

## EDITORIAL

## Trees outside forests

Over the past 15 years, concern about the world's forests has risen high on the global political agenda. But for millions of people in widely differing environments around the globe, from arid zones to mountainsides degraded by agricultural or residential encroachment to urban centres, forests are not a fact of daily life. In some of these areas there have never been forests; in others, they have disappeared. However, even where there are no forests, trees are still crucial to economic, environmental and social well-being.

Trees outside forests – i.e. trees and tree systems found on agricultural land, on meadow and grazing lands, on unproductive lands and in cities and other human settlements, among other places – have numerous, often essential roles and functions. They make a critical contribution to sustainable agriculture, food security and diversification of household economies. They supply many products (including wood for fuel and construction, fruits, barks and food products) and services (e.g. biodiversity, havens for wildlife, microclimate stabilization). They protect crops and the soil against water and wind erosion, thus combating drought and desertification and protecting water resources. They provide shade and mark property boundaries. From a cultural and social perspective as well, trees outside forests are rich in significance.

This issue of *Unasylva* focuses on the special challenges concerning the conservation and use of trees outside forests. Many of these issues were highlighted at the Workshop on Off-Forest Tree Resources, held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, in July 1999; the observations and recommendations of the workshop are summarized in the "World of Forestry" section.

A fundamental starting point for a comprehensive approach to trees outside forests is a clear and agreed terminology, and a basic overview of the extent and state of the resource. The opening article of this issue, by C. Kleinn, focuses on the inventory and assessment of trees outside forests. Particular reference is made to examples from Latin America.

For centuries, subsistence farmers in semi-arid West Africa have maintained a traditional land use system known as the "agroforestry parkland" system, in which mature trees occur scattered in cultivated or recently fallowed fields. J.-M. Boffa gives an overview of the key issues underpinning the management of agroforestry parklands and outlines research and development strategies for their conservation and improved management.

The following article, by R. Carucci, also focuses on Africa, reviewing the potential of trees in reversing and preventing

desertification. The observations and conclusions are drawn from the experience of an FAO-assisted rural development project in Keita, the Niger.

A use of trees in farming systems which dates back to the beginning of domestic agriculture is for animal forage. H.M. Shelton evaluates the potential for sustainable use of leguminous trees to meet the needs of livestock and thus enhance the productivity of farming systems.

Interest is growing in the prospects for private-sector partnerships with communities or individuals for production of goods and services not only from forests, but also from trees outside forests. J. Mayers examines the advantages and disadvantages of a range of relatively new types of company-community relationships involving trees outside forests.

In temperate agricultural landscapes in Europe, trees and shrubs occur mostly in the form of scattered fruit-trees, hedgerows and riparian buffers. F. Herzog briefly describes these systems, summarizes their history and discusses their major environmental, socio-cultural and economic functions.

Trees are also a vital component of the urban landscape, infrastructure and quality of life. G. Kuchelmeister highlights the importance of trees and related vegetation in and around densely populated areas in both industrialized and developing countries. The focus is on development cooperation, poverty alleviation, innovative public-private partnerships and multiresource management.

In recent years a large amount of attention has focused – justifiably – on ways of reducing degradation and deforestation which continue to affect forests around the world. Yet attention must also be focused on the special challenges facing trees outside forests. This attention, within a holistic approach to the management of trees and forests overall, is required if these resources are to contribute their full potential to sustainable development.

This issue of *Unasylva* also contains the full text of an address by Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari to the thirtieth session of the Conference of FAO (12 to 23 November 1999) on sustainable forest management in Finland. Its explicit endorsement of forestry and the expression of the quest for sustainable forest development by a national leader are heartening to all with these goals at heart. ♦