
Forest Conservation and Development

Challenges and Missions of China

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1. Challenges of Chinese Forest Protection and Development

The human society is entering a new century, which was born with new technology and ecological civilization. The adjustment of global economic structure is now in ascendance across the whole world. Nowadays, the world economy is turned from traditional industry era to intellectual economy era. Sustainable development has been put on the agenda of the society's development. China, which is carrying 1/5 of the world population, it is facing unprecedented missions and challenges in order to ensure sustainable development. As such, China has to realize its twin goals: social development and environmental protection. Accordingly, the needs of an increasing population could be satisfied with more output while the ecological services could be maintained on the same level or even lifted to a new level. Under such circumstances, it is highly urged for various forest sectors in China to be fully aware that Chinese forestry must go to a much broader field and should be managed on a higher level.

1.1 Changes in the pattern of demand and ideology

1.1.1 Traced back to the human history, it can be seen clearly that the human society had experienced big changes in their ways of using forests and in their vision of forest values. In history time, people regarded viewed forests as the gift given by God from a fathomless well. Over long time, they simply viewed forest resources as inexhaustible resources and thus they exploited forests as a cheaper investment to build up their wealth. Only in the last century, with scarce forest resources left, people came to realize that forest was recyclable resource, which can generate products and benefit the environment. It is an ecological system supporting the biosphere of which human being is an apart and connecting the forests with mankind's survival. And they should be managed in a scientific and conservative way. To illustrate under Chinese context:

--From the 1950's to late 1970's, the national construction mainly demanded timber and forest products. As the fundamental industry of national economy, the main task of forestry is to produce timber. Although the policy of "regarding the administration of forests as basis" and the idea of "keeping the mountains green and using them forever" have been advanced in the mid-1960s, due to the policy circumstances of "taking more important than giving" and the historical limits of peoples attitudes towards resources and environment, the forest resources had been regarded as cheap primitive accumulation and had long been over spent in industrial construction and agricultural land reclamation. The forestry construction was in effect on a road of sacrificing the forest's ecological interests and supporting national economy construction by centering on wood production.

--From the mid 1980's to the early 1990's, in light of forest development strategy, the national forest government initiated some programs to mobilize the whole nation including the public and various parties to participate actively in afforestation all over the country. The system for target to be reached and responsibility shouldered by various parities should be set system should be set up in the governments at all levels. Efforts should be made to fortify forest protection and to increase the forest stocks. During this period, 10 consecutive significant projects purposed for ecological protection were undertaken. These giant 10 projects were led by "Three North Shelter Belt Construction Project" in northern part of China. As achievements of the projects, targets set to plant trees in almost all lands appropriate for afforestation had been reached in 12 provinces and autonomous regions. At the same time, the total area of forestland in China and the forest stock were both doubled and regional ecological environment were also been improved. With regarding to rural policies, contract and responsibility system for forest production were also put into practice. Accordingly, the system entailed more productivity than the previous system named as "people's communities". In terms of the legal system building, the forestry law system and forestry law enforcement system with "Forest Law" and "Law of Wild Animal Protection" as the core were also been

established and improved.

Unfortunately, almost no fundamental changes were made in the traditional system and the land tenure system was still lagged. In forest practices, resources were still exploited with lower input. Therefore, the expected economic policies of “who plant trees own them” was not put into effect, and the deforestation rate could not effectively be reduced.

1.1.3. After the World Summit held in 1992, forest protection and environmental issues arouse widespread attention from the international community. The sustainable development has become main trend of the world’s economic and social development. Having experienced the catastrophic floods of 1998, the Chinese government has come to realize the importance of environmental conservation. The Chinese central government advocated that improving the ecological environment must be taken as a fundamental policy to be long upheld and then proposed to re-created a beautiful country and execute west development strategy. The change of the dominant demand of social development and the value concept toward forests have made forestry the main factor for improving ecological environment and thus confronted it with unprecedented historical tasks and development opportunities.

1.2 The forest resources are the bases and observance of the natural laws is the principle to be adhered to. Looking back on the latter half part of the past century, we once “struggled with nature” and considered ourselves rivals of nature, but we have to admit that the so-called “natural disaster” actually resulted from the “wrongdoings of mankind”. To get wood, we over exhausted the natural forest resources; to have more land to cultivate, we destroyed the forests and reclaimed land from the lakes; some regions also destroyed the forests and reclaimed land from the lakes; some regions also destroyed forests in the name of developing economic development zones. As a result, the marshes are withering, desertification is aggravating and the diversity of living things is being severely damaged. What’s worse, once the destruction of forests and grasses have been affecting man’s survival, the loss is often hard for one generation to make up. The temporary economic interest obtained by violating the natural laws is paying its high ecological costs, for the hideous ecological environment has become the root cause of preventing economic development and aggravating poverty. The reality shows that if people want to reform nature and improve living conditions, they must first respect nature and observe natural laws. Forests and grass are the necessary basic requirements of man’s survival. Whether to prioritize the economic demand or the ecological demand, the prerequisite is that forest resources must be developed sustainably and man’s behavior must be ratified and standardized. We cannot return to the roads of obtaining temporary economic interests at the cost of destroying forest ecology.

