

IUFRO



SPOTLIGHT

International Union of Forest Research Organizations

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IUFRO Spotlight is an initiative of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations. Its aim is to introduce, in a timely fashion, significant findings in forest research from IUFRO officeholders and member organizations to a worldwide network of decision makers, policy makers and researchers. IUFRO will encapsulate, and distribute in plain language, brief, topical and policy-relevant highlights of those findings, along with information on where/how to access the full documents.

IUFRO Spotlight also aims to present activities such as sessions at major IUFRO congresses or the work of IUFRO Task Forces with a focus on emerging key issues that are of great interest to policy makers and groups inside and outside the forest sector, and contribute to international processes and activities. The IUFRO Spotlight findings will be distributed in a periodic series of emails as well as blog postings.

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Forest Education Changing to Reflect Times

As singer-songwriter – and recent Nobel Prize winner – Bob Dylan, once said: The times, they are a-changin’.

That’s certainly true in the forest sector where challenges such as globalization, climate change and societal demands have altered how we view, study and use the forest.

As the forest industry changes to meet new and evolving demands, so too does the focus on forest education.

Forest studies that once concentrated primarily on wood as a resource are now a rarity. Environmental sciences, environmental management, land use, agroforestry and forest science, plus traditional forestry studies are all among today’s educational mix for those with an interest in the woods.

Part of the reasoning behind that change is because solutions to the challenges mentioned above call for holistic and cross-sectoral approaches. Those developments, in turn, have been reflected both in the labor market and in the demands of students for a greater diversity in subject matter, experiences and skills.



*Team members meet to discuss the Global Outlook on Forest Education (GOFE), research project that is one of the task force's major activities.
(Photo by Mika Rekola)*

To strengthen multi-disciplinary research on forests and practices, a Joint Task Force has been established through a collaborative effort of IUFRO and the International Forestry Students’ Association (IFSA).

The Forest Education Task Force seeks to bring together perspectives and knowledge from students, educators and other stakeholders; encourage international discussions on forest education and capacity building; identify, compile and communicate gaps and challenges in forest education – especially highlighting new fields of forest education; and to enhance forestry students’ mobility and education opportunities,

“Today’s forestry students are tomorrow’s forest managers and decision-makers,” said Sandra Rodriguez Pineros of the Autonomous University of Chihuahua and the IUFRO Coordinator of the Task Force. “We want to enhance global cooperation among students of forest and related science in order to broaden knowledge and understanding. That’s how we will achieve a sustainable future for our forests.”

“And we also want to provide a voice for youth in international forest policy processes,” said Lena Lackner, of Vienna’s University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, who is the IFSA Coordinator of the Task Force .

Over the past few decades there has been a troubling decline in the number of students enrolling in forestry schools. Some institutions have terminated their programs.

“We hope that by broadening the scope of student activities and experiences and modernizing curricula to reflect the 21st Century environment, we will strengthen research capacity and also make forest education attractive to young people,” Ms. Lackner added.

One of the products from the Task Force will be a “Higher Forest Education interactive tool.” (A beta version can currently be accessed at: <http://www.gfis.net/gfis/education/>) Working with the Global Forest Information Service (GFIS), data will be available on global forest education activities and a list of forest faculties and programs worldwide. In addition to promoting forest education activities online, this initiative will also enhance students’ mobility.

IUFRO and IFSA represent a similar field of interest at a global level and have a long history of cooperative work on educational matters.

The Task Force on Forest Education is one of several established by IUFRO to advance knowledge under five research themes in accordance with the IUFRO 2015-19 Strategy.

The five themes are: Forests, Soil and Water Interactions; Forests for People; Forests and Climate Change; Forests and Forest-based Products for a Greener Future; and Biodiversity, Ecosystem Services and Biological Invasions.

Visit the Task Force website: <http://www.iufro.org/science/task-forces/forest-education/>

The findings reported in IUFRO Spotlight are submitted by IUFRO officeholders and member organizations. IUFRO is pleased to highlight and circulate these findings to a broad audience but, in doing so, acts only as a conduit. The quality and accuracy of the reports are the responsibility of the member organization and the authors.

Suggestions for reports and findings that could be promoted through IUFRO Spotlight are encouraged. To be considered, reports should be fresh, have policy implications and be applicable to more than one country. If you would like to have a publication highlighted by Spotlight, contact: Gerda Wolfrum, IUFRO Communications Coordinator, [wolfrum\(at\)iufro.org](mailto:wolfrum(at)iufro.org)

The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) is the only worldwide organization devoted to forest research and related sciences. Its members are research institutions, universities, and individual scientists as well as decision-making authorities and other stakeholders with a focus on forests and trees. Visit: <http://www.iufro.org/>

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