



ISTF NEWS

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Korea Forest Service: International Involvement

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The Korea Forest Service (KFS) has the overall responsibility for the establishment and implementation of forest policies and laws. It focuses on promoting systematic implementation of forest conservation and management, for the purpose of achieving well-balanced land development and conservation. It also plays a central role in efforts to prevent and mitigate the effects of natural disasters, including improving ecosystem health and vitality and contributing to public safety and conservation of the environment. KFS highlights the recreational and cultural functions of forests to improve the quality of life and the living environment, in both urban areas and mountain villages.

The International Society of Tropical Foresters is a non-profit organization formed in the 1950s in response to a world wide concern for the fate of tropical and subtropical forests, ISTF is dedicated to providing a communications network for tropical forestry disciplines.

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The Government believes that forests are the key resources for green growth. Forests in the Republic of Korea sequestered 41 million tonnes of CO₂ in 2007, which accounted for 66 percent of the total carbon emissions in the country (Lee, 2010). To maximize forest value as a key resource, the Korea Forest Service has been working on pursuing green growth through such methods as bioenergy technology development, conservation of forest resources, offering recreation forests and expanding urban forests, among others. Aside from the development of eco-friendly products, the Korea Forest Service is striving to improve its market competitiveness and to promote the production of high-valued forestry products like mushrooms, chestnuts, and medicinal plants for the growth of forestry industry.

Also the KFS pursues forest policies in the following directions: 1) Reinforcement of carbon cycle economy with an emphasis on renewable forest resources; 2) Conserving and managing forest resources; 3) Improving the quality of a green lifestyle; and 4) Sharing experiences, and contributing to international dialogue in accordance with the Five-Year Plan for Green Growth.

International Cooperation

The KFS has established bilateral cooperation programmes and support for the rehabilitation of degraded forests in 12 countries, including Australia, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Mongolia, New Zealand, Paraguay, Russia, Tunisia, Uruguay, and Vietnam (Figure 1). The country has continued to transfer forest technologies related to forest rehabilitation and management through human resources development programmes since 1984 and has supported more than 600 participants from 56 countries, focusing on climate change and desertification (Table 1).

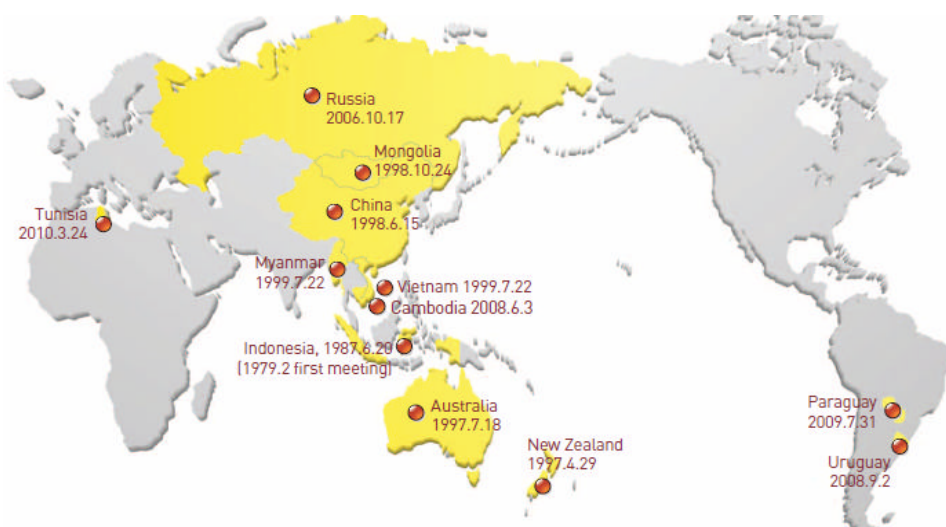


Figure 1. Countries with bilateral forest cooperation with the Republic of Korea.

Table 1. Projects implemented under bilateral cooperation on forestry.

Project	Project site	Duration	Budget (US\$)
Greenbelt plantation project	Mongolia	2007-2016	9.5 M
Plantation to combat desertification	China	2001-2005	5 M
Kubuchi desert plantation	China	2006-2010	2 M
Seed sources and nursery technology (phase 1 & 2)	Indonesia	2005-2010	1.6 M, 2.4 M
Mangrove rehabilitation	Indonesia	2005-2008	1.8 M
A/R CDM & REDD pilot project	Indonesia	2009-2013	5 M
Forest rehabilitation of arid region	Myanmar	2008-2010	1.5 M

In contribution to the international efforts on combating desertification, KFS (in cooperation with Gyeongnam Province) hosted the 10th UNCCD COP in October 2011.

