

Work and employment in the forest sector: challenges and opportunities

Work and employment generated in the forest sector continue to be essential contributors to improvements in livelihoods and the well-being of people, especially in rural areas across the globe. Promoting decent work opportunities and creating quality jobs are critical components of ensuring sustainable and productive forestry operations and achieving a just transition towards more sustainable societies. Decent work deficits, such as persisting informality and poor and unsafe working conditions, remain prevalent in the forest sector, impairing employment quality and sectoral development. Further challenges relate to gender inequalities and the relatively high share of subsistence and seasonal workforce. Many workers in forest-related occupations, notably in developing countries, are vulnerable to discrimination and exposed to poor and unsafe working conditions while suffering from social and economic insecurity. In addition, economic uncertainty caused by crises such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other crises may exacerbate decent work deficits, particularly among workers in the most disadvantaged situations, such as individuals in insecure forms of work, migrant workers, and indigenous and tribal peoples. In this context, research needs to collect information, analyse and assess the state of forest-based work and employment before drawing conclusions, providing results and guidance for effective policies and good practices for increasing decent work opportunities while enhancing sustainable outcomes.

The session aims to bring together experts from academia, private and public sectors to discuss recent findings and good practice examples regarding methodological approaches for employment-related data collection and analyses and on more qualitative aspects of labour issues in the forest sector. The session will foster dialogue and exchange of ideas among interested parties, offering opportunities for further research collaboration. Particular attention is given to the following topics:

1. Data and data collection methods measuring forest-related workforce, decent work and job quality indicators
2. Informality and pathways to a just transition
3. Rights at work with a special emphasis on women and gender inequalities in forest-related work
4. Impacts of working conditions on workers' well-being and the effectiveness of OSH infrastructure, policies and legislation
5. Employment generation through social forestry programs
6. Green job opportunities in rural areas
7. Education and training required for the future workforce
8. Impacts of the policymaking on work and employment

We encourage empirical, theoretical and review contributions on the aforementioned topics for oral and poster presentations, flash talks and a panel discussion. The organiser is planning to invite the selected abstracts for publication in a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal.

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