

# NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF ASIA AND ASIAN FORESTS

2024 #2

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## Tenth Session of the AFoCO Assembly

On April 17–18, 2024, the 10th Session of the AFoCO Assembly was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, as a special session. The Assembly discussed improving project manuals and personnel regulations to accommodate changing needs and developing staff capacity. The launch of the Friends of Asia and Asian Forests (FAAF) to promote private–sector engagement was reported, and ways to strengthen partnerships in global processes, such as the UNFF and UNFCCC, were discussed. The plenary also outlined new opportunities for climate–finance approaches through climate asset management. On the sidelines of the plenary, a ceremony was held to hand over the first Carbon Removal Unit of the Agroforestry and Carbon Project (ACORN) to farmers in Kyrgyzstan. The event confirmed the ongoing collaboration between AFoCO, two ministries — Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Processing Industries; and the Ministry of Emergency Situations — and Rabobank and formally signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to expand the ACORN project in Kyrgyzstan.



## Let's Forest Mongolia Expedition

AFoCO organized a Mongolian expedition as the first event of the Let's Forest Asia Expedition program, which was launched in February as part of FAAF's fieldwork activities.

The event was held on May 9 and 10 and included a tour of Suwon's forests in Mongolia, an ecological tour of Gorkhi–Terlji National Park, and a tree–planting ceremony to commemorate Mongolia's Arbor Day (the second Saturday of May). The Director General of the National Forest Agency, Dr. Oyunsanaa Bysambasuren, as well as representatives from E–Mart, Korean Air, Yakin Corporation, Green Asia Network, Jeju Olle, Mongolian University of Science and Technology, and other public and private organizations from Mongolia and Korea, planted about 200 trees, including pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and larch (*Larix sibirica*).

The planting site is a public–private partnership participation forest of 12.50 ha in the Korea–Mongolia Greenbelt Phase 3 project (2022–2026), which is planned to be created with the participation of Korean companies, and aims to create a symbolic forest in one of Mongolia's most popular tourist destinations to educate visitors about the value of forests and encourage them to participate in the Mongolian Government's One Billion Trees movement.





## Interview

### Chin JeaSeung, CEO of Yuhan-Kimberly

**“The fact that the campaign has been unwavering for 40 years, with a wide range of stakeholders working together, is the biggest achievement, and we hope that the Hanukkah Kimberley case will serve as a good model for FAAF and lead to more success stories.”**



Yuhan-Kimberly sat with AFoCO to reflect on the 40th anniversary of the Keep Korea Green campaign and to discuss the future direction of FAAF. The interview took place on May 29 at Yuhan-Kimberly headquarters. Mr. Chin JeaSeung, who is passionate about the environment and sustainable growth of companies, was positive and sincere throughout the interview. The interview was conducted by Yonhap TV anchor Park Jin-hyung.

#### **Q1. Yuhan-Kimberly has been working to create forests in Korea and Mongolia by example. Why are you particularly interested in forests?**

Alongside the growth of the company, Yuhan-Kimberly has always been interested in the social issues of the day. In particular, in the early 1980s when there was a lack of social interest in environmental issues due to industrialization, the need to green the country emerged. In 1984, [the campaign] was launched and over time it has expanded and evolved by combining social issues, such as planting trees for newlyweds, creating school forests, and planting trees in other countries to prevent desertification.

The forestry sector has been able to continue to cultivate forests for a long time because it is an action that can be done continuously for a long period of time, gives dreams and hope to future generations, and increases the value of the company.

#### **Q2. This year, Yuhan-Kimberly's Keep Korea Green campaign celebrated its 40th anniversary. What are its achievements and significance?**

Keep Korea Green is a campaign that has been developed with various stakeholders to solve social problems through forests, beyond just corporate environmental protection activities. The campaign, which started in stages, has planted 57 million trees in Northeast Asia, including Korea, and conducted projects at 1277 locations in Korea. During the IMF foreign exchange crisis, the campaign promoted public works projects for reforestation, developed a school forest movement to create an alternative environment to overcome ecological blindness and school violence, and has been making steady efforts to solve current social problems, such as creating coexistence forests and carbon-neutral forests, and preserving endangered plants due to the climate crisis.

#### **Q3. Yuhan-Kimberly's campaign is setting a good example for other companies. What are the important factors in promoting sustainability?**

The most important thing is to stick with it once you start and not give up easily. In addition, when sustainability goals are aligned with the vision and goals of each company, and when sustainability efforts are trusted and respected by stakeholders, especially internal employees, they can be internalized into the corporate culture.

One of the reasons why the Keep Korea Green campaign has lasted for 40 years is the strong support of employees. According to a survey of employees last year, the company's sustainability practices, including Keep Korea Green, were the most positive factor in changing the image of the company. This shows that sustainable management practices alone can increase employee satisfaction and improve performance.

Businesses have a greater impact on society than any other member of society and because they have so many capabilities, their responsibilities are being emphasized. Yuhan-Kimberly has a new vision, "We act for life, health and the planet," and has set a goal of achieving 95% of its sales from sustainable products by 2030 to reduce the burden on the global environment. As ESG management is now a matter of corporate survival, we will continue to strive to achieve the new goal.

**Q4. Do you have any thoughts on the future development of FAAF?**

First, it's important to recognize the power of solidarity in creating value through forests. Recently, more and more companies are interested in carbon neutrality and ESG environmental performance through forests. When companies that understand the value of forest carbon project, public institutions in Asia that are active in climate solutions through forests, and international organizations and experts with experience and know-how in forest greening work together, we can take a step closer to solving the climate crisis.

In addition, because forestry takes time to produce results, there must be a "sustaining force" that is consistent and persistent until results are achieved. The role of AFoCO in ensuring the sustainability and future value of the companies and organizations that work together will also be very helpful.

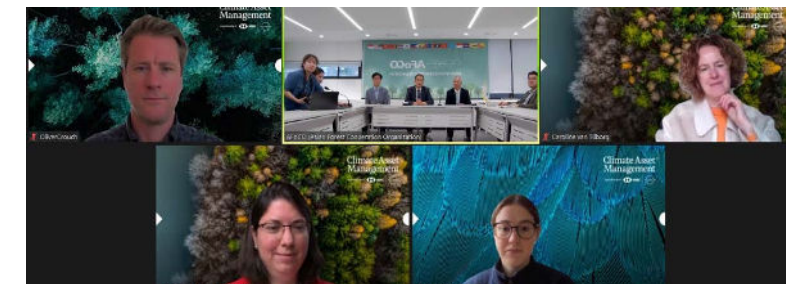
**Q5. Finally, do you have any expectations for FAAF with the Asian Forest Network?**

We are deeply committed to the purpose and objective of FAAF to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals through Asia's forests and we deeply appreciate and support FAAF's purpose and objectives. We are confident that this new chapter in FAAF's history, which will be driven by the solidarity of governments, international organizations, and the private sector, will contribute significantly to the fight against climate change through forests and the growth of AFoCO's 16 member and partner countries.