In the fields of forest research and development, the Korea Forest Research Institute (KFRI), under the KFS, has adopted cooperation agreements with a number of international forest research institutions, including the Center for International Forest Research (CIFOR) and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO). Various training courses were organized by KFRI for government officials and researchers of developing countries. In addition, KFRI hosted the XXIII IUFRO World Congress in Seoul in August 2010.

Furthermore, ROK has been supporting diverse programmes through the Korea Green Promotion Agency (KGPA) with the support of KFS since 2009. KGPA has provided scholarship programmes for graduate students (MSc and PhD) of various nationalities. It also supports various short-term training activities and sponsors officers from developing countries to participate in the international events. KGPA has been closely working with partner countries in Asia to undertake tree planting projects and resource assessments.

ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation towards the Establishment of Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO)

In August 2008, in recognition of the need to ensure sustainable development, the ROK announced a “Low Carbon Green Growth” strategy as a new vision to guide the nation’s long-term development. This strategy contains policy goals to tackle climate change and energy issues, to create new growth engines through investment in environmental sectors, including forests, and to develop an ecological infrastructure.

With the strong and devastating impact of climate change being felt more frequently worldwide and with the global effort to reduce the emission of GHG gaining momentum under the UNFCCC and other frameworks, ROK has been taking a proactive approach to promote green technology and green growth. With international cooperation, the Global Green Growth Institute was launched by the ROK in June 2010 with a vision to promote an integrated approach striking balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability towards a better, safer and greener world.

As part of its environmental protection, the ROK executed an aggressive forest rehabilitation scheme from 1970s to 1980s (Figure 2), which has been recognized as spectacular. In that national implementation of forest rehabilitation, about 2.1 million hectares of degraded forests with wood stock of as low as 6 m³ per hectare after the Korean War was successfully reverted back to well-stocked forests, reaching an average of 126 m³ wood stock per hectare in 2010.

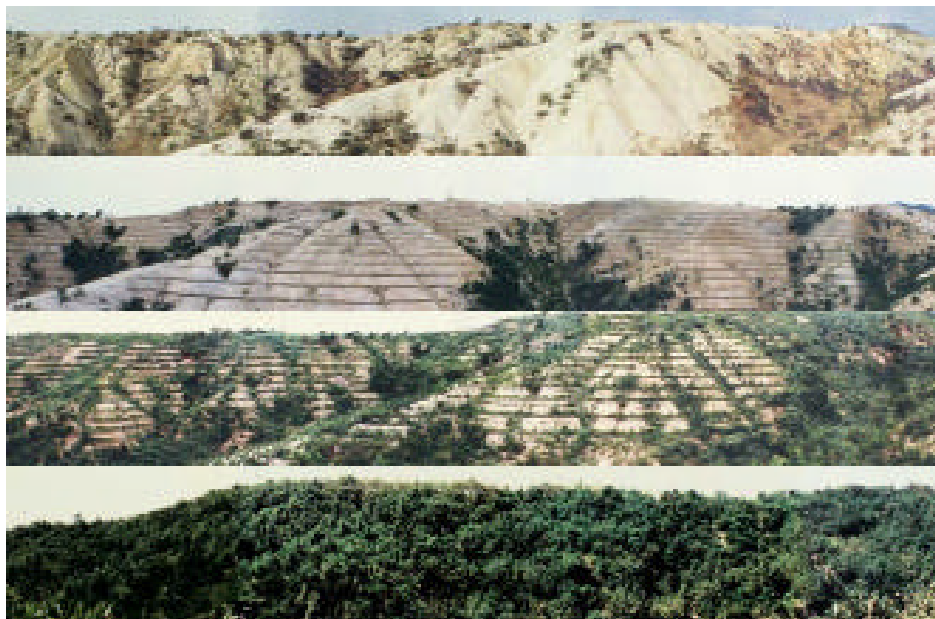


Figure 2. Progress in the Republic of Korea’s forest rehabilitation scheme.

