

Headline	Ensure sustainability of forest dependent communities		
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'Ensure sustainability of forest-dependent communities'

Social forestry is one of the components towards the nation's commitment to forest preservation. Malaysia has pledged to maintain 50 per cent of forest cover to ensure that the forests continuously provides valuable ecosystem services such as sequestering carbon, sustaining biodiversity, preserving water resources and food source as well as preventing soil erosion.

Wan Hasmah Wan Mohd, Undersecretary of Biodiversity and Forest Management Division under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE)

Joanna Yap

KUCHING: Current forestry practices must ultimately contribute to the sustainability of social and cultural practices of forest-dependent communities and provide access to additional income for them, in addition to protecting and managing natural capitals such as ecosystem services and biodiversity

Undersecretary of Biodiversity and Forest Management Division under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) Wan Hasmah Wan Mohd said this when officiating at the opening ceremony for a workshop here yesterday.

She highlighted that Malaysia strongly upholds its commitment to involving these communities through various government development programmes under the Five Year Malaysia Development Plan including mangrove and coastline tree planting, community-based forest restoration and empowerment of local communities in ecotourism activities.

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pledged to maintain 50 per cent of forest cover to ensure that the forests continuously provides valuable ecosystem services such as sequestering carbon, sustaining biodiversity, preserving water resources and food source as well as preventing soil erosion," she said.

Wan Hasmah pointed out that social forestry - which encompasses rural or village forestry, agroforestry, recreation forests and urban forestry - is much needed in Malaysia to support the existing sustainable forest management which is presently mainly shouldered by the government sector.

Wan Hasmah expressed her hope that the workshop would help participants understand the importance of social forestry as an approach to forest management and protection, in order to achieve sustainable forest management, poverty reduction, increased income and living standards of the rural communities and increased greening awareness among urban society.

The 'Training on conflict

management and local engagement on social forestry' workshop is jointly organised by MRNE, Forest Department Sarawak (FDS) and The Centre for People and Forests (Recoftc).

State forest director Sapuan Ahmad said the workshop was designed as an extension of

training for trainers to create a better understanding among participating staff and agencies on basic concepts of conflict management arising from forest-related activities with the local communities, and to identify potential interventions for creating awareness and developing understanding of social forestry among the local communities.

The workshop is funded by the Swiss government and is the third organised under the Asean-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC) project. The first was held in Kuala Lumpur in October, followed by the second in Sabah in the same month.

A total of 30 technical staff and field personnel representing FDS, Forest Department of Peninsular Malaysia (JPSM), Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) and

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Sabah Forest Department (SFD) workshop in Kuching, programme officer Toon De Bruyn. Also present during the opening ceremony was Recoftc senior



LET THE TRAINING BEGIN: Wan Hasmah striking a gong to start off the event. Looking on are Sapuan (second left) and De Bruyn (left).