

WELCOMING ADDRESS

Hidejiro Nagumo, General Chairman of the Symposium

Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the organizing committee of this subject group of IUFRO, I am delighted to be able to welcome you to the IUFRO Symposium on Forest Management Planning and Managerial Economics. I am glad to say that we have been able to welcome a total of 140 participants from 20 different countries and we deeply appreciate your coming to join with us in this symposium.

The gravest problem facing forestry today on a global scale is the continued deforestation of large areas of natural tropical forests. According to estimates by FAO, this deforestation amounts to 11 million hectares each year. One of the major causes is said to be the lack of any suitable management plans for these types of forests or, where plans exist, a lack of effective implementation. This situation imposes a three-fold responsibility on researchers in the field of forest management. First, there is an urgent need to develop management systems applicable to tropical forest management. Secondly, and more importantly for this symposium, there is an increasing need to manage the forests in those areas not threatened with deforestation in the near future with the maximum possible efficiency. Given the long investment periods attached to forestry it is quite possible that efficient management systems and plans will be needed before any major problems in timber supply or ecology become obviously apparent. This means that, not only must forest managers have at their disposal NOW efficient systems of management, but also, taking a longer term view, researchers need to develop ideas which will be of use in forecasting the state of the world's forests in the future when the effects of many of these management plans will be becoming apparent. Finally, and no less importantly, there is a need to ensure that efficient systems once developed are "user friendly" in the sense that their actual implementation and use present no problems for the forest owner or organization for which they are intended. At all times the interface between the management system being suggested and the forest owner who has to put the system into operation must be borne in mind.

The purpose of this symposium is, therefore, to allow the exchange of research and reports of the actual use of management systems.

However, if this was all that we hoped would be achieved here I believe that we would be setting our sights too low. We hope that two other aims will be met by this symposium. First, it will provide an opportunity to establish and renew personal relations between the participants which it is hoped will help to stimulate ideas and push research work forward. And finally it will provide you all with a chance to see Japanese forestry at first hand.

The per capita demand for timber in Japan is one of the highest in the world and so, with a population of about 120 million, this means a very large total demand for timber. About two-thirds of this has to be imported and so the problems of world forestry are very real for us in Japan. However, the managers of Japanese forests are also facing very difficult problems. The strength of the Yen has meant cheaper imports but, as imported timber dominates many of our timber markets, the price of wood has been depressed and so timber growing has become an unattractive investment. Also, as more and more young people leave agriculture and the villages the available labour force for forestry has declined. As a result, the Japanese forest owners have reduced supply in the hope of increased timber prices in the future and the timber products industry has been plunged into the red. For researchers into forest management this has meant the search for management systems that are not only efficient but also minimise the demand for labour. So it is in a very practical sense that we in Japan hope to benefit from the advances in the techniques of forest management.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to the excursion to Nikko at the end of the symposium. There we will be able to show you one of the best examples of Japanese forest management. It is our earnest hope that you will find your visit here enjoyable and that it will prove rewarding to you and that when our international guests return to their homes they will take with them pleasant memories of our country.