## FAIR IDEAS

SHARING SOLUTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE PLANET

### Locally controlled farm-forestry: A firm foundation for fair green economies?

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### **Session summary**

Sustainability is crucial to one planet existence. But growing populations with growing expectations are putting the squeeze on natural resources and threatening local livelihoods. How can we ensure a sustainable approach to farmforestry that promotes equity and respects ecological limits? The question is particularly pertinent to Brazil where the recently passed 'new' Forest Code would drastically alter the balance of forest-farm land in Brazilian settlement communities with far-reaching consequences for livelihoods and the environment.

This session will debate the merits of strengthening rights, business capacity, organisation and investment for locally controlled farm-forestry as a viable way forward. Might a firmer grip for local people shift wealth and power to those with less, while creating strong incentives to manage and restore natural resources for the global good? Could such control be turned into profitable and sustainable business opportunities? Or will the explicit trade-offs in wealth and power render the concept unworkable irrespective of local and global outcomes?

### 1. Why 'farm-forestry'?

We use the term farm-forestry to mean the full spectrum of natural-resource based activities that local people at the forest frontier undertake. The term recognizes the fact that many people in such settings are often farmers first and foremost, but also harvest a range of timber and non-timber forest products and services for subsistence or cash (occasionally this becoming their primary source of income). The term also recognises that in such settings local people often harvest from trees in natural forests, but this is often complemented by the domestication and use of trees on farms – especially where population density rises.

Dates: Location: 16–17 June 2012 Rio de Janeiro iied

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### 2. What do we mean by 'locally controlled farm-forestry'?

We define this term as 'the local right for farm-forest owner families and communities to make decisions on commercial forest management and land use, with secure tenure rights, freedom of association and access to markets and technology'. It is all about resource rights, the business capacity to derive benefits from them, the organisation necessary to break into markets and the ability to attract investment that further secures those resource rights. The word 'locally' means near and in the farm-forest landscape. Local is where you (literally) can hear and see what goes on. Local is different from central and regional in the sense that those at central and regional level cannot hear and see or adequately control farm-forest activities – nor understand the complicated web of interconnected values associated with farms and forests that have importance, beyond financial income, to local people. The word 'controlled' involves both rights and responsibilities with a strong assertion that local management control, local business control and local political control is good for the people and good for the forest.

### 3. Why is locally controlled farm-forestry a relevant issue in Brazil?

Brazil boasts the largest remaining area of natural forests – with an extensive forest frontier where many hundreds of thousands of local people make their living. The original 1965 Forest Code has historically insisted that a 'Reserva Legal' of 80 per cent of a settlement property be kept as forest – but the extent of this legal reserve has never been adequately translated into commercial opportunities for local sustainable forest businesses that might have supplemented rural farming incomes. The debate over the new Forest Code is therefore heated. Are there ways of unlocking the potential of Brazil's farm-forests that might benefit local people and keep the forest standing?

#### 4. Why is locally controlled farm-forestry relevant globally at Rio+20?

Rio+20 comes in search of sustainable development and a 'green' economy. It comes at a time of climate change in which social and economic upheaval is almost inevitable as growing populations place ever more pressure on climatically fragile natural resources. Stronger local control prioritises the needs of local people over distant markets. It builds entrepreneurial capacity to benefit from farm-forestry and sustain local livelihoods. If done well it thereby creates a strong local incentive to manage forests sustainably in ways that are both resilient to and help to mitigate climate change. It is a paradigm shift – not greening what is economic, but rather placing the economy in service of what is green – endorsed by international alliances of family forests, community forests and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the tropical forests. It should surely be at the heart of any Rio+20 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

