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British Columbia Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative

# Fraser Valley Agroforestry Workshop: Agroforestry Opportunities – Conservation That Pays September 29, 2006 - Abbotsford, BC

## Final Report

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# 1 Introduction

In November of 2003 a series of five regional workshops were held around the province as the first project of the BC Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative. Workshops were held in Oyster River (Vancouver Island), Vernon, Cranbrook, Abbotsford and Prince George covering most areas of the province with a notable exception of the Peace Region. To address that delivery gap a regional agroforestry workshop was also delivered in the Peace Region in March 2005 following a format similar to those offered in November of 2003.

With new regional information stemming from Agroforestry Initiative sponsored demonstrations and continuing interest from existing and potential stakeholders and associates, a regionally focused workshop was delivered in Abbotsford in September 2006. As with previous regional workshops, the goals included providing both general and regionally specific information to participants as well as collecting information on regional needs that the Agroforestry Management Committee (AMC) could use in furthering industry development. Specific objectives were to:

1. provide education and build awareness about agroforestry systems and their economic, environmental and social benefits;
2. increase knowledge of agroforestry practices, potential products and markets;
3. increase awareness of the Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative and the opportunity to apply for cost-shared program funding; and
4. identify regional opportunities, gaps and potential partners.

In addition to the Agroforestry Initiative Facilitator, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (BCMAL) staff provided support for the organization and implementation of the workshop. Planning began in March 2006 for delivery in September. Specific details on the organization, location, objectives, format, and content of the workshop was coordinated by a committee consisting of George Powell (Agroforestry Initiative Facilitator), Dave Trotter (BCMAL), Chris Zabeck (BCMAL), Lisa Zabeck (consultant) and Detmar Schwichtenberg (AMC).

Presentations were invited from a variety of regional stakeholders and provincial specialists to provide examples and to speak about the general environmental, economic and production concepts in agroforestry practices and product marketing. These presentations are summarized in section 2.1 of this report. Participant input on both the workshop content and delivery was solicited through a feedback form. Input from the workshop is summarized in section 2.2 of this report.

The city of Abbotsford was chosen as the venue as it is centrally located in the Fraser Valley region and hosts existing Agroforestry Initiative demonstrations. The final agenda for the workshop was as follows (the final delivery order was altered during the delivery of the workshop to accommodate travel delays experienced by one of the speakers):

# Fraser Valley Agroforestry Workshop and Tour Agroforestry Opportunities – Conservation that Pays

September 29, 2006

**Workshop - Friday September 29, 2006, 9 am to 4 pm**

Salvation Army, Cascade Community Church, 35190 Delair Road, Abbotsford

8:30 – 9:00	Late Registration
9:00 – 9:10	Welcome – Opening Remarks – <i>George Powell, BC Agroforestry Initiative</i>
9:10 – 9:50	BC Agroforestry Initiative – Projects & Funding Opportunities <i>George Powell, BC Agroforestry Initiative</i>
9:50 – 10:30	Agroforestry Programs at the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands <i>Dave Trotter, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands</i>
10:30 – 10:45	Refreshment Break
10:45 – 11:45	Direct Farm Marketing and Diversification <i>Brent Warner, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands</i>
11:45 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 13:30	Making Money with Agroforestry <i>Detmar Schwichtenberg, Fraser Harrison SmartGrowth</i>
13:30 – 14:00	Agroforestry and Fisheries Habitat Management <i>Michelle Boshard, Rural Resource Associates</i>
14:00 – 14:30	Speciality Crop Opportunities <i>Raman Gill, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands</i>
14:30 – 14:45	Refreshment Break
14:45 – 15:15	Small Lot Agriculture <i>Mark Robbins, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands</i>
15:15 – 15:30	Session wrap-up and concluding remarks– <i>George Powell</i>

The workshop was promoted via various low-cost, electronic distributions:

1. agenda and registration information were posted on the Agroforestry Initiative’s website (hosted by the Federation of BC Woodlot Associations, [www.woodlot.bc.ca/agroforestry/](http://www.woodlot.bc.ca/agroforestry/)) and e-mailed to the Initiative’s electronic mailing list;
2. workshop announcements were posted on events calendars of stakeholder and associate organizations including: the BC Institute of Agrologists, FarmWest, the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, and FORREX (the Forest Research-Extension Partnership); and,
3. workshop announcements were forwarded through email distributions lists of the BC Institute of Agrologists, the Association of BC Professional Foresters, the Association of Professional Biologists of BC, regional agriculture advisory committees and the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

All of the workshop registrations were received in advance by email or fax during the pre-registration period from August to September 2006. All pre-registrants attended the workshop.