Finally, we believe that the Keep Korea Green campaign is one of many good models that can be used to support FAAF's common goals and various agendas. In particular, the Mongolian Yuhan-Kimberley Forest program, which restored a forest that had been desertified, is a good example. I hope that FAAF will serve as a platform for companies to do a good job of solving environmental and social problems through forests.

## AFoCO to launch USD 20 million carbon credit afforestation project

On June 3, AFoCO hosted an event with London, UK-based Climate Asset Management<sup>1</sup> (CAM) for the Asia Regional Carbon Credit Afforestation Project. Over the next five years, AFoCO and CAM plan to invest USD 20 million (approximately KRW 28 billion) in AFoCO's member countries to restore landscapes and secure carbon credits. CAM's investment is in line with AFoCO's 10-year Climate Action Plan, which Dr. Chongho Park, Executive Director of AFoCO has been pursuing since taking office. The Plan has been recognized by the international community for its ambitious impact goals. Starting in 2024, AFoCO will promote the development of carbon credit forest restoration projects in Lao PDR and Cambodia and will expand to Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia in the future.

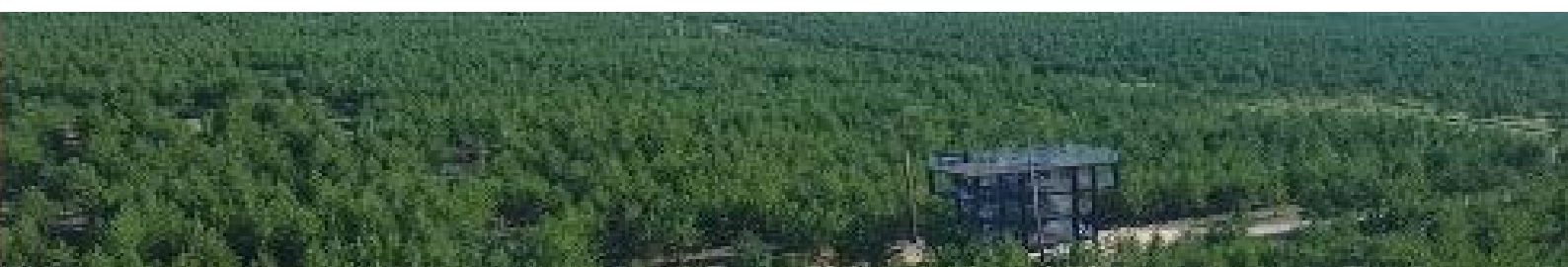


## Woori Bank's Mekong REDD+ project in Cambodia is in full swing

During June 12-14, AFoCO held various events in Stung Treng Province, Cambodia, including a signing ceremony for the Mekong REDD+ Project, a community briefing, a meeting with the Governor, and a capacity-building program for local representatives. Launched in January, the project, which aims to prevent forest conversion and preserve ecosystems for the next 30 years, is a collaboration between Woori Bank and the Cambodian Forestry Administration in four districts of Stung Treng province, covering approximately 30,000 hectares (ha) of forest managed by 14 local communities. The project aims to reduce carbon emissions and improve the livelihoods of local communities, especially as the area is designated as a priority conservation area by the Ramsar Convention.



<sup>1</sup> CAM is a natural capital asset manager founded in 2020 by HSBC in partnership with climate change advisory firm Pollination. CAM's Natural Capital Strategy aims to protect and restore critical biodiversity and provide commercial long-term returns and the Nature-Based Carbon Strategy provides carbon credits for companies and investors seeking to achieve Net Zero.





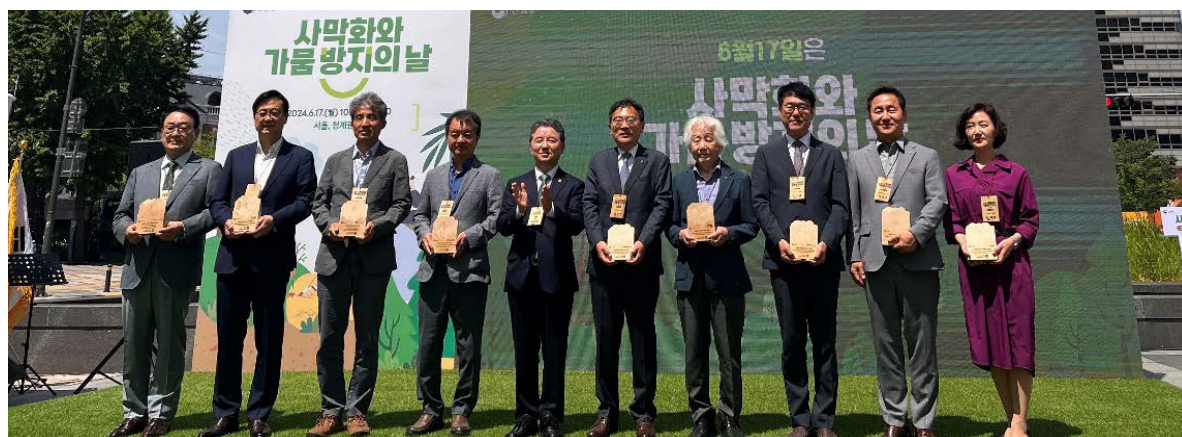
## Restoring the Ecology of Bulam Mountain in Seoul with L'Occitane

A tree-planting event to celebrate the 79th Arbor Day was held on April 5 at Azalea Park in Bulam Mountain, Nowon-gu, Seoul, as part of the Bulam Mountain Forest Fire Restoration project. Jointly organized by AFoCO, L'Occitane Korea, and Nowon District, Seoul, the event deployed nature-based solutions to help revive the ecosystem of Bulam Mountain, which was severely damaged by the 2022 wildfires, with the support of L'Occitane. During the event, AFoCO and L'Occitane employees planted a total of 3150 trees with the public.



