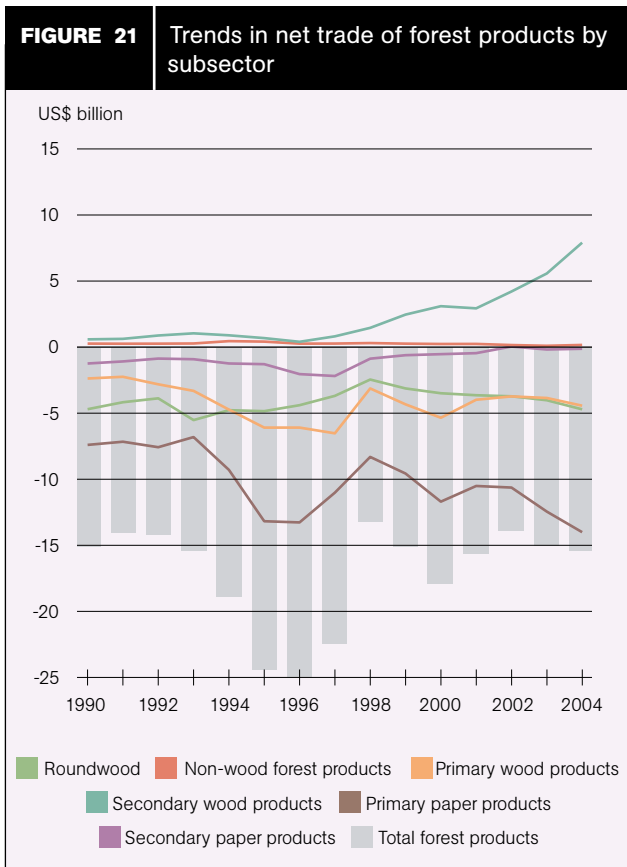
A problem in assessing the socio-economic significance of the forestry sector in Asia and the Pacific is the scarcity of data on production and employment in the informal sector. National statistics on income and employment emphasize the formal sector (Figure 23), while microlevel studies suggest that the informal sector is predominant.

The importance of the informal sector also raises significant issues for progress towards sustainable forest management. Since those who operate in the informal sector often have no rights over the land and forests, their collection of wood and other forest products is often “illegal” in the existing legal framework of most countries. In the context of ill-defined rights, there is little incentive to manage the resources sustainably. Further, most of those dependent on the informal sector are poor, without the necessary resources to practise sustainable management. This would suggest that improvements in the informal sector are needed in order to make progress towards sustainable forest management.

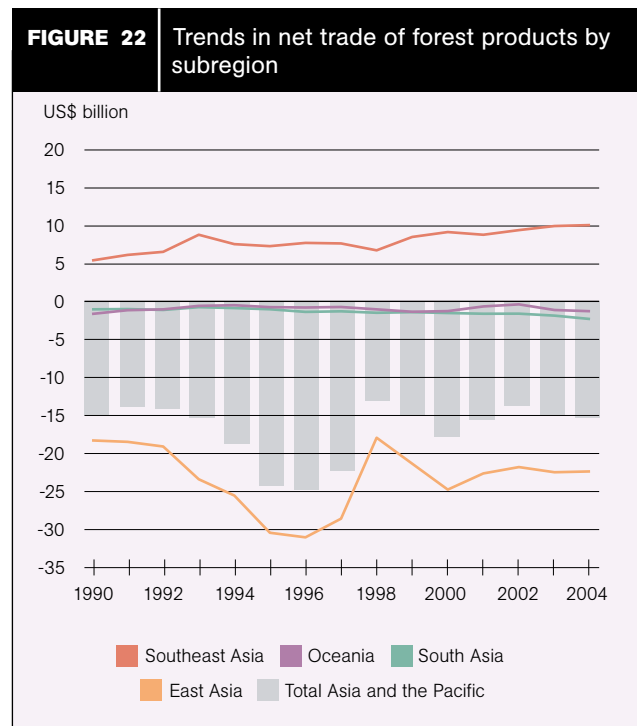
Trends in forest-related socio-economic parameters suggest that the forest sector is likely to remain an important contributor to sustainable development. The combination of cheap labour, growing economies and consumer markets, and global trade possibilities creates a good basis for development.

