



Eastern and Southern Africa
Small Scale Farmers' Forum
ESAFF - UGANDA



AGROECOLOGY CAN RESTORE OUR LOST FOREST COVER

Background

The role of forests and forestry in development is emphasized in numerous global and regional development frameworks, such as the EAC Vision, the African Union Agenda 2063, and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. As much as 8.7% of the country's economy is derived from forestry, according to the Uganda Forestry Accounting Report (NEMA 2011). For both human and environmental well-being, forests are essential.

In Uganda, the value of trees in socioeconomic growth is widely acknowledged. The goal of Uganda Vision 2040 is to increase the percentage of forest cover from 15% in 2010 to 24% in 2040. A target to increase forest cover to 18% was set as part of NDP II, which sought to boost sustainable

output, productivity, and value addition as important growth potential. With an overall objective of **"Increased household income and enhanced quality of life."** NDP III's strategic direction specifies the ambition of doubling the present forest cover by 2025.

The government of Uganda committed to increasing the resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other related risks in the Malabo Declaration of 2014. It is anticipated that the current negative trends in biodiversity and ecosystems will impede efforts to achieve 80% of the assessed Sustainable Development Goals targets linked to poverty, hunger, health, sustainable consumption and production, water, cities, climate, oceans, and land.

Why forests are important:

Forests are essential to life on Earth, providing us with food, fuel, shelter, and medicine. They are also vital to preserving biodiversity and mitigating climate change. Unfortunately, deforestation is occurring at an alarming rate, threatening the health of our planet and its inhabitants. Forests are vital for clean air and water: Trees absorb carbon dioxide and other pollutants from the air and help clean the atmosphere. They also store carbon, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. Additionally, forests play a major role in the water cycle by filtering and storing runoff, thus protecting groundwater supplies.

ESAFF Uganda believes that forests are crucial in protecting the environment by providing oxygen, improving air quality, climate amelioration, conserving water, preserving soil, and supporting wildlife.

"Forests provide habitat for wildlife, a home to a wide variety of wildlife, including birds, mammals, amphibians, and insects. By preserving forests, we can help ensure the continued existence of these species and preserve biodiversity. Since long time ago, forests are very important to our communities. They provide essential resources such as food, firewood, and medicinal plants. They also provide very good inputs for making organic pesticides and fertilizers."

- Kisekka Ibrahim, small scale farmer, Masaka district

Our actions to restore forests:

Agroecology has long been recognized as an approach that helps reconcile the needs of people and nature by providing healthy and nutritious food while accelerating the recovery of degraded land and strengthening climate change resiliency. Small scale farmers still emphasize that Agroecology is the best answer to recover the lost forest cover and mitigating climate change

ESAFF Uganda has taken on the following actions:

1. ESAFF Uganda launched a massive tree planting campaign with an aim of planting 245,300 trees across the country. A total of 101,459 trees have so far been planted by small scale farmers in all the 54 member districts.
2. ESAFF Uganda is promoting agricultural methods, such as agroforestry, diversification of crops, conservation tillage, green manures, natural fertilizers, biological pest control, rainwater harvesting, and production of crops and livestock in ways that store carbon and protects natural resources.
3. ESAFF Uganda is using Agroecology Clubs, Community Agroecology Schools and media to communicate the importance of forest in our ecosystem and contribution to food security.

"We can improve air quality, lessen the impact of the urban heat, and contribute to the prevention of extreme weather events by increasing the amount of trees and green areas in metropolitan areas. Governments and stakeholders must work together globally to create sustainable forest management policies and procedures. This entails lowering the amount of illicit logging, stepping up reforestation initiatives, and encouraging the sustainable utilization of forest resources."

- Hakim Baliraine, National Chairperson, ESAFF Uganda

What more can be done:

Small-scale farmers urge the government to launch new afforestation programs immediately. New plantations will increase forest cover and help to restore the eco-balance. For afforestation, trees should be chosen based on local geographical conditions, and care should be taken during the trees' initial growth.

The government should enact legislation mandating forest conservation. Surveying forest resources in order to avoid overuse, Categorization of forest areas and proper delimitation of reserved forest areas to prevent anyone from damaging the reserved area, as well as determining which areas require reforestation, while regulating and improving the commercial use of forest products Forest protection from fire, mining, and other threats.

In addition to the threat posed by humans, forests are threatened by parasitic fungi, rusts, mistletoe, viruses, and nematodes. All of these are detrimental to the environment. There is a need to urge communities to plant indigenous tree species that are more resistant to pests and diseases as well as climate change.

Conclusion:

Small scale farmers further call for the popularization of Agroecology and the domestication of the United Nations Declaration which states that peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands, and of the resources that they use and manage such as forests.



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