## Event on World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

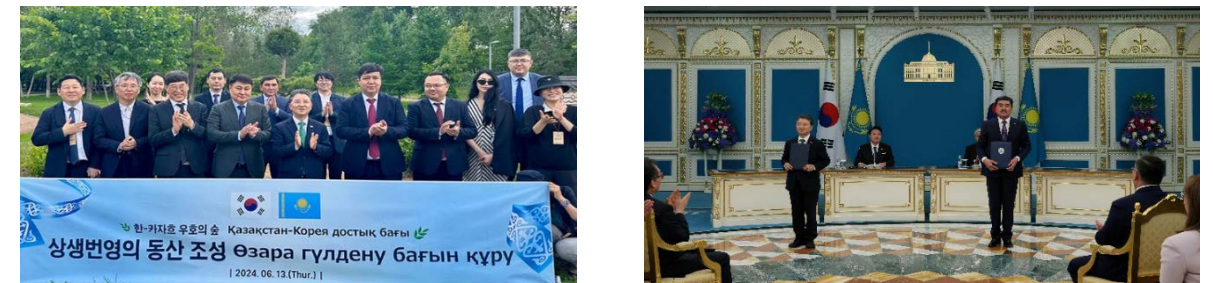
On June 17, the Korea Forest Service held a ceremony at Cheonggyecheon Square in Seoul to commemorate World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought<sup>2</sup>. The ceremony included congratulatory remarks from the ambassadors of Kazakhstan and Mongolia to Korea, performances by environmental clubs from elementary, middle and high schools to encourage students to remember June 17 every year and participate in the fight against desertification, and plaques presented to nine organizations, including AFoCO, Korean Air, Future Forest, Yuhan-Kimberly, E-Mart, Global Civic Sharing, Peace Forest, Green Asia Network, and the Korea Green Ranger.



<sup>2</sup> World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought was established by the United Nations (UN) in 1994 to commemorate the adoption of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

## Expanding forestry cooperation following the Korea-Kazakhstan summit!<sup>3</sup>

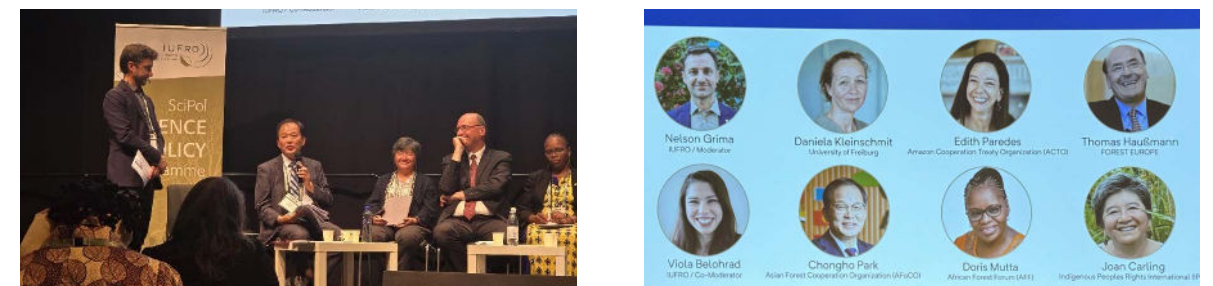
On June 12, at the Kazakh Presidential Palace in the presence of the leaders of the two countries, Sunghyun Nam, Minister of Korea Forest Service and Yerlan Nyssanbayev, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on forest cooperation. The country was hit by a massive forest fire in 2022–2023 that destroyed more than 100,000 ha, highlighting the need for international forestry cooperation to strengthen the response to forest disasters. In response to a request from the Government of Kazakhstan, the Korea Forest Service will expand forestry cooperation to include forest-fire prevention and response and restoration of damaged areas and further strengthen exchanges between research institutions, such as seed cooperation for biodiversity enhancement, arboretums, and satellite imagery and reading technology.



## 26th IUFRO World Congress

From June 23 to 29 in Stockholm, Sweden, forest experts, policy makers and others from around the world gathered for the 26th World Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), which was the largest ever held, with the theme, Forests and Society Towards 2050. A total of 4300 delegates attended, which featured 3500 presentations and more than 70 innovations. In particular, experts discussed sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, and the role of forests in climate change mitigation. Dr. Chongho Park, Executive Director of AFoCO, represented Asia at the session, 'Forest Governance in the Region: Stakeholder Dialogue, organized by IUFRO, where he highlighted the importance of forest governance in Asia.

The Congress provided a new direction for forest conservation and regional development in Asia and highlighted AFoCO's role and activities as a leading international Asian organization.



<sup>3</sup> South Korea Policy Briefing dated June 13, 2024

## Other News Digest

### SK innovation supports mangrove project in Malaysia as part of its CSR efforts

On April 5, SK innovation signed an MOU for a mangrove rewilding project in Rajang Mangrove National Park (RMNP), Sarawak, Malaysia as part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative. A total of 22,000 mangrove seedlings (*Rhizophora apiculata*) will be planted through the project.

### Only nine out of 69 European tree species are fit for the future

Scientists from the University of Vienna and the Technical University of Munich have found that only nine of 69 European tree species, including the English oak, are suitable for future reforestation owing to climate change impacts. The scientists write that it is important to create mixed forests rather than simple forests to ensure forest survival, which is essential for healthy ecosystems.<sup>4</sup>

### ICVCM endorses VCS and ART as forest carbon standards

On May 2, the International Council for Voluntary Carbon Market Integrity (ICVCM) announced that the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS), the world's largest carbon credit program, has met the Rubber Stamp Core Carbon Principles (CCP) after significant changes to its procedures. It has also approved the globally operational Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART) program, run by Winrock International. This brings the number of CCP programs to five, including the ACR, CAR and Gold Standard.<sup>5</sup>

### Lao PDR launches forest carbon credit initiative

The Lao DPR government, in partnership with AIDC Green Forest, is launching a forest carbon credit initiative (REDD+) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and degradation, the Government announced at a signing ceremony on May 5. The initiative builds on an MOU signed in December 2022 and includes feasibility studies for 10 forests covering 1.7 million ha.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-024-02406-8>

<sup>5</sup> <https://icvcm.org/integrity-council-confirms-verra-and-art-meet-its-high-integrity-benchmark/>

<sup>6</sup> The Laotian Times, May 9

## Other News Digest

### Sixty-one percent of experts predict global temperatures will rise by more than 2.5 degrees this century

On May 8, The Guardian published the results of a survey of 380 lead authors and editors of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports since 2018. It found that 358 of them, over 94%, believe the planet's warming will exceed 1.5 degrees.