1.2. The opportunities and challenges brought about by social environment for forestry.

1.2.1 The 21st century is one of ecological civilization. As the main body of continental ecosystem, forest resources provide the basic means, such as shelter, food medicines and so on, for mankind’s survival and development. They build up one significant component in environmental conservation. As far as we are concerned, sustainable development of forest aims to make the human society to live in harmony with the nature at higher levels. In order to reach the goal, environment conservation and ecological balance with appropriate extraction of natural resources should be made.

In China, at the CPC’s fifteenth conference, which was held in late 1990’s, the Chinese central government the set a new target for another 5-year planning. In this planning, one main task is to maintain ecological functions and to slow down ecological deterioration. The nature and the indication of forest development have been reflected and put into practices in various fields in pursuit for the socio-economic development. The public in China have more awareness of the significance of forest conservation, restoration and development and thus to achieve sustainable development.

According to the fifth survey (1994-1998) on national forest resources, the total area of land appropriate for forest was 2,632,950,000 ha. Among them, 1589410000 ha were forest land which ranks the fifth in the world. But the average per person is only 0.128 ha., which is only 1/5 of the average number of the world. The forest coverage is 16.55%, which equals 60% of the forest coverage of the whole world. The forest reserve volume is 112.7 billion square meters, which ranks the seventh in the world. But again, the reserve volume per person is only of a very small portion, i.e. 9.0 square meters, which is only about 1/8 of the

average per person volume of the world. So we can see that marked progress has been made in terms of forest resources cultivation, administration and reasonable utilization, and the forest acreage and reserve volume have increased. But at the same time, the quality of forests is not very good, usable resources are decreasing and other problems still remain.

1.2.3 It also put forward the implementation of west development strategy, proposing that during the 10th five period stress will be put on strengthening ecological environment construction and outbreaks be made in five to ten years. To achieve this aim, the SFA will advance step by step six large key projects with its all strength:

E.1 Natural Forest Protection Project (NFPP): fully stop the cutting of NF in the upper reach of Yangtze River and the middle and upper reach of the Yellow river, and immensely decrease the wood output of the main state-owned forest areas in the Northeastern china and inner Mongolia while at the same time protect NF resources in other areas.

E.2 is to go on strengthening the construction of the key shelter wood system in the “three north”—northeast, northern china and northwest areas, the huai he river and taihu lake drainage area and the lower reach of the yangtze river such as zhujiang and the afforestation of the taihang mountain and plain area projects. The main purpose is to solve the sand problem in the “three north area” and ecological problems in other areas.

E.3 is to return the cultivated land to forests and grasslands. This it the project that involves broad fields and large masses whose main aim is preventing sand problem around Beijing area and solve the sand erosion problems.

E.4 is the project of preventing sand problem around Beijing area which aim is to strengthen efforts to solve sand erosion problems and construct Beijing Tianjing biosphere.

E.5, is the project of protecting wild animals and constructing natural reserves. This is to protect rare living thing ad wetland resources and implement the construction projects of protecting wild animals and theirs habitats.

E.6, is the construction projects of main forest area industrial bases, accelerate the quick-growing woods and woods as industrial materials and accelerate the construction of green channels and carry out trees and grass planting.

3. Exploring policy mechanisms for afforestation

The productivity can only be increased under positive and appropriate environment. During the late 1990's, China made an extensive institutional reforms and the market economy with Chinese characteristics was preliminarily established. It is necessary for forest sectors to make up-dated adjustment in its policy orientation and the enforcement of policies. Therefore, great efforts should be made to mobilize the public to participate in the forestry construction in order to entail more economic factors such as the social capital, technology and human sources to flow to the forestry sector. The benefit of forest managers should be ensured. The optimal combination of forestry development and forest stakeholders should be sought in order to tap great potentials for forest development.

Our vision in the near future

In near future, we should make main efforts in following various fields:

1 Build up investment and financial mechanisms by various means

1.1 The public forests are mainly aimed for ecological functions in favor of the benefit for the whole society. It is recommended that the main budget source for this kind of forests should be from the government investment. Beside, multi-lateral investment from various parties in the society also should be encouraged to have more diversified financial sources for the development of the public forest and investment in this kind of forests. The ecological compensation funding is being formulated based on Chinese Forest Laws. Currently, this kind of funding is mainly used for the development and conservation of the public forests. The national government should fund with appropriate proportions to the key areas for fast-growing trees.

Subsidies should also be given to precious tree species and timbers. It is necessary to build up a stable, more diversified and broader financial mechanics for urban afforestation in order to fasten the process of urban afforestation.

According to the principle of the person who invests should be benefited as well as shouldered risks, we will gradually promote the contract system for constructing the key forest program, program supervision system, bidding system, contract management system, and improve the vital forestry investment supervision system.

