



Action urged to promote wood as a sustainable construction material

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Increasing the use of wood in building sustainable housing can help combat climate change and support the global transition towards a sustainable and circular bioeconomy, a webinar heard last week.

Jointly organized by FAO and its Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries (ACFSI), the webinar, entitled *Reconstructing our climate: Using wood as the building material to promote sustainable housing*, analysed the opportunities and challenges of using wood as a sustainable construction material.

“Forests and the products that they provide are one of the most important tools we have available to address the climate and biodiversity crisis,” said Mette Løyche Wilkie, Director of FAO’s Forestry Division, in her opening remarks.

The sustainable forest-based industries will play a critical role in providing the renewable wood-based products that the world needs to decarbonize the building sector, said Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, Director Emeritus of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, in his keynote speech.

“To meet the world’s ambitious and urgent environmental goals, we will need to turbo-charge policy change that recognizes the benefits of timber and fibre products”, said Ross Hampton, ACFSI Chair.

Eva Müller, Director General for Forests, Sustainability and Renewable Resources at the German Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture, underlined that the world cannot wait until we are able to produce cement or other non-renewable construction materials in a climate-neutral way. Wood as a renewable construction material can help us to achieve the double objective of climate protection and resource conservation, Müller said.

With future demand in construction materials expected to increase due to urbanization and the expansion of cities, especially in Africa and Asia, it is important that the use of sustainably sourced wood is promoted. It is an affordable and healthy construction material that stores carbon and contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals, webinar participants agreed.

To further enhance the use of wood as sustainable construction material, actions required include a clear narrative on the role of wood in society, the removal of regulatory and other obstacles, and the implementation of incentives, the webinar concluded.

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