

IUFRO



SPOTLIGHT

International Union of Forest Research Organizations

Union Internationale des
Instituts de Recherches
Forestières

Unión Internacional
de Organizaciones de
Investigación Forestal

Internationaler
Verband Forstlicher
Forschungsanstalten

IUFRO

Interconnecting Forests,
Science and People

125th Anniversary
Congress 2017

The 125th Anniversary Congress on 18-22 September 2017 in Freiburg, Germany, will offer a wide selection of scientific sessions highlighting innovative research and interdisciplinary research approaches of relevance to forests, and focus on the transfer of scientific knowledge on critical global forest-related challenges to national and international political agendas. In a series of "Congress Spotlight" articles individual sessions shall be showcased to give a foretaste of the richness and scope of research findings that will be presented at the Congress. Keep updated at: <http://iufro2017.com/>

IUFRO 125th Anniversary Congress Spotlight / Theme 1 - #51 / August 2017

Pooling resources to meet sub-Saharan forest challenges

Collaboration and cooperation are the keys to facilitating learning and making better use of research outcomes in sub-Saharan African countries facing severe forestry challenges.

That's the philosophy behind Dr. Joseph Cobbinah's upcoming session on the **impact of forestry research on policy, livelihoods and economic development in sub-Saharan Africa**. The session will take place at the IUFRO 125th Congress in Freiburg in September.

Dr. Cobbinah, of the CSIR-Forestry Research Institute of Ghana, is also coordinator of the session. The session will provide a platform for sharing knowledge and experience on common challenges and for discussing measures and approaches to accelerate cooperation. It will allow researchers from member institutions to present research outcomes that have impacted policy, livelihoods and economic development in the region, he said.



Training workshops for early and mid-career forest scientists across FORNESSA countries contribute to enhancing research competence and networking. (Photo by Michael Kleine, IUFRO)

"Forest research, when properly designed managed and utilized, can play a vital role in the formulation and implementation of SFM policies, improve livelihoods and contribute to national GDPs," Dr. Cobbinah said.

In the sub-Saharan region of Africa in recent years, climate change has caused specific, noticeable challenges, he said. "Due largely to erratic rainfall patterns, soil moisture deficits have had major negative impacts on forests and people in terms of forest growth, pests and diseases, food security and basic health."

He went on to emphasize the importance of cooperation. "Ecological zones often cut across national boundaries. Different countries may have common ecological challenges. The rain forests of Central Africa, as an example, are shared by a number of countries, as is the Miombo forest of the South Eastern Region of Africa.

"Countries within these specific enclaves tend to have similar ecological, social and economic challenges. In a region where institutions are generally under-resourced, networking and cooperation allow for focusing the minds of a

critical mass of experts on common problems. It can avoid duplication of efforts, act as a catalyst for the generation of knowledge, facilitate collective learning, and allow the sharing of technology development costs,” he added.

Dr. Cobbinah says to make the most of the situation, there is a need to change the way research is conducted. He feels that currently there is often a lack of connection between the researchers, forest managers and policy makers and the local communities, which are the direct beneficiaries of the research.

He is hopeful his session will provide a pathway to better understand how forest research results feed into policy decisions, contribute to economic development and affect livelihoods in the region and also help rejuvenate the FORNESSA (Forest Research Network for Sub-Saharan Africa) network.

The network, a non-profit, non-governmental scientific organization, aims to support and strengthen forestry research in order to improve the conservation, sustainable management and utilization of forest resources throughout the region.



*Meeting of Directors of FORNESSA institutions to discuss strategic issues of research priorities, collaboration and funding.
(photo by FRIM, Malawi)*

Several issues have, in Dr. Cobbinah’s opinion, hampered the network’s progress. Among them, he mentions a weak to non-existent IT infrastructure in some institutions; uneven institutional development (many forest researchers operate within agricultural institutes where their activities are overshadowed by agriculture research); funding support that is weak in some areas; and also language issues involved in dealing with scientists from different colonial (Anglophone, Francophone and Portuguese) backgrounds.

While he does not view the IUFRO Congress as a panacea, “it should help us identify areas for collaboration and cooperation, allow us to share information and be a step toward reinvigorating our network,” Dr. Cobbinah said.

The September 18-22 Congress in Freiburg will celebrate IUFRO’s 125th anniversary. Founded in 1892 in Eberswalde Germany, IUFRO has grown to unite more than 15,000 scientists (who cooperate in IUFRO on a voluntary basis) in almost 700 member organizations in more than 120 countries.

IUFRO promotes global cooperation in forest-related research and enhances the understanding of the ecological, economic and social aspects of forests and trees. It disseminates scientific knowledge to stakeholders and decision-makers and contributes to forest policy and on-the-ground forest management.

About 2000 scientists from 89 countries are expected to attend the Congress. The sub-Saharan Africa session in Freiburg will be one of 172 scientific sessions that will cover a wide array of topics dealing with various aspects of forest research.

See you at the IUFRO 125th Anniversary Congress in Freiburg, Germany!
Look out for [#IUFRO2017](#) on Twitter and [@iufro2017](#) on Facebook!

The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) is the only worldwide organization devoted to forest research and related sciences. Its members are research institutions, universities, and individual scientists as well as decision-making authorities and other stakeholders with a focus on forests and trees. Visit: <http://www.iufro.org/>

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