

SUMMARY NOTES ON THE 9TH SESSION OF THE
ASIA-PACIFIC FORESTRY COMMISSION

by

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It is evident that most of the nations in attendance have ample technological ideas and similar lines of policy thinking as the more developed countries in the area and that F.A.O. are endeavouring to provide them with technological background and access to many sophisticated techniques. However it seems that implementation of advanced forestry policies in these countries is the main problem. Nonetheless there is a growing awareness that log export is not the most beneficial way of utilising forest resources for national development. Pressure for more agricultural land and shifting cultivation are seen as the main sources of erosion of the forest estate.

Forecasted consumption trends indicate that the demand of the developed countries will increase threefold for saw and veneer logs and tenfold for pulpwood by the turn of the century. Demands by internal traders will increase twelvefold for logs and twelvefold for pulpwood. In the Indian subcontinent mainly internal traders, log demand will increase ninefold, pulpwood demand fivefold. These estimates are only tentative and in fact the Indian sub-continent has already reached the predicted consumption level for 1980. There will thus be a gradual tightening of resource throughout the region and in addition the developing countries are already expressing concern that under current trading arrangements they may not be receiving a fair share of their profits for realisation of their natural resources.

Coupled with this situation little is known about mainland China and this country could in fact have an overall effect on timber supply and demand

situation in the region which might eclipse the gigantic effects already exerted by Japan. Land clearing in order to provide food supplies at basic survival level is seen as perhaps a more important factor than devastation of timber areas for log exporting, or the need to reserve forest areas for environmental purposes in the overall timber supply situation. All countries represented are well aware of environmental requirements and it is significant to note that in New Zealand after making all allowances for environmental reserves of every kind, further conservation pressures have resulted in the withdrawal of a further 10 to 15 per cent of the previous estimated net forest area. It is also likely that proposals for the rehabilitation of the Beech forest will meet extremely stiff opposition from the environmental groups.

Largely as a result of F.A.O. intervention there is an increasing awareness by exporting countries of the value of their resource as part of a regional resource and an increasing appreciation of the need for perspective planning. There has been a marked improvement in the basis for preparation of national plans and in addition there is a crystallising move for exporting countries to combine and co-operate in regulating and allocating supplies, and also in obtaining more information about the bona fides, and standing of consumers for their timber and end use of their product. All of these factors, together with the increasing timber deficit anticipated for Japan will combine to tighten the available resource as well as to tighten the terms and conditions under which it is to be realised. Japan is now importing 11.2% of its log supplies and 35% of its chip material. Imports will become increasingly significant due to a predicted downturn in local production but environmental restrictions are not regarded as limiting forest production in any way. Japanese proposals are positive and definite. They have made a wonderful approach to environmental matters within their own country and it is their firmly expressed intention to apply a similar rigorous approach to any operations in which they are involved overseas.

New Zealand is experiencing an insatiable demand for timber fibre in all its shapes and forms. There has been a marked price increase and heavy pressures to overcut as a result of this. The classic sustained yield concept is being relaxed in both private and public sectors and the large log export trade is now becoming permanent. Maintenance of this trade is felt to be obligatory and it could well be that New Zealand may move towards greater compensatory imports of finishing grades and finishing products. The interest in planting is increasing and is now tending to lead to land use conflict. Combined farming and forestry activities and more intensive management of both are now the basis of very careful planned availability surveys. Environmental pressures are so consistent as to seriously restrict the use of indigenous forests. This is regarded as a failure in public education.

As with most other countries in this area Thailand expressed doubts as to the feasibility of sustained yields in native forests and an embargo on log exports is proposed.

Korea has 1 million ha of plantations less than 10 years old, primarily for fuel wood, India has similar fuel problems.

Indonesia has 122 million ha of forest of which only 43 million is expected to remain as permanent forest, a rehabilitation scheme based on attracting overseas capital to develop an export trade in processed products.

In Hawaii there is a strong trend towards diversion of land into single purpose management, especially recreation and wildlife conservation. Hawaii also is under the same pressures of the litigation following the environmental era as in the U.S.A. where five hundred major law cases are facing the U.S. Forest Service regarding environmental matters.

New Guinea also does not intend to perpetuate log export. The common feeling of the exporting

countries was that they needed assistance in the control of and implementation of conditions under which logs are made available to external concessionaires.

Summarising the overall supply and demand situation, Mr. Westoby said that undoubtedly supply would tighten and the exporting companies would claim a greater share of the returns from their product. He suggested the situation would crystallise into three types of supply categories:

1. Those countries planning and able to maintain internal self-sufficiency.
2. Those countries dependant on their internal domestic programme plus a certain level of imports.
3. A joint approach to regional co-ordination of all aspects of log supply and demand.

Some indication of scale in Asian forestry and other matters is provided by the following:

1. Vietnam War Damage

In the period 1961-71 one-tenth of the total land area of Vietnam was defoliated, including one-third of the total area of commercial forest. This amounted to 1.4 million hectares containing 45,000,000 cubic metres of timber or enough to meet local timber demands for the next 30 years. Tordon 24D 245D were applied with reckless abandon in quantities of millions of pounds. Fifteen thousand pound "cheeseburgers" were used to clear heavy pads in one plane decimation. Massive assaults on bush were made by bulldozers operating in line and abreast to clear jungle likely to have been concealing guerillas, saturation bombing and artillery is estimated to have resulted in 21 million craters, roughly 9.1 metres by 1.5 metres deep and covering roughly 200,000 hectares in total area. Added to which 1 to

2 per cent of all ammunition used is dud and the whole countryside therefore remains as a vast minefield carrying timber heavily impregnated with metal from shrapnell. Similar damage is anticipated in Laos and other countries, affected by the war.

2. On the other hand Japan has 25 universities teaching forestry with a total attendance of 1,100 students. Forestry is taught in three streams, forestry, forest production and forest engineering. In addition forestry is taught at 30 junior high schools. With roughly 30% state forest and 70% private forest the Japanese Extension Service runs to a total of 2,500 professionalist officers.
3. Thailand has a training school for elephants.
4. Malaysia with 33 million ha of forest is experiencing critical problems in respect of alienations of further areas for agriculture. In collaboration with F.A.O. (Alf Leslie) they have developed a comprehensive programme to indicate the implications of various levels of alienation and the final extent of the forest estate will be determined by pressure for food not timber. Sri Lanka is experiencing similar problems and hopes to offset this by planting marginal agricultural land at 5-600 ha/yr.
5. Most countries, though proffering the application of multiple use in forest management, admitted to increasing polarisation of actual land management institutions, with control of National Parks, Wildlife and Recreation passing to separate statutory bodies for single purpose management.
6. New Zealand categorically stated that this represented failure on the part of the profession to educate the public and suggested that only the most competent people, not necessarily foresters, were good enough to

handle public relations. The U.S.F.S. has adopted a policy of "Informing and Involving" the public through regional committees under the direction of regional foresters.

7. The Brindabella Fauna Sanctuary managed by Commonwealth Department of Environment comprises 4,856 ha, including a substantial area of resumed farmland for development into habitat observation areas. The annual budget is \$50,000 for maintenance and \$110,000 for capital expenditure, a lot of money for as yet a not very impressive area.
8. The current budget for Canberra Parks and Gardens is \$6,000,000 per year.