

Africa to debate the sustainable future of forests

Despite the fact that forests are essential to mankind's existence on earth, half the world's forest cover has been lost in the last 50 years while only 7% of remaining forests are protected.



Forestry is an integral part of sustainable development.

In the second week of September, Africa will, for the first time, host the XIV World Forestry Congress in Durban, which aims to ensure that forestry is an integral part of sustainable development. The congress also sets out to propose technical, scientific and policy interventions to promote forest sustainability.

Africa's interests will be strongly represented at the congress by the Forest Stewardship Council, which has regional offices in South Africa, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It also has members and stakeholders throughout the continent, with FSC-certified forests in 19 African countries. FSC will also host its annual In Good Company 2015 (IGC) workshop ahead of the congress; the IGC is an opportunity for international business leaders to debate the most pressing issues facing the forestry sector and the supply and value chains that are integral to the value of sustainable forest products.

Sustainable use of Africa's forests

Chris Burchmore, the regional director of FSC Africa says: "This congress is a crucial event for the sustainable use of Africa's forests, which in turn are linked directly to biodiversity and livelihoods on the continent and ultimately, to life on Earth." Burchmore adds "It's high time Africa hosted this important event. It will bring together the global forestry community, including government, NGOs, business and scientists to review and analyse the key issues and to share ways of addressing them. It will be professionally and culturally rewarding, but challenging too, as participants engage in defining a vision and strategies for the sustainable future of forests.



More than half of the continent's population relies directly or indirectly on forests for livelihood

The importance of forests can't be overstated, he adds: they help mitigate climate change, ensure adequate supply of fresh water, enhance biodiversity as well as sustainable incomes, livelihoods and food security

More than half of the continent's population relies directly or indirectly on forests for livelihood. But in recent decades, Africa has experienced the highest rate of deforestation of all the continents, 0.49% per year. This represents some 3.4 million hectares lost annually.

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