Of the reasons for humanity's failure to tackle the climate crisis, nearly three-quarters of respondents cited a lack of political will, while 60% blamed vested interests, particularly, the fossil fuel industry.<sup>7</sup>

### Microsoft accelerates reforestation carbon credits project

On May 13, Microsoft announced its largest-ever carbon removal agreement with Re.green, a nature-based climate solutions startup, to purchase 3 million tons of credits over 15 years from a reforestation project in Brazil. The project aims to restore more than 16,000 ha of degraded pastureland and plant at least 10.7 million trees in the Amazon and Atlantic forests.<sup>8</sup>

### Biodiversity Fund approves 18 new project preparation grants<sup>9</sup>

On May 20, the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) approved new project preparation grants, allocating more than USD 70 million to 18 new projects in 21 countries, including 13 least-developed countries and small island developing states. The GBFF was launched at the Global Environment Facility Assembly in Canada last August to support biodiversity initiatives and has so far received contributions from six countries: Canada, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Spain and the United Kingdom.

### Opportunities and barriers for ecological restoration projects in voluntary carbon markets

On May 21, Carbon Direct published a report, Opportunities for Ecological Restoration in the Voluntary Carbon Market, in collaboration with Meta. The report examines the barriers to ecological restoration projects in the voluntary carbon market and provides a roadmap for how buyers in the market can support both climate change mitigation and biodiversity.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/may/08/world-scientists-climate-failure-survey-global-temperature>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.esgtoday.com/microsoft-signs-another-reforestation-based-carbon-removal-megadeal/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.thegef.org/newsroom/press-releases/biodiversity-fund-approves-18-new-project-preparation-grants>



## Other News Digest

### Google, Meta, Microsoft and Salesforce create Symbiosis Coalition for forest credits<sup>10</sup>

On May 22, Google, Meta, Microsoft and Salesforce announced the creation of the Symbiosis Coalition to promote nature-based credits in the voluntary carbon market. The companies have pledged to contract up to 20 million nature-based carbon removal credits by 2030 that have a high certainty of climate impact and equitable outcomes for communities whose livelihoods depend on these projects.

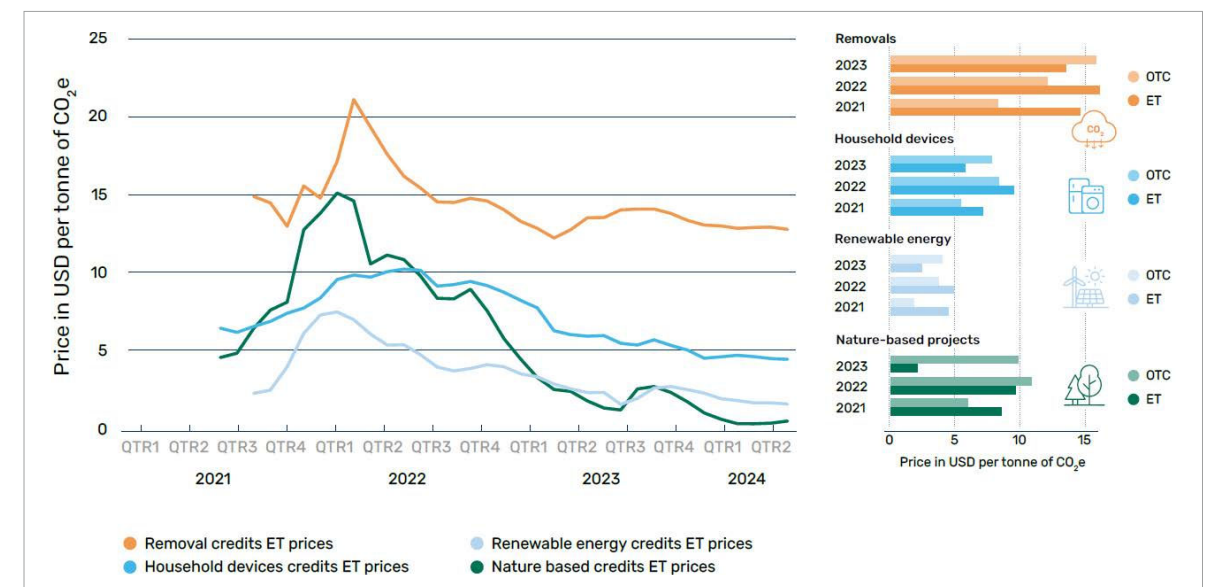
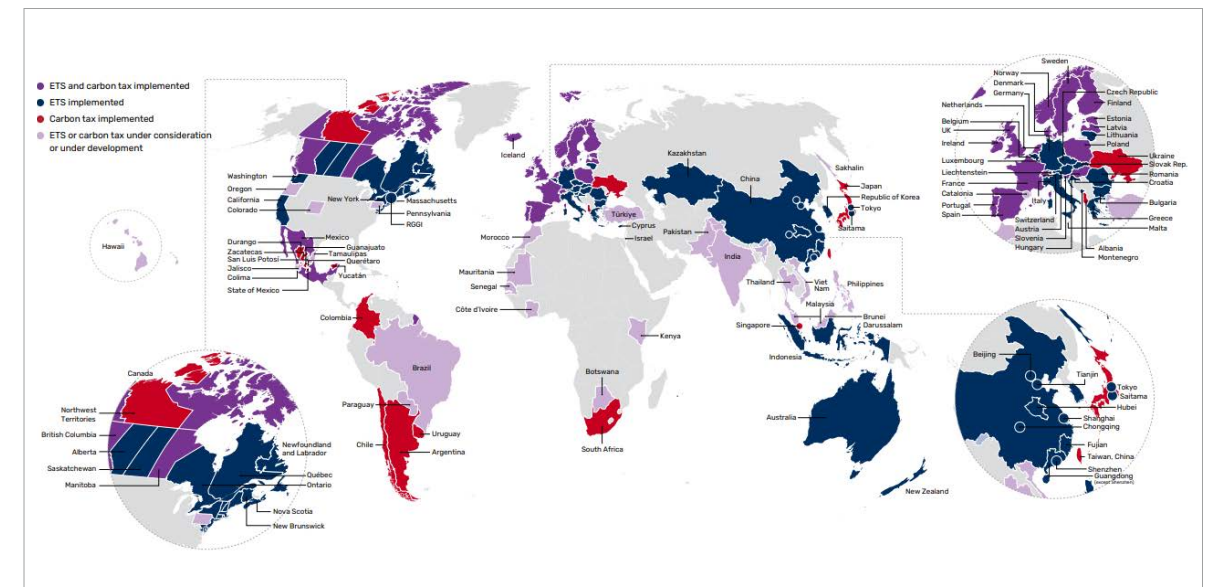
### UN-REDD calls for strengthening forest targets in national NDCs at Bonn Climate Conference 2024<sup>11</sup>

On June 10, UN-REDD launched a report, Raising Ambition, Accelerating Action: Towards Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions for Forests, at the Bonn Climate Conference 2024 (6.3-13). The UN Environment Program (UNEP) climate experts said that only eight of the 20 countries with the highest emissions from tropical deforestation have explicit targets to reduce deforestation and that forest-based targets need to be strengthened to meet nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

<sup>10</sup> Press Release — Symbiosis Coalition | Nature-Based Carbon Removals  
<sup>11</sup> Launch of UN-REDD report "Raising Ambition, Accelerating Action: Towards Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions for Forests" (unep.org)

## Carbon pricing trends in 2024<sup>12</sup>

There are about 75 carbon pricing schemes<sup>13</sup> in operation around the world, covering 25% of global emissions. In 2023, total revenues from carbon taxes and cap-and-trade programs reached USD 104 billion. In 2023, carbon credit prices decreased by about 10%. While the price of nature-based credits, including REDD+, decreased owing to integrity concerns, the price of sink-based nature-based credits, such as afforestation/reforestation, increased by 30% year-on-year.



