



APPROACHING TODAY'S GREATEST FOREST CHALLENGES

Why Is This Important?

The challenges facing forests are diverse and vary across all sectors. Numerous items come to mind, including disrupted fire regimes, invasive species, loss of open space, unmanaged outdoor recreation, trees in urban areas, overbrowsing, regeneration failure, changing markets, forest fragmentation, tax and policy issues, drought, disaster recovery, climate change, water quality, and public perception of the sector. Globally, illegal wood harvesting and aggressive clearing for land-intensive food production are some of the top threats to forests.

Creating Room for Innovation. There is a need – arguably today more than ever – for more diverse perspectives to help ensure the health and future of forests. Taking all the unique differences from women's capacity to be 'Catalysts for Change,' WFC can foster a climate of innovation to tackle the challenges within the forest sector. **The goal is not to solve the biggest problems at the Congress but to insist that we participate in designing the solutions.** Such work inherently requires broad participation by all forest stakeholders to confront the critical needs. Yet, existing frameworks and processes to convene these stakeholders are not consistently available. As such, it may be necessary to build the structures to allow this participation.

We think better together. Addressing the gender diversity gap creates room for creative problem solving to combat the most pressing challenges of the forest sector and the forest to which we are all connected.

How Will We Do This?

Research supports that inclusion practices and diverse work environments support creativity.

Because women are a minority group in the forest sector, our perspectives are likely to occupy a minority share of existing answers. This means that women's perspectives are ever more valuable as the forestry community seeks new solutions. Approaching issues through a female lens can also lead to longer-term perspectives that ignore silos and bridge strengths for subsequent innovation. When all views are taken into account and valued, women can provide a unique perspective to develop recommendations and actions related to how forward-thinking models and methodologies can work together and be adopted more effectively into practice. For example, we can bring together other sectors and stakeholders such as agriculture, energy, or finance. The forestry sector is at the heart of nature-based solutions and the demands of a circular economy. Interdisciplinary methods and novel perspectives will drive the innovations of tomorrow and the application of these solutions.

