

FAO and UK launch 5-year AIM4Forests programme

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To celebrate Earth Day, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Kingdom launched AIM4Forests, a five-year programme designed to accelerate country capabilities in forest monitoring as a part of global efforts to stop deforestation and forest degradation, and restore forests.

More than 420 million hectares of forest have disappeared since 1990. And although deforestation rates have slowed down significantly, 10 million hectares are still being lost every year. Through the pledges made at the UN's climate talks in Glasgow in 2021, world leaders committed to working collectively to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030, sustainable land use, and the conservation, protection, sustainable management and restoration of forests, and other terrestrial ecosystems.

One barrier to progress has been a lack of information. Those that are responsible for forests need accurate data to inform the right course of action. In this regard, countries urgently need national forest monitoring systems (NFMS) embedded in government institutions that deliver high-quality data and provide the critical information needed for domestic forest-related priorities and policies, including land-use decisions.

Well-designed NFMS enable governments to report emission reductions internationally through Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) processes. This is a key step towards accessing climate finance and raising levels of ambition of international commitments under the Paris Agreement.

To address such challenges, the AIM4Forests programme (Accelerating Innovative Monitoring for Forests) will support domestic forest monitoring based on modern technologies and technical innovation, and also leverage UK expertise in academia, research & development and in the use of space data and remote sensing.

“FAO welcomes the partnership with the United Kingdom, which will be fundamental in supporting Member countries’ efforts to sustainable forest management and restoration, supporting the achievement of their commitments such as nationally determined contributions (NDCs). Forest and land use data are critical for overall land use planning in an integrated manner, to transition to sustainable production, address biodiversity loss and climate change,” said Maria Helena Semedo, FAO Deputy Director-General. She added, “This contribution from the United Kingdom will support key areas of FAO’s strategies on climate change and biodiversity.”

The role of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) in forest management and conservation is increasingly recognised. The programme, therefore, supports IPLC efforts to monitor forest areas, further strengthening their role as forest stewards.

The new £24.5 million programme is part of the UK’s International Climate Finance commitment to spend £11.6 billion between 2021/22 and 2025/26, including at least £3bn on solutions that protect and restore nature. The programme will run until 2028 and work with 20 countries across Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and Latin America. The new programme will be implemented by the National Forest Monitoring team of FAO’s Forestry Division working in collaboration with UN-REDD and GFOI to coordinate country technical assistance on MRV and NFMS.