Updated Mandate of the National Working Group for Community Forest Management (NWGCFM) for 2004

Background
The National Working Group for Community Forest Management (NWGCFM) has been established in 1999 by the Vice-Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development with the mandate to facilitate the discussion on community forest management, and to explore options for developing a supporting strategy.

The legal basis for community forest management has been continuously improved with a number of legal documents, in particular concerning decentralization and devolution of responsibilities to lower levels, and the options created in the new land law (QD??) dated 26/11/2003. However, the pending finalization of the forest law and the implementation guidelines for both laws, requires a focused continuation of the working group to address the outstanding issues.

Thus the initiation of this review of mandate.

Definition of the term Community Forest Management
Based on presentations and discussions in several national Workshops1, the currently appropriate definition of the term ‘community’ refers to a group of households, a hamlet or a village, and thus is identifies as a unit that can fulfill the main tasks and responsibilities assuring forest protection and sustainable management.

The concept for community forest management encompasses the following elements (Ernst, lets use your pie-graphic with the last piece sticking out!)

1. Land allocation to communities
2. Inventory and planning systems for the community
3. Silvicultural systems
4. Benefit sharing arrangements within the community and between the community and higher Government levels
5. Institutional arrangements
6. Regulatory arrangements
7. Integration of CFM into rural development

Status quo of Community Forest Management in Vietnam and outstanding issues

1. Land allocation to the community

The new Land law allows for the allocation of land to groups of households, hamlets, and villages (art 9, paragraph 3?), and thus provides the required legal basis for communities taking responsibilities in sustainable forest management.

Outstanding Issues:

a. legal clarification of prerequisites for allocation: In the forest law, prerequisites for allocation of specific forest types, to groups of households, hamlets, and villages must be further specified?

1 See proceedings of the National Workshop on Community Forestry, Nov. 1999???, Nov. 2001, and May 2003

Elke Foerster, 235D11AD1EC40FF247256E740035BA97@Nwgcf_mandate_draft01.doc, 9/14/2011
b. Review current experiences and clarify a methodology/process of land allocation to communities in order to ensure social consensus on rights and obligations.

2. Forest Inventory in consensus between forest administration and the community

Currently, especially for natural forests, there is no clear management inventory for individual forest blocks. While the rough categorization along the FIPI classification provides an excellent national overview of the forest condition, it does not suffice as the basis for management of individual blocks with varying silvicultural objectives (see also point 3). However, forest block management inventories have been piloted with community participation in a few locations, using either rough estimates or detailed scientifically plausible inventory methods.

Outstanding Issues:

a. Review the forest block management inventories that have been piloted in a few locations and propose a strategy for selecting a methodology

3. Identification of silvicultural systems and planning systems

The identification of management goals varies widely based on natural endowments and the requirements of the users. Based on management goals and agro-ecological influences, silvicultural systems differ in their technical components. In a few locations, silvicultural systems have been defined and incorporated into a planning system for the forestry administration and the community.

Outstanding Issues:

a. Identify major silvicultural systems for the prevailing agro-ecological zones and determine (preliminary) models for species composition and management.

b. Review formats and documentation for determining silvicultural systems regarding their suitability for reconciliation of community and Government requirements (See also under 5).

4. Benefit sharing arrangements within the community and between the community and higher Government levels

Benefit sharing arrangements are regulated in decision 178 dated 11/2001 and the implementation guideline 80 issued 9/2003. Since the discussions of these legal documents, pilot implementation has brought about field experiences in their applicability under varying local conditions.

Outstanding Issues:

a. Review field experience from pilot implementation of the benefit sharing arrangements between forest users and government, and assess the need for clarifications and changes (e.g. more regional flexibility, a more detailed participatory inventory for high value locations, etc).

b. Review options for regulating benefit sharing among groups of users (less complicated than for cooperatives, maybe similar to Chinese forest user groups).

5. Institutional arrangements

Currently the utilization of natural forest is regulated rather generally. Commercial timber use is restricted by quotas. For home consumption individuals need to apply for using timber through the village head, the Commune Chairman, the District Forest Protection Unit to the District ARCO for each individual occasion. In some pilots, 5 yr and annual management plans have been tested. These plans differ in their degree of detail based on a rather general estimate of forest block inventories or detailed management inventories.

Outstanding Issues:
a. Review piloted methodologies for 5 yr and annual management plans and suggest a strategy for a differentiated use of a more general/more detailed methodology.

b. With the utilization of 5 yr and annual management plans, the approval process has to be newly defined. Conditions for identifying approved management plans as alternative to timber quotas should be defined.

6. Regulatory arrangements

For enforcement of forest protection, Decision 56 (dated ??) gives a clear framework for the elaboration of community level (village level) forest protection regulations. Experiences are wide-spread with regard to implementation and financial requirements of setting up forest protection regulations. Little experience is however documented on a monitoring and enforcement mechanism of the forest protection regulations.

Likewise a review and monitoring mechanism for adherence to management plans has to be elaborated.

Outstanding Issues:

a. Review the monitoring and enforcement mechanism of the forest protection regulations and document ‘best practices’ to be shared between provinces

b. Define a review and monitoring mechanism for adherence to management plans and pilot it in selected areas.

7. Integration of CFM into rural development

In many forest-based communities, forestry contributes an important share to household income. Objectives of sustainable forest management are thus closely linked to objectives of poverty alleviation. While there is a wide-ranging experience in direct transfers (cash, saving accounts) to individuals for forest protection and management, there are few pilots for providing funds to groups of households and communities for natural resource management.

Outstanding Issues:

a. Review pilot experiences, develop eligibility criteria for community block funds, and test the distribution of funds.

Future mandate of the NWGCF in view of outstanding issues

Out of the above mentioned outstanding issues, the NWGCF will focus on ???

Repeat (selected) issues determined above/ or refer to wording used in annual work program 2004?

In particular, it will

- **assist in applying subsidiarity principle:** Identify which issues need to be clarified on which level: Which general national legal basis and guidelines need to be in place for the provinces to make best possible local guidelines.

- **Assist in identifying a phased and differentiated approach?**