ROK’s success in forest rehabilitation is driven by a strong will and efficient policy implementation of the government coupled with an active participation of the local communities. Another success factor is practical implementation of the outputs of related research works. This remarkable success was well noted and documented worldwide as follows:

- FAO recognized ROK as the only nation which has successfully implemented a forest rehabilitation program. FAO's Unasylva (1981) mentioned that *“The Republic of Korea embarked on a four-fold programme in 1973...The programme succeeded beyond expectations.”*
- Achim Steiner, UNEP's Executive Director commended ROK's success at the 10th Ramsar Convention (2008) that *“Korea...used to have environmental issues in the past - 1980s- but now the forestation is a rare success.”*
- Many other well-known experts have acknowledged ROK's achievements as well, such as by Lester Brown (2008): *“South Korea is a reforestation model for the world. We can reforest the Earth.”*

ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation: Perspective and Expectations

Through the proclamation of “low carbon, green growth” as a key policy agenda for national development, a move from a conventional approach to economic and industrial development to an environmentally friendly approach development was initiated. In order to share this vision internationally, the President of the Republic of Korea, Myung-Bak Lee, proposed the establishment of AFoCO during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)–ROK Commemorative Summit in June 2009 (Figure 3). Greening Asian forests and strengthening cooperation to address emerging forestry issues, including climate change, are the main objectives of this endeavor.



Figure 3. The establishment of AFoCO was proposed by ROK during the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit in June 2009.

ASEAN-Korea Environmental Cooperation Project (AKECOP)

AKECOP was launched in July 2000 following the guidance of the first ASEAN-ROK Summit in 1997, where the environmental issue was identified as a priority area of collaboration. As an

environmental collaboration initiative, AKECOP was designed to implement research and educational activities under the theme “Restoration of Degraded Forest Ecosystems in Southeast Asian Tropical Regions.” In August 2000, an institutional mechanism was set for the implementation of the activities with the establishment of the ASEAN-Korea Environmental Cooperation Unit (AKECU) at Seoul National University (SNU). AKECOP Steering Committee was chaired by a team leader from SNU. Its members consisted of the Chairs of the ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN) and the ASEAN Senior Officials on Forestry (ASOF), Head of the Environment Division of the ASEAN Secretariat, representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT), Ministry of Environment, National Institute of Environmental Research, Korea Forest Research Institute, and Director of the National Instrumentation Center for Environmental management at SNU. Leading research institutions or universities from nine ASEAN Member States (AMSs) participated in the activities. Details of project implementation are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Implementation of AKECOP from 2000 up to 2011

Phase	Period	Years	Budget in Totals (US\$)	Budget per year (US\$)
I	July 2000~June 2005	5	2,450,000	490,000
II	July 2005~June 2008	3	1,050,000	350,000
III	June 2008~June 2011	3	1,350,000	450,000

Regional research program has been implemented for 11 years by each AMSs on their current forest issues, including restoration of terrestrial and mangrove ecosystems, improving forest biodiversity and alleviation of poverty, and biomass energy. Seven universities, including Seoul National University, University of Seoul, the Catholic University of Korea and others, and the National Institute of Environmental Research have participated in the on-site field research in the Philippines. In addition, scholarship programs under AKECOP produced 18 MSc and PhD graduates and more than 180 participants have completed short-term training courses.

Cooperation Activities under the ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation Programme

During the 2nd AWG Meeting for the establishment of AFoCO in March 2010, ROK proposed to support for pilot projects under the ASEAN-ROK forest cooperation programme. The pilot

projects were first developed in 2010 with selected AMSs at the end of 2010. Four pilot projects were signed individually between ROK and four AMSs (Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar and Philippines) and were completed in 2011 (Table 3).

Table 3. Pilot projects under the ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation Programme (2010)

Country	Project title	Amount (US\$)	Implementation status
Cambodia	Strengthening ASEAN-ROK forest cooperation toward sustainable forest management (SFM)	40,000	Implemented and submitted the final report
Indonesia	Identification of R&D capacity and future priorities in forestry in ASEAN	50,000	Implemented and submitted the final report
Myanmar	National REDD+ strategy development and enhancing capacity in Myanmar	30,000	Implemented and submitted the final report
Philippines	Capacity building of stakeholders on the preparation of forest investment proposals (US\$ 20,000) and support to international conference on forestry education and research (US\$ 10,000)	30,000	Implemented and report to be submitted

At the ‘International Workshop on Forest Cooperation’ organized in Seoul in December 2010, ROK signified its intention to support the future implementation of ASEAN-ROK forest cooperation programme. An estimated budget of 1 M US\$ has been allocated for 2011 providing an amount of 100,000 US\$ for each AMS except for Brunei having an amount of only US\$ 80,000 (Table 4). During the international workshop, the areas of future cooperation were identified as follows:

- a. Mitigation of climate change effects through rehabilitation/restoration of degraded forest and ecosystem, environmental service, community forestry and REDD+ activities;
- b. Conservation of biodiversity and eco-tourism;
- c. Non-timber forest products development and renewable biomass energy; and

d. Human capacity development (scholarship and training programme).

