

Global Summit on “Advancing Sustainable Forest-based Bioeconomy Approaches”

23–25 February 2026, Vienna, Austria

Guidance Note

Item 8.2 - Growing forest-based innovations

1. Date & Time

Tuesday, 24 February 2026, from 15:00 to 18:30 CET

2. Context

Innovation can be defined as “doing something new and different”. Five broad dimensions of innovation can be distinguished: technology, finance, policy, institutions, and social systems.

Innovation can be defined as “doing something new and different – whether solving an old problem in a new way, addressing a new problem with a proven solution, or bringing a new solution to a new problem”¹. An enabling ecosystem that supports education, adoption, and scaling is essential for driving innovation. Innovation must be context-sensitive, responsible, and inclusive to effectively address on-the-ground realities and needs. Five types of innovation are particularly valuable for the forest-based bioeconomy sector, ranging from cutting-edge tools and technologies (technological innovation) to new funding mechanisms (financial innovation), improved policy frameworks (policy innovation), organizational reforms (institutional innovation), and community-based participatory approaches (social innovation). Effective global action depends on understanding the breadth of innovation across the forest-based sector and developing appropriate global strategies.

The forest sector has shown a strong capacity for innovation across various types. However, significant challenges persist in identifying, adapting, and scaling-up innovations. We need a comprehensive understanding of the breadth of innovations occurring in the sector and strategize how to approach it on a global level. Taking into account the outcomes of COLI webinars no. 3 “From forest to market: Advancing forest-based bioeconomy solutions to ensure resource supply meets growing demand” and no. 6 “Bioeconomy cooperation: next steps to upscale forest-based bioeconomy”, the session will focus on identifying different types of innovation. It explores the partnerships that are essential for driving innovation, particularly in facilitating the uptake of science-based innovations in the forest-based bioeconomy sector and enhancing associated capacities.

3. Objectives

This thematic session aims to identify:

¹ FAO. 2024. The State of the World’s Forests 2024 – Forest-sector innovations towards a more sustainable future. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd1211en>



- i. Key aspects of innovation as a driving force and its potential for advancing the forest-based bioeconomy.
- ii. Challenges and immediate opportunities for innovations to advance the forest-based bioeconomy, including partnerships to enhance learning opportunities and skills.

4. Guiding questions

- i. Which recent **innovations** have successfully advanced sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches? e.g. they could be any of (or a combination of) technological, social, policy, institutional, or financial.
- ii. Which **factors** currently prevent the large-scale implementation of sustainable practices in the forest sector? e.g. such as policy constraints, institutional challenges, or financial gaps.
- iii. What are the most promising **short-term innovation opportunities** in the forest sector that can be rapidly scaled up to enhance the forest-based bioeconomy?
- iv. Which **collaborative efforts** between stakeholders are needed most to create the conditions that support the expansion of forest-based innovations and accelerate this transition? (e.g. those by government, industry, finance, and research)

5. Format and modalities

The thematic session will be hosted by the session lead. The session comprises a keynote presentation, followed by stakeholder views and facilitated discussions in breakout groups on site and online. During the facilitated discussion, participants will have the opportunity to contribute to the above-mentioned four guiding questions. Time allows for approximately 15 minutes of discussion per guiding question within the breakout groups.

The key points from the parallel sessions will be presented in the plenary followed by an exchange of views giving participants the opportunity to contribute to the discussion of all topics.

6. Programme

Topic 8.2 Growing forest-based innovations	
Time	15:00-17:00 CET
Thematic Session	Growing forest-based innovations
Location	Room 1 "Maria Theresia"
Session Lead	Akiko Tabata (JPN)
Moderator	<i>Ewald Rametsteiner (FAO)</i>
Opening by session lead	Akiko Tabata Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan



Keynote	Eric Hansen Oregon State University, US
Stakeholder views	Helen Wallace Queensland University of Technology, Australia
	Robert Mavsar European Forest Institute (EFI) International Bioeconomy Forum (IBF) Working Group on Forest Bioeconomy
	Mia Crawford UNFF Major Group Farmers and Small Landowners
World café	Breakout group discussion on guiding questions <i>Facilitated on-site: Lisa Lehner (AT), Thaís Linhares-Juvenal (FAO), Nelson Grima (IUFRO), Peter Mayer (BFW)</i> <i>Facilitated online: Martin Hosner (Bioeconomy Austria)</i>
	Summary by facilitators & Closing by session lead
Coffee break (17:00-17:30) Reconvene in Room 10 “Orangerie”	
Time	17:30-18:30 CET
Plenary	Advancing forest-based value chains & Growing forest-based innovations
Location	Room 10 “Orangerie”
Co-Chairs	Georg Rappold (AT) & Pumeza Nodada (ZA)
Moderator	<i>Tiina Ryttilä (FIN)</i>
Discussion & Exchange	<i>Pitch of key points from Item 8.1 and 8.2 by session leads</i>
	<i>Exchange of views</i>
	<i>Conclusion by Co-Chairs</i>



7. References

- i. **FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)**. 202X. *Summary report of Webinar 5. Building the future: innovative wood solutions for carbon neutrality and sustainable bioeconomy*. Rome, FAO. [link will be provided upon availability]
- ii. **FAO**. 2025. *Background paper of Webinar 5. Building the future: innovative wood solutions for carbon neutrality and sustainable bioeconomy*. Rome, FAO.
<https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd7200en>
- iii. **FAO**. 202X. *Summary report of Webinar #6 - Bioeconomy cooperation: next steps to upscale forest-based bioeconomy* Rome, FAO. [link will be provided upon availability]
- iv. **FAO**. 2025. *Background paper of Webinar #6 - Bioeconomy cooperation: next steps to upscale forest-based bioeconomy*. Rome, FAO. [link will be provided upon availability]
- v. **FAO**. 2024. *The State of the World's Forests 2024 – Forest-sector innovations towards a more sustainable future*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd1211en>
- vi. **IUFRO (International Union of Forest Research Organizations)**. 2026. Policy Brief .
https://www.bmluk.gv.at/dam/jcr:118de0ca-7dee-4267-938e-15b6c538c286/COLI_06_Growing_Forest-based_Innovations_FINAL.pdf