<sup>12</sup> Based on the World Bank's, Carbon Pricing Status and Trends 2024.  
<sup>13</sup> This report analyzes direct carbon pricing schemes, including carbon taxes, cap-and-trade, and carbon credit mechanisms.

## Voluntary carbon market trends<sup>14</sup>

The value of carbon credit transactions in the voluntary carbon market in 2023 was USD 732 million, down 61% year-on-year, with an average credit purchase price of USD 6.53 CO<sub>2</sub>e ton.

While real estate and land use and renewable energy remain the most popular projects, the additionality debate has led to a 68% and 69% year-over-year decline in transaction volume, respectively.

Category	2022			2023			Percent Change		
	Volume (MtCO <sub>2</sub> e)	Value (USD)	Price (USD)	Volume (MtCO <sub>2</sub> e)	Value (USD)	Price (USD)	Volume	Value	Price
Forestry & Land Use	1130.0	\$ 1.1 B	\$ 10.14	36.2	\$ 351 M	\$ 9.72	-68%	-69%	-4%
Renewable Energy	92.7	\$ 386 M	\$ 4.16	28.6	\$ 111.1 M	\$ 3.88	-69%	-71%	-7%
Chemical Processes/ Industrial Manufacturing	13.3	\$ 68.5 M	\$ 5.14	12.2	\$ 50.2 M	\$ 4.10	-8%	-27%	-20%
Household/ Community Devices	9.1	\$ 77.6 M	\$ 8.55	9.9	\$ 76.6 M	\$ 7.70	+10%	-1%	-10%
Energy Efficiency/ Fuel Switching	6.6	\$ 35.6 M	\$ 5.39	9.4	\$ 34.4 M	\$ 3.65	+43%	-3%	-32%
Agriculture	3.8	\$ 41.7 M	\$ 11.02	4.7	\$ 30.6 M	\$ 6.51	+24%	-26%	-41%
Waste Disposal	6.2	\$ 44.9 M	\$ 7.23	1.5	\$ 10.9 M	\$ 7.48	-77%	-76%	+3%
Transportation	0.18	\$ 770 K	\$ 4.37	-	-	-	-	-	-

### Changes in transaction volume and price trends by project type among occupancy and land-use project types

- **Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+)** : 51% year-over-year decrease in deal volume, 23% decrease in price
- **Afforestation, Reforestation and Revegetation (ARR)** : 62% decrease in volume and 31% increase in value year-on-year
- **Improved Forest Management (IFM)** : 47% decrease in volume, 11% increase in price year-over-year
- **Blue Carbon** : 89% year-over-year decrease in volume and 28% decrease in price

Project Cluster	2022			2023		
	Volume (MtCO <sub>2</sub> e)	Value (USD)	Price (USD)	Volume (MtCO <sub>2</sub> e)	Value (USD)	Price (USD)
REDD+ (ALL)	57.4	\$ 584.2 M	\$ 10.19	28.2	\$ 222.3 M	\$ 7.87
Afforestation-Reforestation and Revegetation (ARR)	10.8	\$ 129.8 M	\$ 12.05	4.1	\$ 64.8 M	\$ 15.74
Improved Forest Management (IFM)	4.5	\$ 66.2 M	\$ 14.67	2.4	\$ 38.9M	\$ 16.21
Blue Carbon	3.4	\$ 39.3 M	\$ 11.58	0.38	\$ 3.2 M	\$ 8.33

REDD+ project types accounted for the majority (78%) of credits traded in the forestry and land-use category, while ARR and IFM credits accounted for 11% and 7%, respectively. Credits from projects in Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for 36% of forestry and land use traded, followed by Africa (25%) and Asia (18%). The category was traded in the largest number of countries in 2023 and VCS was the most popular standard for forestry and land-use credits, with 85% of the total volume traded. This category includes all projects that focus on reducing carbon emissions at the household or community level. Popular project types include the distribution of efficient cookstoves and water purification devices, which mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation used for fuel in rural areas. There are also community energy efficiency projects and biogas infrastructure for fossil fuel-free heating and cooking in rural areas.

Home and community appliance credit volume increased by 10% from 2022, with an increase in clean cooking stove credit transactions accounting for almost all of this growth. The majority of household/community appliance projects were in Africa (56%), followed by Asia (14%). In 2023, 55% of the volume of credits traded in this category came from Gold Standard projects, followed by VCS projects (40%). According to a survey by Ecosystem Marketplace, there is growing interest in credits that provide environmental and social co-benefits. This has the potential to increase the market share of carbon project credits that provide co-benefits. Some respondents cited biodiversity benefits as the primary reason for purchasing credits. This suggests potential demand for biodiversity credits in the future.

<sup>14</sup>Ecosystem Marketplace의 "State of Voluntary Carbon Market 2024"를 참고함.



## Trends in Article 6 cooperation among AFoCO member countries

The UNFCCC Paris Agreement requires all Parties to submit their NDCs, and Article 6.2 (Cooperative Approach) of the Agreement allows for voluntary cooperation among countries to generate mitigation outputs that can be transferred internationally and used to contribute to NDCs.

All 16 member countries of AFoCO have submitted NDCs to the UNFCCC and 10 of them<sup>15</sup> have conditional targets that are contingent on international support, demonstrating the demand for collaboration through a cooperative approach.

Twelve of AFoCO’s member countries have bilateral cooperation agreements based on Article 6 of the Agreement. Japan (10 countries)<sup>16</sup>, Singapore (5 countries)<sup>17</sup> and Switzerland (1 country) have bilateral cooperation agreements with AFoCO members.