LEGAL, POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Most countries in the region have a relatively sound legislative and policy foundation from which to implement sustainable forest management, and a majority have updated their forest policies in the past 15 years. Examples of policy changes since 2000 include policies to strengthen community involvement in Bhutan; new forest policies in Cambodia and Pakistan; the implementation of national forest programmes in India,

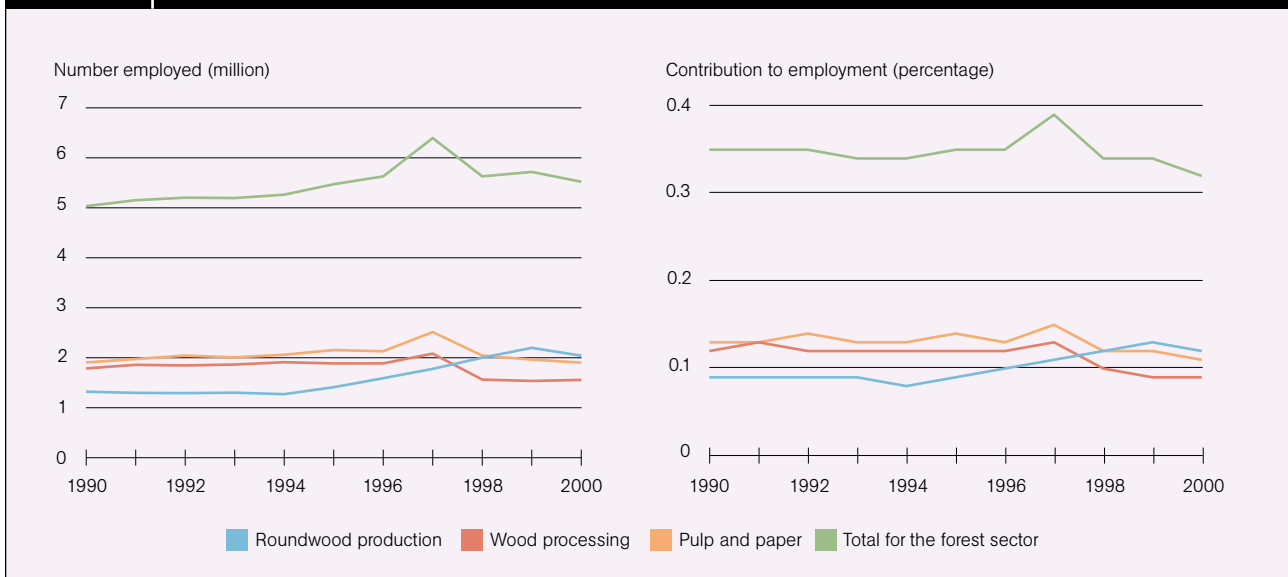


NOTE: A positive value indicates net export. A negative value indicates net import.



NOTE: A positive value indicates net export. A negative value indicates net import.

FIGURE 23 Employment in the formal forest sector



Indonesia, Mongolia and Nepal; the development of regional forest agreements in Australia; and a new National Forest Strategy (2006–2020) in Viet Nam.

A number of countries are moving towards policies that encompass participatory forestry and devolution and decentralization of forest management responsibilities. Some countries, such as Cambodia and Nepal, have focused on poverty reduction in their forest policy. However, despite the generally positive trend, in many countries policy objectives have not been achieved because of budget shortages, weak institutional capacity and governance problems. Some countries are making efforts to reinvent their forestry institutions (Box 2).

About half the countries have an active national forest programme, in various stages of implementation. Eight countries have established partnerships with the National Forest Programme Facility.

Legislation is the most important tool for translating policy statements into action. Most countries have a combination of policy statements, laws and programmes that regulate and orient the use of forests and the development of forest activities. Some countries have made efforts to modernize legislation to support economic, social and environmental policy frameworks (FAO, 2006e). Since 2000, significant new legislation has been enacted in Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Mongolia, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

Throughout the region, countries are devolving forest management responsibilities to local or provincial agencies, to the private sector and to community groups and NGOs. The private sector is increasing in importance, and many countries are trying to decentralize forest management and find more effective approaches to involving civil society.

At the regional level, significant progress has been made in strengthening institutions to support improved forest management. Regional institutions that have developed include the Asia–Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions, Asia–Pacific Agroforestry Network, APFISN and the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific.

NGOs potentially play an important role in the forestry sector. NGO involvement in national forest programmes has increased from the 1990s onwards, and many have established networks to raise awareness, disseminate research and provide advice on forest conservation. In countries in which communities have a “hands-on” role in forest management, e.g. India and Nepal, institutional structures are developing to ensure a coordinated voice in macrolevel decision-making.

An important trend is the increased availability and accessibility of information, owing to the Internet and to the willingness of countries to share their forestry experiences. This has strengthened forest institutions in many countries. In the FRA 2005 reporting process, for example, countries in Asia and the Pacific were among the world leaders in responsiveness and participation.

The challenge for the region will be to ensure that some countries are not left behind, and that benefits are extended equitably to the poorest segments of the population, especially in rural forest areas.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

An encouraging trend in Asia and the Pacific is one that encompasses much more than just the forest sector – it is the high rate of economic growth in key countries in the

BOX 2 Reinventing public forestry institutions

All over the world, forestry institutions are under pressure to adapt better to the environment in which they operate. Adapt and reinvent or fade into irrelevance is the norm in an increasingly competitive environment. While many countries have reformed forest policies and legislation, implementation lags behind because of institutional rigidity.

