



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

**SOCIETY, ECONOMY
AND FORESTS**

THE UNFOLDING FOREST TRANSITION IN CHINA AND LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

ISBN 978-92-5-133932-9

**SOCIETY, ECONOMY
AND FORESTS**

**THE UNFOLDING
FOREST TRANSITION
IN CHINA AND
LESSONS FOR
THE FUTURE**

Published by

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Bangkok, 2021**

Required citation:

FAO. 2021. *Society, economy and forests: The unfolding forest transition in China and lessons for the future*. Bangkok.
<https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3232en>.

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

ISBN 978-92-5-133932-9

© FAO, 2021



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>).

Under the terms of this licence, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons license. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: "This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original [Language] edition shall be the authoritative edition."

Any mediation relating to disputes arising under the licence shall be conducted in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) as at present in force.

Third-party materials. Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

Sales, rights and licensing. FAO information products are available on the FAO website (www.fao.org/publications) and can be purchased through publications-sales@fao.org. Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request. Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: copyright@fao.org.

Cover photograph: ©Shutterstock/aphotostory

Contents

Boxes, figures and tables	iv
Foreword	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Summary	vii
Introduction: A changing world	1
Increase in forest cover and growing stock	3
Fastest growth rate in forest cover	3
Rapid increase in growing stock	6
Growing prominence of forest ecosystem services	6
China as a major producer of forest products	9
What contributed to the forest transition?	13
Emergence of China as an industrialized economy	13
Environmental concerns driving key policy changes	14
Policy and institutional changes	15
Implementation of key forestry programmes	18
Science and technology transforming the forest sector	20
The future of forest transition in China	23
Demographic changes	23
Economic changes	24
Environmental challenges	25
Lessons from the forest transition in China	27
References	29
Annex: Key policy, legal and institutional changes in forestry in China	31

Boxes, figures and tables

Boxes

1	Floods in China in 1998: A turning point	15
2	Reform of collective forests: A major turning point in Chinese forest governance	17
3	Conversion of Croplands to Forests and Grasslands Programme	19
4	Bamboo resources in China and technologies for their utilization	21
5	Combating desertification in northern China	22

Figures

1	Forest cover change in China (million ha)	4
2	Change in the extent of naturally regenerated and planted forests	4
3	Share of planted forests	5
4	Change in the extent of other land with tree cover (area in million ha)	5
5	Change in forest growing stock	6
6	Forest area managed for key environmental functions	7
7	Trend in the production of wood in China	9
8	Industrial roundwood imports by China	10
9	Change in the quantity of sawnwood imports	10
10	Change in the share of sawnwood production	11
11	Export value of wooden furniture	11
12	Growth of per capita GDP in China	13
13	Change in total and in urban population in China	24

Tables

1	Rate of forest cover increase in China	3
2	Changes in land ownership in China	16
3	Key national forestry programmes	18
4	Number of students graduating from forestry educational institutions	20

FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

fao-rap@fao.org

fao.org/asispacific

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Bangkok, Thailand

ISBN 978-92-5-133932-9

CB3232EN/1/02.21