

# WELCOME TO THE WORLD'S FORESTS EDITION OF THE NATURAL INQUIRER!

Have you heard of the United Nations (UN)? The UN is a world organization established in 1945. Today, 192 countries are members of the UN. These nations are working together for peace, human rights, freedom, and social progress.

## YOU DO THE MATH:

How old is the UN today?

The Food and Agriculture Organization, or FAO, is a part of the UN. FAO's mission is to build a world where no one goes hungry. To do this, it helps developing countries and countries in **transition modernize** and improve agriculture, forestry, and fisheries practices. FAO also helps these countries provide healthy nutrition for all their citizens.

## GLOSSARY:

Words in **bold** are included in the glossary on page 45. If you do not understand the word, be sure to use the glossary!

For many years, FAO has been collecting information about the world's forests. You may think it is unusual for an organization concerned with food and agriculture to be studying forests. Trees, however, are important for human nutrition and health.

Forests are a source of food, including fruits, nuts, mushrooms, herbs, spices, and animals. Forests provide wood that can be used to build houses, heat homes, and cooks meals. Forests provide fibres for building houses, making clothing, and for other building purposes. Trees provide resins that are used in many products. Trees also provide medicines. They help protect

## INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS:

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests to raise awareness on **sustainable** management,



and sustainable development of all types of forests. The UN's International Year of Forests Web site is a global platform to celebrate people's action to sustainably manage the world's forests.

<http://www.un.org/en/events/iyof2011/>

The International Year of Forests 2011 logo conveys the theme of "Forests for People." The logo celebrates the central role of people in the sustainable management, conservation, and sustainable development of our world's forests. The elements in the design show some of the many values of forests. Forests provide shelter for people and **habitat** to support **biodiversity**. Forests are a source of food, medicine, and clean water. Forests play a vital role in maintaining a stable global climate and environment. The logo reminds us that forests are vital to the survival and wellbeing of people everywhere.

soil and water necessary for food crops. Trees also help protect the environment and they reduce the impact of climate change.

People use forests and plant trees for the many benefits trees provide.

Trees are often planted in a manner similar to food crops, except that it takes many years for trees or their products to be ready for harvesting (Figure 1). The more knowledge FAO can collect about trees and forests, the more successfully it can help countries like yours to manage forests wisely. More information also helps your country take better advantage of forest benefits. These benefits improve the lives of all people. You will learn about the benefits provided by forests in Inquiry 3.



Figure 1. Eucalyptus trees planted in rows. Eucalyptus trees are often planted to be used in cleaning products, medicines, timber, foods, for fuelwood, and for many other purposes. Photo by Babs McDonald.

Every 5 years, FAO publishes a report about the world's forests. This journal was written from the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010. It contains information about forests in 233 countries and territories. All together, these forests are the world's forests. No matter where these forests are located, they provide benefits for people and wildlife across the entire planet.

In this edition of the *Natural Inquirer*, you will learn about the world's forests. FAO divided the world into regions (Figure 2). Most of the information in this journal is presented according to these regions. Africa, for example, is considered one region. Take a moment to find the region where you live.

## IS THIS THE FIRST WORLD'S FORESTS NATURAL INQUIRER?

This is the second World's Forests *Natural Inquirer*! More than 55 000 copies of the last edition were printed and distributed. FAO translated it into French, Chinese and Arabic, while other translated versions were made available thanks to national initiatives. The Czech version was made available thanks to the Forest Management Institute (ÚHÚL) of the Czech Republic (<http://www.lesnipedagogika.cz>), the Spanish version was realized by the National Forestry Commission of Mexico (CONAFOR) (<http://www.conafor.gob.mx:8080/biblioteca/ver.aspx?articulo=339>). Recently the publication has been translated into Mongolian by a FAO project working for the management and conservation of forests in Mongolia.

The Ocean in Arid Land Organization, an NGO based in Kenya, has a 5 year project aimed at planting 2.5 million trees through distribution of seeds and seedlings. As part of the project it distributes copies of the *Natural Inquirer* to increase awareness on the importance of the forest ecosystems.