Countries with bilateral cooperation agreements	
<b>Japan</b>	Bilateral cooperation for the Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM) has been in place since 2013 with a number of ASEAN countries and will expand to Central Asia in 2023 with agreements with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.
<b>Singapore</b>	operates an International Carbon Credit (ICC) scheme that allows companies subject to its carbon tax to offset up to 5% of their carbon emissions with carbon credits and is expanding its Article 6-based cooperation to secure ICC-based credits.
<b>Switzerland</b>	signed a bilateral agreement with Thailand in 2021 and in January this year agreed to transfer 1916 tCO <sub>2</sub> e of the savings from its E-Bus program to ITMOs, making it the world’s first ITMO transfer.

In terms of Article 6 cooperation among AFoCO member states, Korea has signed climate change cooperation agreements with Viet Nam (2021) and Mongolia (2022), and with non-members Gabon (2023) and Uzbekistan (2023). In June, an MOU was signed between the Korean Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy and the Indonesian Minister of the Coordinating Ministry of Economic Affairs to implement Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

Efforts are underway to implement and transfer substantial reductions post-Agreement, which will play an important role in meeting countries’ NDC targets. While examples from the forest sector are still limited, REDD+ and forest-based collaborative approaches that comply with relevant decisions and guidance from the UNFCCC are expected to be promoted to contribute to cost-effective mitigation and sustainable development.

<sup>15</sup> Ten countries with conditional emission reduction targets in their NDCs: Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam and Tajikistan

<sup>16</sup> AFoCO member countries that have signed the JCM Agreement (10 countries): Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.

<sup>17</sup> AFoCO member countries that have signed an Article 6 cooperation agreement with Singapore (5 countries): Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia and Viet Nam.

## The role of forests in achieving NDCs and national REDD+ implementation trends in AFoCO member countries

The implementation of REDD+ is divided into three phases: readiness, implementation and results-based payment. The readiness phase involves national strategy and policy development and capacity building while the implementation phase involves pilot projects. The results-based payment phase is when incentives are paid based on measurement, reporting and verification (MRV). Establishing a national-level MRV system based on the UNFCCC Warsaw REDD+ Framework (WRF)<sup>18</sup> is a prerequisite for accessing financial support.

Sixteen AFoCO member countries have included the land use and land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector as part of their national mitigation and adaptation measures in their NDCs. Twelve countries mentioned setting mitigation targets and related policies and instruments for the LULUCF sector and 11 countries mentioned adaptation using LULUCF<sup>19</sup>. There are a total of 11 countries participating in REDD+ based on the WRF by submitting relevant documentation to the UNFCCC: five countries (Indonesia, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam and Malaysia) have submitted reductions based on the WRF and Indonesia is the only country to have received results-based payments. The remaining six countries (Myanmar, Thailand, Bhutan, Timor-Leste, Mongolia and the Philippines) are in the process of preparing to fulfill the four essential elements of the WRF. In the future, REDD+ cooperation is expected to expand further to secure reductions through performance-based incentives or collaborative approaches.

(Climate Watch, 2024; UNFCCC REDD+ Web Platform, 2024)

Country	NDC			National REDD+ Implementation Phases			
	Reduction			Adaptation	Readiness	Implementation	Result based payment
	Target	Policy	Measure				
Indonesia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cambodia	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Lao PDR	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Viet Nam	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Myanmar	0	0	0	0	0	-	-
Thailand	0	0	0	0	0	-	-
Bhutan	0	0	0	-	0	-	-
Malaysia	-	-	0	0	0	0	-
Timor-Leste	0	0	0	-	0	-	-
Kyrgyz Republic	0	-	0	0	-	-	-
Mongolia	-	0	-	0	0	-	-
Kazakhstan	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
Republic of Korea	0	-	0	-	-	-	-
Tajikistan	-	-	0	0	-	-	-
Philippines	-	-	-	0	0	-	-
Brunei Darussalam	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

<sup>18</sup> Establishing a national-level MRV system includes four essential elements: a national strategy or action plan (NS/AP), a forest emissions baseline and/or forest reference line (FREL/FRL), a national forest monitoring system (NFMS), and summary information on safeguards (SIS).

<sup>19</sup> Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry

## Village-based forest restoration in Lao PDR

In 2007, the Government of Lao PDR amended its forestry law to prevent further deforestation because about 80% of the country’s population depend on forests for their livelihoods but continued population growth and poor on-the-ground forest management have reduced forest cover from more than 70% to just 40%.

In 2016, AFoCO launched a village-led forest degradation restoration project in the Xangthong and Pak Song provinces of Lao PDR, adapting the success of South Korea’s Saemaul movement (see map below). Now in its ninth year, the project is considered to have established an exemplary model for community-led forest restoration in Lao PDR, with project developers from various organizations as well as village officials from other provinces continuing to visit the project to benchmark their work. AFoCO has been able to effectively improve local implementation through a project implementation methodology that directly involves villagers from the stage of designing the details of the actual project activities to ensure that the project’s site conditions and local needs are properly reflected. Participating villagers have been actively involved in all project activities, from the formation of Village Forest Management Groups (VFMGs) to nursery establishment and planting for forest restoration and the development of village-based forest restoration guidelines.

In Paksong, 45 community members from Kuptun and Bengkatud village forest management autonomous groups have joined the village nursery to produce 170,000 seedlings and restore a total of 600 ha of forest.

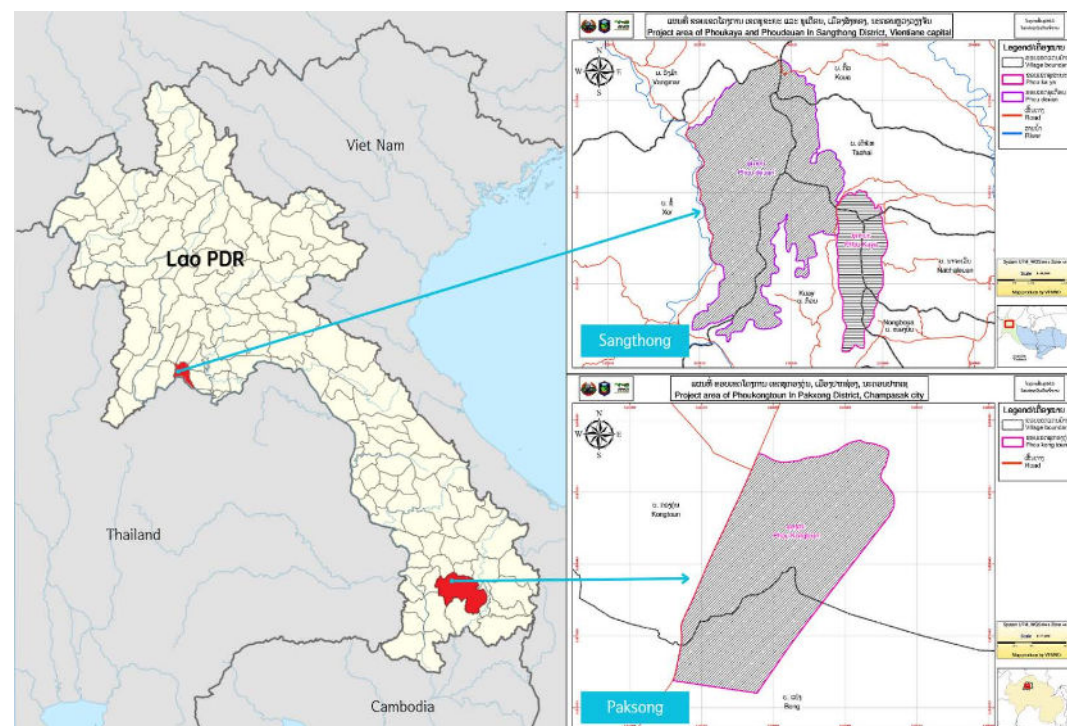
“Through incentives for forest management activities and active participation in the project, including nursery and non-timber forest products’ production, our average annual income has increased by about 70%,” said Mr. Yeng, leader of the Pak Song community forest management group, at the

