

Network for Young Professionals in Forestry



RATIONALE

The forestry sector is struggling to change with the times, and address the challenges and opportunities faced by young professionals working within the sector. But many of these challenges could be addressed through intergenerational dialogue and the inclusion of the next generation of leaders in the forestry sector, providing them with a space to connect and share knowledge across perceived geographic boundaries.

- Forest sciences are being absorbed by other disciplines, including natural resource management and environmental studies; while at the same time, forestry is expanding beyond traditional silviculture to include conservation, poverty reduction, carbon sequestration, etc.
- While there is heightened global awareness regarding the roles of trees and forests in delivering economic, environmental, and social benefits, including addressing climate change, land degradation and income generation, forestry is also perceived as an extractive industry, which do not hold much public favour.
- The forestry sector is ageing; forestry institutions around the world are experiencing dwindling membership and catering to an older demographic. This can partially be attributed to a reduction in forestry programmes and students, but also to the way forestry is marketing itself and recruiting and/or developing its younger generations. The perception is that forestry is dominated by an ‘old boy’s club’ with limited career development opportunities.
- Networking, particularly at the internationally level and amongst young professionals is limited, and yet it is increasingly recognized that local challenges are also regional or global challenges.

A young professional network could cater to the forestry sector's specific technical and sectoral needs, influence the forestry sector to empower young professionals, improve intergenerational dialogue, and revitalize existing forestry professional networks. An international young professional network is necessary as there is increasing recognition that national/domestic challenges and opportunities are often global, relevant in other countries, with transferrable solutions.

The establishment of an international young professionals’ network within the forestry sector could serve multiple purposes:

1. Link the next generation of forestry sector participants and leaders by **establishing a global network of professional peers**;
2. Address the main forestry issues, current and emerging, by giving a **global voice** to young forestry professionals;
3. Provide **knowledge exchange and career development opportunities**, including greater access to training resources, outreach and skills development for members;
4. Promote a continuum from forestry student and early professional to mid-career and senior forestry professional, providing **mentorship opportunities** and ensuring continuity within and for the progression of the sector;

5. Increase the visibility and representation of young forestry professionals in the forestry sector – providing **opportunities to showcase their expertise** and to contribute to professional associations and institutions; and
6. Serve as **ambassadors for the forestry sector**, promoting the environmental, economic, and social benefits of sustainable forest management, and to encourage more people to join the forestry sector so the industry is continually developing and able to adapt to future challenges.

EMPOWERING FORESTRY'S FUTURE LEADERS

Learning from the experiences of similar young professional networks in other natural resource sectors, the Forestry Young Professional Network (ForYP) would advocate for young professionals, providing advice to the sector on how it could better serve its future leaders. It would primarily function using an online member platform, and creating networking opportunities at sector conferences:

- Linking forestry young professionals to their peers around the globe;
- Sharing news, events, courses/trainings and job opportunities within the sector;
- Coordinating a mentorship program between young professionals and more senior professionals, as well as young professionals and students;
- Transferring innovative and new knowledge and technology; and
- Developing and offering professional development training.

Membership would be open to anyone under 40 who is either already working or seeking a career in the forestry sector. To the extent possible, the ForYP network would build on, complement and/or utilize existing platforms and mechanisms, such as IFSA and national forestry associations, to expand the youth voice to include an early to mid- career perspective. For example, including courses and vocation training targeting young professionals on forestry knowledge platforms; providing opportunities for young professional engagement at forest conferences and meetings through networking events, as well as presentation or facilitation opportunities; utilizing skill development platforms, such as LinkedIn Learning, etc. As such the network would collaborate closely with these other existing networks, such as IFSA, IUFRO and other professional associations.

To initiate the YP network, an interim Board will be determined by a Selection Panel – made of YPs and Advisory Committee members – from applications (or nominations) and serve for a period of 3 years. This interim Board will be responsible for establishing the ForYP Network, including the network charter/modus operandi, membership registration/management, website, etc. This initial interim Board will be announced at the World Forestry Congress 2021 in Republic of Korea.

The ForYP concept has been developed by a group of young and more established professionals in the forest sector. This group, along with other advisors, will remain available to mentor the inaugural Board throughout the establishment phase of the ForYP. The ForYP concept group is comprised of:

- Geraint Richards, Head Forester, Duchy of Cornwall (United Kingdom)
- Rob de Fegely, Chief Executive Officer, SFM Australasia Pty Ltd (Australia)
- Jim Carle, International Forest Management Consultant, JB Carle & Associates (New Zealand)
- Elaine Springgay, Forestry Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization (Canada)
- Alfred Duval, Regional Forester, Port Blakely (New Zealand)
- Michelle Freeman, Board Director, FSC Australia & New Zealand (Australia)
- Maria Paula Sarigumba, Board Director, International Society of Tropical Foresters (Philippines)
- Yemi Adeyeye, Director, Young Professionals in Agriculture Development (Nigeria)