

## Peer-to-peer Learning among Land Owners

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*The international symposium of IUFRO [3.08.00 Small-scale Forestry](#) held in Kuusamo, Finland, from 3-5 April 2011 drew some 30 participants from nine countries and focused on "Recent Advances in Land Owner Extension".*



Photo by Outi Virkkula

### Land owners need more innovative guidance

More and more land owners and forest owners live in urban areas away from their properties and have no or weak connections to rural social networks. These people tend to be well-educated and have regular jobs far from land-based businesses or they are retired. They have varying perceptions of their land and multiple motivations towards different land use activities.

Simultaneously, demand for private land is increasing. Among other things, climate change mitigation opens new perspectives for sustainable land use relating e.g. to bioenergy, biodiversity, and new types of forest management. New forest-based industries like nature tourism and carbon markets as well as forests' health impacts shape the discourse of rural land use. Today's land owners tend to need more and more support, advice and education in taking decisions about how to manage their land and what kind of voluntary practices or co-operatives they participate.

Consequently, education, information and guidance addressed to land owners need to take new and innovative forms in order to reach the target group and benefit both owners themselves and society in general. Traditional natural resource planning and guidance services can no longer fulfill the needs of a modern land owner.

### Purpose of the Symposium

The overall purpose of the Symposium was to shed light on the new forms and approaches of land owner extension, forestry advisory and rural communication with a special focus on peer-to-peer learning among land owners. Three keynote presentations were given concerning cooperation of forest owners, social learning and the Finnish forestry extension organizations and their activities. The sessions focused on the following themes:

- \* Peer-to-peer learning
- \* Forest planning, extension and services
- \* Cooperation of forest owners
- \* Adult learning
- \* Reshaping communities
- \* New approaches in focus

### Next steps in promoting peer-to-peer learning

Symposium participants concluded that family forest owners' peer networks are worth strengthening, because this would make the work of professional forestry extension organizations easier. Discussions with other land owners complement the advice given by professional foresters. Meanwhile, peer-to-peer information involves risks such as disseminating false information or misunderstandings. Concrete next steps in promoting peer-to-peer learning among land owners will include e.g. studying the functioning of study circles, conducting test seminars with land owners as key actors, and training of foresters and lay land owners to act as mentors on field trips and virtual peer-to-peer training courses.

### Websites:

*Presentations:*

<http://www.metla.fi/hanke/3521/symposium/#programme>

*Participant feedback:*

[http://www.metla.fi/hanke/3521/symposium/Kuusamo\\_feedback.pdf](http://www.metla.fi/hanke/3521/symposium/Kuusamo_feedback.pdf)

### Organizers and/or sponsors

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