November 2023 project monitoring meeting. “Now that the villagers have seen that their lives can be improved through the project, they are much more willing to actively participate in forest management activities,” he added.

The implementation agreement signed between the Ministry of Forestry and villagers at the beginning of the project provided not only a legal basis for the project’s activities but also clear guidance to the villagers on the specific activities defined during the project design process, enabling more active participation and implementation. In addition, the delegation of project implementation and management to a local body (District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO)) is credited with enabling better communication and mutual understanding with communities, leading to successful mediation and compromise on key issues.

Dr. Oupakone, Deputy Director General of the Department of Forestry and general manager of the project, said that the project has not only succeeded in attracting a EUR 7.7 million community-based forest management project from the German Development Bank (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau) but has also provided the technical foundation for the implementation of the 2019 amendment to the Lao Forestry Law to decentralize forest management, including the publication of community-based forest restoration guidelines through the AFoCO project.

The World Resources Institute’s 2023 Tropical Forest Loss Report, released in April, shows a sharp increase in deforestation in Lao PDR owing to the expansion of agricultural land. The Government aims to increase forest cover to 70% of the country by 2030. In order to achieve this goal, village ownership of forest management and collaborative governance with local governments are key. This project demonstrates how Korean reforestation success stories have been adapted and developed in Laos.





## Biodiversity and roses<sup>21</sup>

Spring flowers were colorful, abundant and beautiful but all too soon they're gone and we're in the middle of summer. As the seasons change, so do the flowers we hear about around the country. We've heard about azaleas and now nasturtiums; local flower festivals have started with daffodils and tulips; and now hydrangeas are everywhere; and the longest-lasting flower news of all is the rose. The queen of the seasons, roses began blooming in May and continue to delight the nation. As the saying goes, roses bloom at different times depending on the variety. The beauty and fragrance of the various colors is immeasurable and the thought of all the good men and women of the land who will meet and enjoy the rainy season brings a sense of happiness to our hearts. Even if we don't travel far, roses are still with us, in gardens everywhere, on our neighbors' fences and... everywhere.

Suddenly, I remembered a French movie I saw two years ago, *The Rose Garden of Madame Vernet*. Madame Vernet inherits a top-notch rose farm and is driven to the brink of bankruptcy by a commercialist businessman who produces roses like a factory commodity. She tries to overcome this by secretly stealing good pedigree varieties and crossing them to create new varieties but ultimately fails, until a novice employee accidentally crosses them with a wild rosebush (translated as 'rose house', so I'm not sure of the exact species) and the best variety is born. Of course, the theme of the movie is about people who have fallen down in life, healing and finding their strengths through growing roses and it was one of the best movies I've seen in a long time, with a screen full of roses and the lives of gardeners.



There are about 25,000 varieties of roses in the world, so where do all the different colors, scents and shapes come from? It's all thanks to the rich and diverse genetic pool of morphological, physiological and environmental stresses that wild species contain.

If you look up 'rose' in the dictionary, it refers to a group of plants belonging to the genus *Rosa* in English and *Rosa* in science. Some of the plants in Korea include jimjilae, corresponding flower, honeysuckle, raw feverfew, and stone thorn. All of these are roses. What we recognize as roses nowadays are the relatively new

cultivars of the rose family. Interestingly, roses are also featured in the story of Hwawanggye in the Three Kingdoms Saga and the song, *Hallim Byeolgok*, in the Goryeo Dynasty. What did roses look like to our ancestors back then?!

We've all had those moments in our adolescence when we heard the story of the rose-loving poet, Rilke, who died from a thorn prick from the rose he was giving to his lover, and we were vaguely curious about life and love, influenced by it, and excited to see who would give us a hundred red roses when we came of age. Since then, it seems we've been handing out roses in moments of celebration and joy and, now, as we grow older we appreciate the freshness and clear scent of the real thing whether it's a valley of roses we met on a forest path or a seaside blossom. Being close to wild roses rather than importing hybridized roses from abroad, reduces our carbon footprint and invites other creatures like bees and butterflies to join us.

If the current topic of biodiversity seems overwhelming, why not start with the idea that the beauty and usefulness of all the creatures we encounter today is made possible by their diversity.



<sup>20</sup> Former head of the National Sejong Arboretum

<sup>21</sup> This article is a reprint of the author's May 22, 2024 column in *The Korea Times*, *Life and Coexistence of Yu Mi Lee*.

## Committee on Forests (COFO) 2024 and World Forest Week

(July 22–26, Rome, Italy)

The 27th session of the Committee on Forests (COFO) will be held in a hybrid format from 22 to 26 July 2024 at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy. The biennial COFO session brings together high-level representatives, government officials and partner organizations to identify new policy and technical guidance, explore solutions and discuss future strategies and actions.

COFO 27 will be held in conjunction with the 9th World Forest Week (WFW 2024), with the theme, Accelerating Forest Solutions through Innovation. A highlight of COFO 27 will be the launch of FAO's flagship publication, The State of the World's Forests 2024, which will provide in-depth analyses of forest sector innovations towards a more sustainable future.

## The 8<sup>th</sup> IUCN Asia Regional Conservation Forum

(September 3–5, Bangkok, Thailand)

The 8th IUCN Regional Conservation Forum (RCF) for Asia will take place 3–5 September 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand with the theme, Reimagining Conservation in Asia: Nature and a Positive Future. Held every four years, the RCF for Asia serves as the leading platform for knowledge and partnerships in the region, bringing together key stakeholders in nature and biodiversity conservation.

