

## Forest Products and Environment: A Productive Symbiosis

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Symbiosis can be defined as a mutually beneficial relationship. Can there be a symbiotic relationship between forest products and the environment? This question was asked at the IUFRO All-Division 5 Conference held from October 29th to November 3rd, 2007 in Taipei. It reflects the increasing awareness of the role of trees and forests in meeting demands of society.

### Multiple benefits of forests

There are several critical contemporary issues related to forest products and the environment. For example, the use of wood to provide energy is a worldwide need, since about half the wood consumed in the world provides energy - from fuel for a wood stove to input for an electric power plant. The use of forest products can also play a role in the storage of carbon to ameliorate climate change and reduction of forest fire risk. Finally, the use of wood compared to other raw materials, can have an environmental advantage. This is all well recognised by forest scientists, but the multiple benefits of forests and hence the importance of sustainable forest management also need to be promoted to the public and to policy makers. Obvious examples include the promotion of wood use for home construction and fittings, but also provision of water, food and energy in some parts of the world.

### Science and industry

The conference Keynote Speakers represented a mix of science and industry, all addressing different aspects of dealing with forests and wood products in our daily lives. The topical nature of the conference theme was underlined by presentations on technical issues around conservation values of the



International and Local Division 5 Organising Committee Members in Taipei

diminishing forest resource, and the need to maintain diversity in an increasingly industrialised world. The forest products industries themselves can make major contributions to forest conservation by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by recycling, energy reduction, design efficiency and offsetting by tree planting. The forest industry can also benefit from adopting a global perspective and cooperating to create new innovative products such as nanomaterials with enhanced efficiency and performance.

### Recommendations for IUFRO

Recommendations were made to expand the cover of Division 5 to include Pulp and Paper with a focus on tropical as well as temperate woods. Another topic discussed was the need to incorporate activities related to Wood Culture in a new Research Group as this would complement the other activities very well and support the beneficial nature of forestry and wood use around the world.

*All-Division 5 Conference "Forest products and Environment: A Productive Symbiosis" from October 29th to November 3rd, 2007 in Taipei. The event is held every four years and this time the attendance reached 340, with representation from 40 countries. A total of 365 papers and posters were presented in Plenary, Sub-Plenary and Group sessions.*

Further information on the meeting at: <http://www.iufro.org/science/divisions/division-5/50000/activities/>