

Preface

There is a growing consensus that producer organizations are critically important for the sustainable use of natural resources. Representing the collective voices of farmers and forest-dependent people, indigenous groups and rural communities, they provide essential services to their members and are the building blocks of local democracy. Formal or informal, effective producer organizations identify and agree upon the means to manage their natural resources. And when they are truly inclusive — and with the right support — their management choices are more sustainable and the benefits are more equitably shared. In this way, they offer solutions to many issues that otherwise hinder our ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

ETFRN News has been reporting on issues of topical importance for almost a quarter of a century. Editions in the past six years in the current “book” format have covered landscape approaches, REDD and FLEGT, private investment, forest financing, forest governance, chainsaw milling, biodiversity conservation, and climate change. The latest edition continues this tradition.

This issue brings together 30 articles — 26 full papers and 4 sidebars — that include experiences from more than 30 countries. Most contributions are from the Global South, representing NGOs, UN organizations, government bodies and private companies. Women make up one-third of the 80 contributing (co)authors. The list also includes some founders and members of producer organizations.

The result is a compilation of experiences that adds significantly to the growing body of knowledge on forest and farm producer organizations. Authors write of their achievements and challenges, how they have organized themselves, what support they have received, and whether this has helped them or not.

As well as the experiences of individual producer organizations, we also hear from umbrella organizations, national or regional federations or associations, and the pivotal role that they are playing in scaling up benefits. This shows that to have a meaningful influence on public and corporate policies and practices, becoming better organized at higher levels is a key requirement. Well-organized and articulate producer organizations have been instrumental in making the necessary changes for local producers to improve and sustain the benefits to their lands and their livelihoods.

In the end, as emphasized in most of the articles, the goal is to ensure people's rights to land, natural, social and financial resources. And here, much remains to be done. But there is a lot to learn from the contributions in this *ETFRN News* and we hope you will take encouragement from the stories that are shared here.



René Boot
Director, Tropenbos International
Chair, ETFRN



Eva Muller
Director, Forest Economics Policy and Products Division, FAO