This year, IUCN Asia will host the 8th RCF to discuss key transformative directions and actions to achieve a positive future for nature for Asia and the world.

## Climate Week NYC 2024

(September 22–29, New York, USA)

Climate Week NYC, hosted by The Climate Group, will take place September 22–29 in New York City. The event is held annually in partnership with the United Nations General Assembly and is run by the UN and the City of New York. It brings together leaders from business, government, technology, academe and civil society. It is an event that drives climate action, aligning with this year's slogan, It's Time. The week is part of the broader Climate Week NYC events program.

As part of the broader program, more than 500 events will take place in New York and around the world across 10 themes. The focus of the events is to lay the groundwork for the important discussions and negotiations that will take place at COP16 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Cali, Colombia and COP29 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Baku, Azerbaijan.

## Host a FAAF colloquium

AFoCO is organizing its first colloquium on, The Business of Forest Carbon, a topic that companies have been asking about. We would like to invite experts and interested companies and organizations to join us to ask questions, provide answers and discuss. The event will be held on Tuesday, August 27, 10–12pm at the AFoCO Secretariat.

If you would like to join us, please contact Hyungmin Kim  
(Tel: 02.785.8964 / E-mail: kimhm0217@afocosec.org )



## Paris Olympics and forest projects

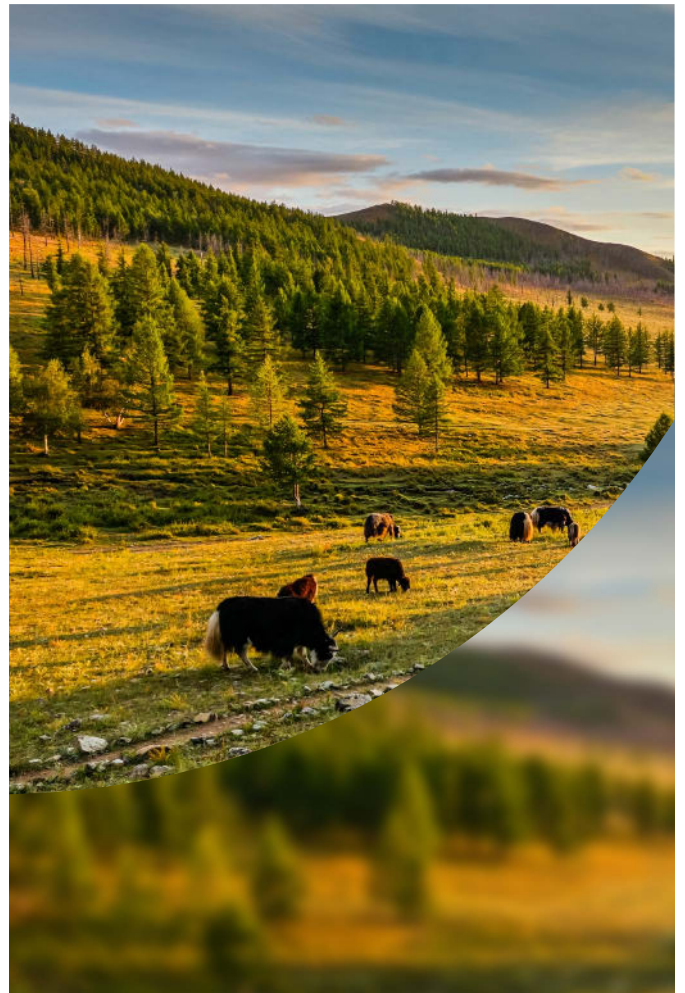
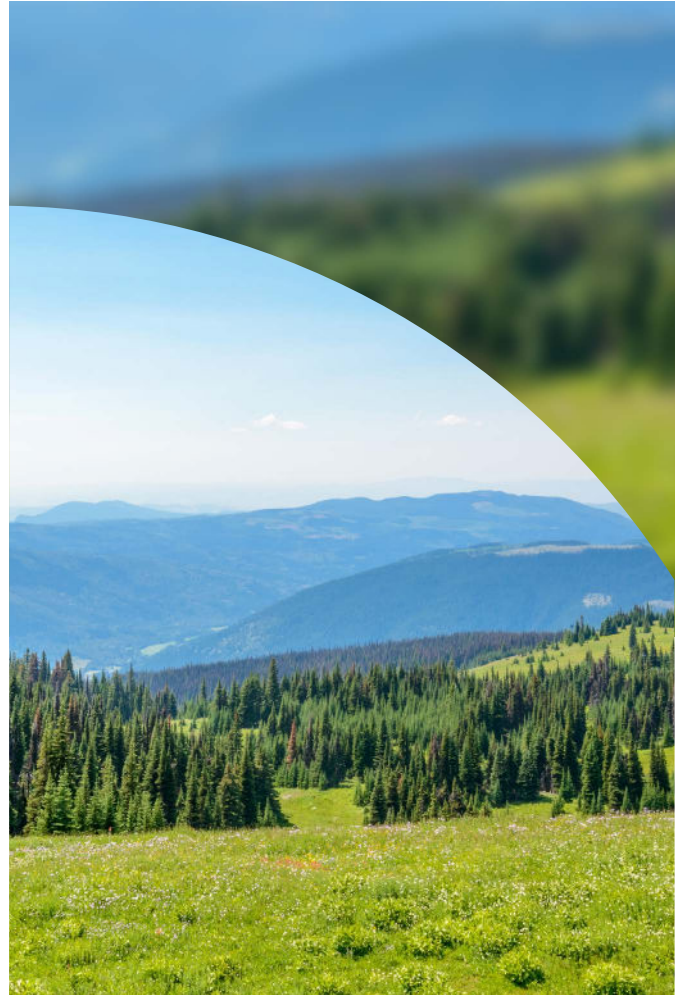


Paris 2024 aims to halve the carbon footprint of the Games (1.75 million tons) compared to the average of the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Games. Excluding Tokyo 2020, which was held without spectators, the average carbon footprint of the most recent Games was 3.5 million tons CO<sub>2</sub>e. In the five years of preparation for the Games, 476,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e has already been generated, with the remainder expected to be generated during the Games' operation.

National and international forestry projects have been specifically selected to meet the targets, including the creation of 1340 ha of new forest in the Plaine de Pierrelaye–Bessancourt in Île-de-France and the rehabilitation of degraded forests in Montmorency, the Vosges and the Aisne, while international projects include the fight against deforestation on thousands of hectares in Guatemala and Kenya and the restoration of mangroves in Senegal. The Paris Olympics' carbon contribution program is available as a PDF file<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> PDF – Paris 2024 carbon contribution projects





# NEWSLETTER

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