All the translated versions of the first World's forests edition of the *Natural Inquirer* are available for download at:  
<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>  
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/fra/en>

If you are interested in having this new edition of *Natural Inquirer* translated in a different language please contact:  
[fra@fao.org](mailto:fra@fao.org)

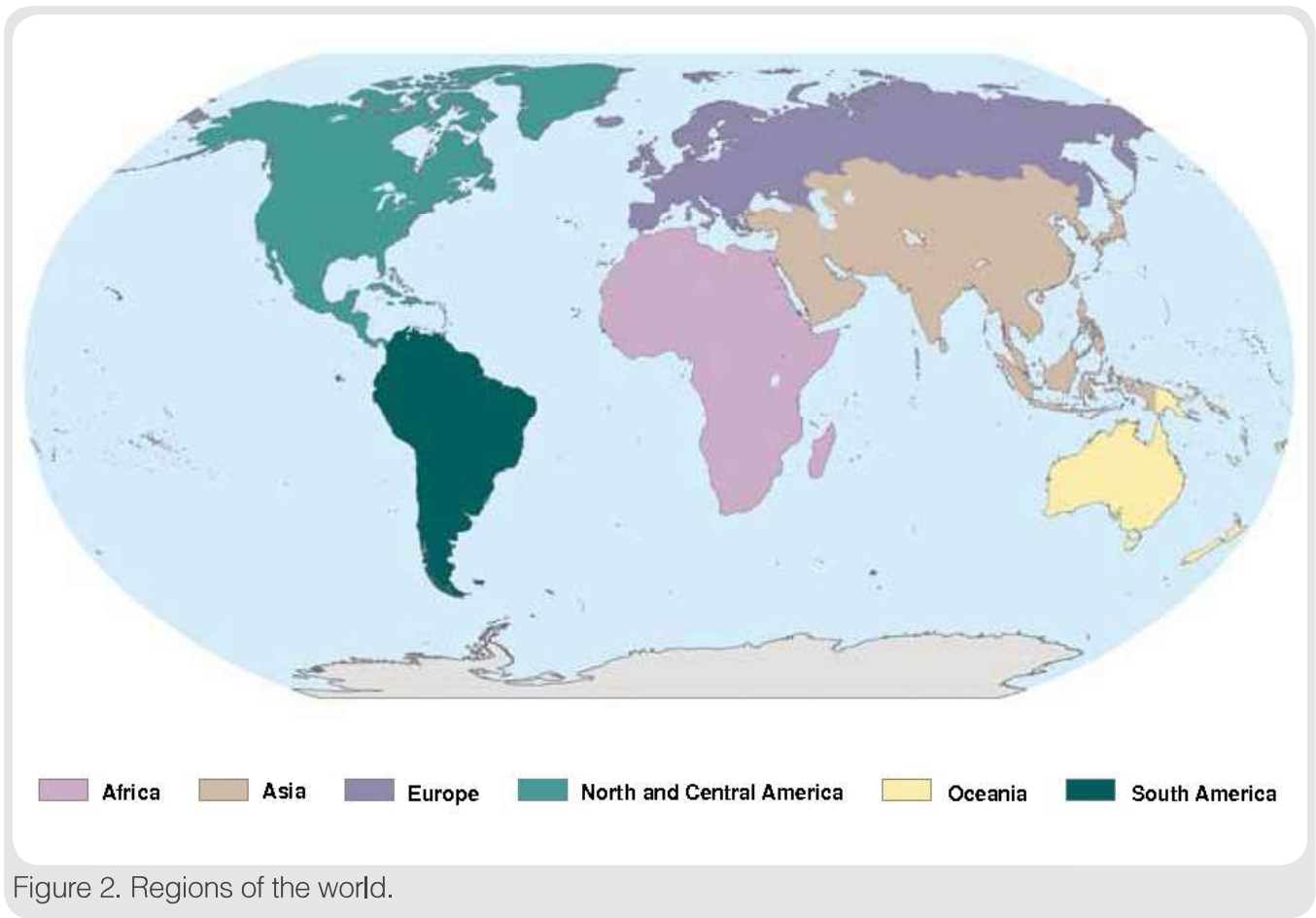


Figure 2. Regions of the world.

## THINKING ABOUT THE WORLD'S FORESTS



Forests are important to the lives of people everywhere, even if those forests are not found in their own community. Forests provide materials such as wood for building or for energy. Forests provide food for people and for animals. They provide habitat for many different kinds of plants and animals, which helps to maintain the **diversity** of life on Earth (Figure 3). Forests protect the quality of water and help keep the soil from **eroding**. Forests help keep the air clean and they provide places for people to live and play. In many places, forests provide jobs which help people and their families have a better life. Forests also hold carbon on Earth, which helps to slow the rate of climate change.



Figure 3. Impala in Namibia, Africa often **browse** on **vegetation**. Photo by Michael Bowker.