



## Community Forests: The Farmers' Market of the Forest Sector

ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN A Community Forest Agreement (CFA), be they a forest professional, elementary school teacher or local business owner, knows that there are challenges with this new model. Community-based decision making is hard work and takes perseverance. The economic and ecological changes facing the forest sector do not make things any easier. So why would a community or the government look to expand the Community Forest Program? There are many reasons.

### Consumer Demand

Consumers want to connect with nature and want to know the story behind their purchases. Strong environmental practices and personal stories will be important marketing tools. Community forests can tell the public the story of the product from the tree to the finished product and how selling the product affects their community and the environment.

### Increased Productivity and Utilization

Experience shows that once a community is given a finite land base to manage for the long-term, the incentive is there to realize maximum utilization of every available stand and hectare of forest land. Forest companies are focused on harvesting the species and log types that best meet their mill requirements. Community forests are focused on marketing the full range of species and logs that they have available and marketing these products to a range of manufacturers.

### Value Added Development

Access to fibre has been a limiting factor in the creation of a vibrant and diverse wood manufacturing sector, especially for small to medium sized companies. Small companies do not have the capacity nor the need to manage a forest tenure. However, they do need a reliable and stable source of raw material which long-term, community based tenures can provide. Community forests have the ability to deliver products to all user groups, whether it be a major 2x4 dimension lumber mill or the smallest artisan. They are the farmers' market of the forest sector. By delinking the woodlands from the major manufacturers you ensure that each log finds its best market and end use.

### Forest Stewardship

Research has shown that communities that are able to play a meaningful role in management have developed ways to prevent over-exploitation of local resources. In community forestry, management decisions are made by those who have to live them and the feedback can be immediate. With a meaningful, area-based tenure, community members become the stewards of their local forests.

### Community Economic Development

Community forests have demonstrated their ability to provide for diversification and economic stability. By increasing the number of CFAs throughout the province, government can provide a mechanism whereby a portion of the benefits generated by forest resources remain in the communities where



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they are generated, without having to bring back apurtenancy. They have long been recognized as an important tool for community economic development with financial returns being leveraged over and over again to create community benefits such as community halls, libraries, trails and tourism development, even a new ambulance.

In the spring of 2009, the Working Roundtable on Forestry reached consensus on 29 recommendations aimed at achieving "a vibrant, sustainable, globally competitive forest industry that provides enormous benefits for current and future generations and for strong communities." Recommendation #23 was to "expand the Community Forest Agreement Tenure Program." In order to expand the program, three key success factors must be met:



## See more on the web

The British Columbia Community Forest Association has produced a short film telling this story from the point of view of six very different community forests. It's available on their website, [www.bccfa.ca](http://www.bccfa.ca).

In the 10 years since this tenure was piloted, community forests are demonstrating their ability to create jobs and manage local resources to meet community needs, values and priorities.

**Size:** CFAs must be large enough to be efficient, economically viable and able to provide the maximum benefit to local economies. In several cases around the province, the small size of CFAs hampers these initiatives. Depending upon the profile, sufficient volumes of species and forest products must be available to support the manufacturing diversification sought. This is especially important for the more remote communities, where the cost of transportation to distant manufacturing facilities can be prohibitive.

**Availability:** While the number of CFAs has increased rapidly in the last decade, they still only represent 1.5% of the provincial annual allowable cut. The Minister of Forests and Range has committed to expanding the program, but the challenge is to find a

way to allocate more volume and area to CFAs. One potential solution is to develop a mechanism whereby CFAs could provide data to a marked pricing system, thereby performing the role currently filled by BCTS.

**Pricing:** A stable pricing mechanism must be maintained. The change of community forest pricing to a reduced, tabular rate was the single most important decision the provincial government has made in support of community forests. By shifting the benefit and revenue risk to the community, government has allowed for true market pricing to take effect.

Ten years after this innovative tenure was piloted, community forests are demonstrating their ability to create local jobs and manage local resources to meet community needs,

values and priorities. They are positioned to meet the needs of the value-added sector, so critical to the future of our industry. Local and international markets are seeking products that are produced in an environmentally and socially conscious manner. Community forests are delivering this product now. In the midst of the current challenges facing BC forestry and forest dependent communities, community forests are a unique tool to help create and maintain more resilient and self-reliant communities. 🌱

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