2. Impose lower taxes in concerned sectors and to implement long-term loan polices

Commodity forest as a combination of ecological and economic benefits, it should be imposed with lower taxes than normal. Favorable polices should be given to this type of forests. For example, it could be given lower periodical loan interest and loan subsidies. Policy favorable will be given to those long-time and low-rate loans. Forest manager have legal rights for management, beneficiary right and other legal rights. Forest, timber and forestland use right can be used as guaranty and can be mortgaged. The national forest government will provide favorable loans with subsidies to those rural forest organizations such as individual plantations and forestry shared organizations, whose products will have promising markets. Micro-credit loans will also be offered to those projects of cultivation of multi-lateral crops and stockbreeding. In particular, the favorable policies on taxes and credits should support those practices such as afforestation on barren hills, wild land and so on.

3. Diversify management forms and cultivate more economic factors in forestry sectors

It is necessary to develop collective economy, which is reached in effective ways and with various forms. The enterprises and individuals should be encouraged to be involved in the investment on treatment of forest "four waste" (barren mountain, wasteland, waste beach and waste sand). The forest established by individuals should be promoted and the commodity forests should be management under a more free context. The managers of commodity forests should be allowed to have their own decisions on investment operations such as under share system, contract system, individually owned forest farm and so on.

4. Put the land tenure into more efficient way and promote the circulation of use right on forest, timber and forest lands.

The forest resources should be used in a conservative and appropriate ways in order to use the forest resources in more efficient ways. The compensation mechanisms for using forests are required to be in sound development and the intermediate organizations such as forest property assessment organizations should be cultivated.

After the establishment of forests on land appropriate for afforestation such as on "four waste", under concerned contract, the trees planted should be owned by the contractors. The contractors have use right on

contracted “four waste” during the concession period. Trees planted by people under contract systems should be owned by the people who plant the trees. Under agreements of various transaction parties, the certifications of ownership and use right are allowed to be transferred and inherited under legal compensation system, yet the transaction price has to be regulated by the national government. With regarding to the establishment of commodity forests, the ownership and use rights on the established forests and timber can either be illegally transferred or be converted into monetary terms which can be used as shares for joint-investment, joint-afforestation and joint-management. They can also be a gift or can be inherited either with compensation or without compensation in light of different situations.

5. Implement strategies on the integrity of trade, industry and forest development.

Industry sectors such as timber processing, forestry chemistry are urged to invest in the construction of commodity forest base and forest production base with various means. New forestry industry such as eco-tourism, green food industry, pharmacy, animal breeding, wild plant cultivation is urged to be promoted. In order to reach goals mentioned above, it is necessary to regulate and guide the different markets and emphasize on cultivation and development of market elements such as market information.

6. Strengthen Forestry Legal Systems and Build Forest Law Enforcement and Supervision System

Laws issued after the open up and reform policies in China show clearly the nature and the status of forestry in national development. The National Congress, which is a legislature body in China, has issued or amended 13 laws concerned with natural resources represented by Forest Law and Wildlife Conservation Laws. By the end of year 2000, China has been involved in 46 international conventions. The national forest government on behalf of Chinese government to sign on 3 conventions, namely, Conventions on Preventions of Desertification, ITTC, Convention on Protection on International New Plant Brand. It has been also engaged in the practices of 4 conventions. Chinese government has signed 25 bilateral agreements, which include 5 agreements represented by national forest government. Five (5) among 22 laws related with natural resource conservation issued by the National Congress have been implemented by Chinese forest government. The national forest government has also formulated more than 60 institutional rules and regulations according to national laws and regulations. Currently, the national forest government is engaging in legal construction and law enforcement on 3 undertaken key conservation projects, namely, Natural Forest Protection Project, Project of Prevention and Treatment on Desertification, Conversion of Farmland into Forest or Grassland Project.

7. Improve the quality of forest cultivation, education, and promote the construction of technical teams by virtue of technology.

Establish and consummate supervision and assessment system in order to entail forest key projects with technological support and ground. An appropriate proportion of budget on technological maintenance should be ensured in order to use biotechnology, IT, new materials and breeding technology in forest resource management. There is also a need to set up pilot area and to extend techniques to rural areas in order to narrow the gaps between technological achievements and real practices. The indices such as technological improvement should be identified. The competition mechanisms should also be introduced so that the income distribution and technical contribution can be compatible.

8. Forestry administration at different levels and those primary-level forestry organizations are supposed to transform their function, commit themselves to management, supervision and guide, and serve to protect the proprietors' legal rights.

In the course of promoting forestry industrialization, forestry authorities are to regulate forest products market, cultivate trade organizations, individuals and intermediate communities, increase input of science and technology in forestry, train those forestry communities with modern technology, advanced management methodology and law awareness.

On entering the new century, we are still far from the future target and have to shoulder more missions. Chinese government and we Chinese will make greater efforts in developing forestry and bettering ecological environment, and will devote to global forest resource protection and ecological construction.