Table 4. Implementation of nine projects under the ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation (2011)

Country	Project title	Amount (US\$)	Implementation status
Brunei	Brunei plant biodiversity: endemics and database	80,000	ongoing
Cambodia	Improving capacity on forest restoration in Cambodia	100,000	ongoing
Indonesia	Spatial database development for conservation on priority species of trees in Indonesia and capacity building on biomass energy	100,000	ongoing
Lao PDR	Building core capacity for village and village cluster forestry	100,000	ongoing
Malaysia	Plant biodiversity enrichment model in greened ex-tin mine and human capacity development to enhance the implementation of SFM in Peninsular Malaysia	100,000	ongoing
Myanmar	Mitigation of climate change effects through restoration of degraded forests and ecosystem and REDD-plus activities in BagoYoma Region of Myanmar	100,000	ongoing
Philippines	Addressing climate change through community-based fuelwood plantation	100,000	ongoing

development and management

Thailand	Strengthening collaboration of forestry research and SFM with local people participation	100,000	ongoing
Vietnam	Developing non-timber forest products (NTFP) in the northwest of Vietnam as the mechanism for SFM and livelihood improvement for local communities	100,000	ongoing

Four project monitoring teams, as independent parties, were organized by the KFS to assess and evaluate the project implementation in AMSs. A project evaluation workshop was held in December 2011 in the ROK and a project coordinator or a focal official from each AMS was invited to evaluate the ongoing project as well as to further explore possible forest cooperation activities in the future.

The Forest Cooperation Projects will be expanded with more funding support in 2012, not only for current participating countries but also for other Asian countries. The activities will focus more on capacity building in the context of SFM and in addressing climate change issues.

Initiatives and Development on Agreement between ASEAN and ROK on Forest Cooperation

Following the proposal for establishment of AFoCO made by ROK at the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit in June 2009, further initiatives and negotiations took place between the ASEAN and ROK forestry officials, a process that eventually led to the signing of the “Agreement between the Governments of the Member States of the ASEAN and the ROK on forest cooperation” at the 19th ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia in November 2011 (Figure 4). The Agreement represents a milestone in the history of ASEAN–ROK forest cooperation.



Figure 4. The Agreement between the Governments of the Member States of ASEAN and the Republic of Korea on Forest Cooperation was signed by foreign ministers during the 19th ASEAN Summit (18 November 2011 in Bali, Indonesia).

On the signing of the Agreement, the Chairperson highlighted the following statements during the 14th ASEAN– ROK Summit:

We welcomed the signing of the Agreement between ASEAN and the Republic of Korea on Forest Cooperation in Bali on 18 November 2011, aiming to strengthen forestry cooperation and enhance the capacity in dealing with climate change in the region. We agreed to promote cooperation for the implementation of the Agreement, thereby building a foundation for the future establishment of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization.”

Scope of the Agreement between ASEAN and ROK on Forest Cooperation

Once the Agreement comes into force, field-oriented actions will be carried out over the course of two years focusing on SFM and climate change issues in the region. Certain activities will be related to combating desertification, preventing disasters, promoting community forestry and enhancing forest carbon stock. Simultaneously, a dialogue towards the establishment of multilateral organization, AFoCO will be initiated involving the AMSs, ROK and other potential countries.

The Agreement will have an institutional arrangement by establishing a “Governing Council” and the “Secretariat”. The Council will be responsible for the implementation of the Agreement and will act as a decision-making body with a member each from the AMSs and ROK.

The Secretariat office is expected to be based in ROK with the main task of assisting the Council in the implementation, coordination, monitoring and reporting of activities in accordance with the approved work programmes and plans. The Secretariat will be headed by the Executive Director and it will work closely with the relevant focal agencies of all the participating countries for the implementation of the activities.

Under this Agreement, participation of a third party, such as other relevant organizations, states or entities, in the joint programmes, projects and activities will be sought including their participation in the dialogue for the establishment of AFoCO.

Vision and development strategies of future AFoCO

AFoCO will have a legal identity of regional organization established by an intergovernmental multilateral arrangement involving AMSs, ROK and other Asian countries. AFoCO is expected to fulfill the primary objectives of strengthening forest cooperation among the members to prevent deforestation and forest degradation and promoting SFM on ecological, environmental and economic aspects (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Vision of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO).

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