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**Mission:**  2nd African Regional Conference of Forest and Farm Producer Organizations, Tanzania

‘Strengthening Forest and Farm Producers’ Organizations in a Changing Climate’

**Date:** September 25-29 2017

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**Background**

The second African conference of Forest and Farm Producer Organizations (FFPOs) is a follow-up to the first one held in Kenya in June, 2015 with participation of forest producer organizations and forest stakeholders from several African countries and partners involved in various Africa-level initiatives such as Africa’s Great Green Wall, the Network for Natural Gums and Resins in Africa. The Nairobi Conference identified lack of capacity of forest producer organizations, gender in-equality and low youth participation as major constraints in developing sustainable forest management and vibrant climate resilient smallholder forest product value chains in Africa.

**Conference objectives**

The main objectives of the 2nd African Regional Conference of Forest and Farm Producer Organizations was to share experience among forest producer organization representatives in order to strengthen existing organizations; special focus was on lessons learned from first phase of FFF in Africa and how to build these and others into the Phase II. The main other themes of the conference were:

* Shaping (sub) national cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder platforms for policy influence.
* Identifying opportunities to enhance forest producer organizations in other countries and areas in Africa, including at regional level (including NGARA)
* Sharing experiences and best practices on promoting gender equity and youth participation in FFPOs in general, and through innovative climate resilient business in Africa.
* Discussing sustainable business incubation models applicable to development of community based forest enterprises and the development of FFPOs in Africa
* Discussing recommendations and way forward

**Field Visits**

Prior to the conference the participants had a chance to visit the southern highlands of Tanzania to learn and exchange knowledge with their counterparts. The participants visited Mafinga Forest & Wood Industry Training Center, Mgololo / Mufindi Tree Growers associations (TGAs) Sao Hill Forest Plantation, Khalid Timber processing mill and Charcoal Briquette factory.

**Key Lessons learned:**

1. Quality germplasm and best sivilcultural management practices very important to ensure quality timber product and better market.
2. FFPO’s should build their organizational and technical capacity of their members to adopt tree farming as a business with linkages along the value chain
3. Livelihood diversification like bee keeping and non-wood forest products are necessary to cushion farmers as they wait for their tree crop to mature
4. Appropriate technology in saw milling that increases recovery is important for realization of maximum profits and business sustainability.
5. Briquettes from sawdust can be engineered to very high efficiency levels resulting in less pollution and longer burning times thus giving them a competitive edge.
6. Insurance of plantations/woodlots can play a key role in case of fire, pests and diseases outbreak
7. The growing population and expansion of cities in Africa provides a huge market for farm and forest producers but they have to meet the volumes and quality to realize benefits.

**Key lessons from the conference:**

1. FFPOs have a huge potential to contribute to attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) if well organized and well facilitated.
2. FFPO’s in Africa share the same challenges and can gain a lot by networking to learn and help each other
3. Women and youth play a very important role in communities and FFPO’s. Their participation in activities and in decision making is crucial for holistic and inclusive development.
4. Land is a crucial factor in forest enterprises. Tenure issues must be addressed if sustainable enterprises are to be realized and in particular access, control and benefit for women and youth. Conflict and soil fertility also impact greatly on access to land.
5. FFPO’s must structure themselves to deliver meaningful and quality services to members to ensure their own sustainability
6. Apex FFPO’s must strengthen their lobby and advocacy function to better serve the interest of their members especially when it comes to dealing with governments and other decision makers
7. Declarations and work plans from conferences and workshop need committed follow up and monitoring to ensure implementation.



*Courtesy - Sophie*