

Capacity Building to Increase the Adoption of Sound Forest Management Practices in the Brazilian Amazon

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Historically, large-scale commercial logging in the Brazilian Amazon has been executed in a predatory and illegal manner, due to the incipient adoption of sound forest management practices. Society is leading an overarching strategy to mitigate this problem, including the establishment of timber concessions in public-owned forests. However, the scarcity of trained human resources to plan, execute, monitor and audit forest management, for the sake of a successful concession system, has been frequently ignored.

In the last 12 years, IFT, a center of excellence in forest management in the Amazon, has stimulated the expansion of reduced impact logging (RIL) through capacity building, extension and research. During this period, over 3,500 professionals were trained by IFT in courses focused in practical aspects of forest management. In IFT's vision, training must focus on different audiences, including workers, technicians, auditors and government agents. As consequence, IFT applies in its courses the "learn by observing how to do it" approach - in the case of decision makers and governmental agents - as well as the "learn by doing" approach - in the case of chainsaw and heavy-machinery operators.

IFT's experience highlights three important lessons: (i) forest management is dynamic, and must be constantly improved from findings in scientific research; (ii) it is crucial to direct training initiatives to technical schools and junior colleges in forestry, which ultimately will be held responsible to implement RIL practices in the field; (iii) extension initiatives must efficiently reach entrepreneurs and decision makers, since they will administer forest operations in the future.

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