In the past, forest management in most countries was dominated by the public sector. This has changed in recent decades, as the private sector, local communities, farmers, etc. play an increasing role in all aspects of forestry. Institutional changes such as privatization, community forest management and an array of different partnerships reflect the range of options being pursued.

The fundamental driver of long-term change is evolution in the values, beliefs and perceptions of society. Drivers of institutional change include the following:

- **Macroeconomic policies** (often influenced by political ideologies). Economic liberalization and scaling down of government involvement, often to reduce budget deficits, have led to major changes in institutional arrangements in forestry. Social policies to reduce poverty and promote rural development have driven shifts towards greater involvement of local communities in forest management.
- **Changes in markets.** More flexible parastatal agencies (corporations, boards, enterprises) have been established to provide more flexibility for operating efficiently in a commercial environment.
- **Technological changes.** The increasing flow and volume of information make it possible to bypass lines of command and flatten organizational structures, and a more informed public is demanding efficiency, transparency and social and environmental responsibility.

Public-sector forestry agencies have often initiated structural changes themselves, largely out of resource constraints. Devolution of management responsibility to local levels is sometimes driven by the declining human and financial capacity of institutions and the need to reduce management costs.

The degree of change depends on the circumstances – from adaptation of functions and structure to external changes, to deep change involving revisiting the institution's core values and mission, followed by appropriate functional and structural changes.

Striking the right balance between stability and change is a major challenge facing forestry organizations. Change is necessary and inevitable, but some level of stability is also important, especially for consistency in the implementation of forest policies and, more importantly, to

retain institutional capacity. Instability from too-frequent changes can promote staff attrition and undermine the accumulation of knowledge and experience as well as the development of institutional memory. People need to be an integral part of the change process.

Reinventing institutions is difficult and can be costly. Ideally, institutions should develop as learning organizations in tune with the needs of society. Addressing the human dimension of change is the most complex and least often successful aspect.

Some examples from Asia and the Pacific

An example of radical change is the privatization of forest plantations in New Zealand, largely triggered by economic liberalization policies. Less radical, but still substantial reforms – establishing more flexible autonomous parastatal agencies for specific activities, particularly in the realm of commercial forestry – have occurred in China, Fiji, India and Myanmar.

Divesting responsibilities to local communities is another major institutional development in Asia, particularly notable in several countries: joint forest management in India, management by forest users' groups in Nepal and community-based forest management in the Philippines.

There are also a number of instances in which government forestry agencies have brought production functions under more flexible autonomous institutions, overcoming constraints stemming from governmental rules and regulations. Research and development is another area that has been reinvented to respond to the special needs of scientific work (for example, the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia).

region, especially in the two largest countries, China and India. Many experts believe that this growth will have a positive impact on the economies of other countries. It is already having an impact on forestry in terms of demand for both forest products and service functions of forests.

- Primary forests continue to decline at a rapid rate in many countries, especially in Southeast Asia. Illegal logging continues in several countries, particularly in selected areas with high-value timber. Problems are most acute in countries that are not benefiting from economic growth, because such growth helps provide resources to strengthen institutions.
- While the net forest area in most countries of the region continues to decline, several countries are increasing their forest area as a result of investments in afforestation and rehabilitation.
- Economic development creates problems as well as opportunities. It is a challenge to ensure that commercial timber harvesting is done with care so that damage to the forest is minimized. Several Asian countries are implementing regional and national codes of forest harvesting practices to deal with this problem.
- High rates of forest plantation can result in a false sense of progress if, in fact, natural forests are being replaced by planted forests.
- Forest disturbances by pests and diseases pose a significant threat, especially to new plantations. As climate variability increases, the threat to forests from fire increases as well. The moist forests of Southeast

Asia, long thought to be immune to major fires, are increasingly being burned, with huge losses of timber and additional problems relating to human health and trade, for example. There is evidence that forest degradation is contributing to opening up moist tropical forests, allowing them to dry out and become more susceptible to large forest fires.

- Loss of biological diversity is a concern.
- The forest sector is witnessing a trend towards more participatory decision-making. The political commitment to sustainable forest management has never been stronger, and most countries have a relatively sound policy and legislative foundation for implementing it. There are broad trends towards more private ownership of forests, increased clarity of forest resources tenure, and decentralized management.
- One of the greatest challenges to policy-makers throughout the region is to ensure that benefits from forest products and services are shared with the poorest segments of society. Hundreds of millions of people in Asia and the Pacific continue to live below the poverty line, including in the largest countries with the fastest growing economies. A significant number of rural poor people live in forests or depend on forests in whole or in part for their livelihoods.

Problems remain to be solved, but there are increasing signs that several countries in the Asia and the Pacific region are starting to turn the corner towards sustainable forest management.