A fee of \$30 – 45.00 was charged to each registrant to help cover costs; the fees were dependent on whether or not the participant attended the workshop only (\$30) or the workshop and an optional tour on following day (\$45). Coffee, refreshments and lunch were provided to the participants. Payment for the workshop was accepted at the door or by mail to the Agroforestry Initiative Facilitator.

The primary target audience was the producer/industry community. However, as with previous workshops, attendance was strong by representatives from resource professionals and government agencies thereby providing a means of extending information to the larger community. The following table provides a break down of the attendance by stakeholder and associated groups.

<b>Participation breakdown</b>	
Speakers / Facilitator	7
Landowner / producer / woodlot licensee	7
First Nations / Association / Other organization	3
Consultants	3
Government (BCMAL, AAFC-PFRA, BCME, BCMFR, Farm Credit Canada)	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

## **2. Workshop Summary**

### **2.1 Presentations**

The workshop began with coffee and refreshments to allow for late registration and to permit workshop participants to network.

George Powell, Project Development and Implementation Facilitator for the Agroforestry Initiative facilitated the workshop delivery and provided some opening comments to begin the presentation portion of the workshop. Summaries of the day's presentations are as follows

#### **Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative – Projects and Funding Opportunities – *George Powell***

Agroforestry is the intentional, integrated production of trees or shrubs with other crops and/or livestock. In essence it is the blending of agriculture, silviculture and to a large degree conservation practices in the same land management system. There are five land use systems within the agroforestry family: shelterbelts and timberbelts, silvopasture, integrated riparian management, alley cropping and forest farming.

Agroforestry has several potential advantages over conventional agricultural or woodlot systems. The first advantage is the potential for production gains through efficient capture and utilization of sunlight and soil resources. If structured properly, the multiple canopy and rooting layers in an agroforestry configuration make better use of the production potential of the land and can produce more in total per unit area than separating production into single use forestry or agriculture operations. The second area of advantage is based in economics. Agroforestry systems are another option for diversification, and it is prudent for any agricultural or woodlot operation to keep diversified amidst the uncertainty of constantly changing commodity markets and production risks. Agroforestry systems also offer the means to generate annual cash flow. Tree or shrub crops are long-term investments and require some investment early on for planting and maintenance. Inflation through the years means your initial investment reduces the “real” return from these systems in the future. Agroforestry systems blend annual production (and cash flow) with long-term production investments, meaning you can offset some or all of the discounting of future profits from your tree or shrub crop. Because the workload between the “agro” and the “forestry” components are often complimentary (distributed to different seasons), agroforestry systems can allow you to make better year-round use of your labour, machinery or other capital. This can allow for year-round retention of skilled labour and better use of your machinery investments. The third area of agroforestry advantage is in the environmental services afforded by these systems. Trees and shrubs contribute to the diversity and wildlife habitat of our agricultural landscapes. In addition to the long standing use as wind breaks, trees and shrubs are being used in novel applications to filter dust, odours or noise from agricultural or industrial operations as well as providing a buffer between farms and urban development. Trees and shrubs also have the capacity to fix and hold carbon – the sequestration of carbon through agroforestry systems can contribute to our international commitments to reduce “greenhouse” gas emissions.

With these potential advantages in mind, the BC Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative was formulated to capitalize on the opportunities and realize their potential to diversify and strengthen our agricultural and small-tenure forestry sectors. The purpose of the Agroforestry Initiative is to assist the development of the agroforestry in BC, and thereby increase production opportunities, promote stewardship, increase producer incomes and enhance community stability.

Funding for the Agroforestry Initiative is derived from the Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) as trustees of the Agri-Food Futures Fund - a federal/provincial partnership. The Agroforestry Management

Committee (AMC), a volunteer group of industry and academic representatives oversees the Agroforestry Initiative; advising this group are agroforestry specialists from our federal and provincial governments. The Federation of BC Woodlot Associations (FBCWA) administers the Initiative.

The goals of the Agroforestry Initiative come from the BC Agroforestry Strategic Plan. This plan was authored using direct input from current and potential agroforestry practitioners and it identifies those areas and issues, which need to be addressed for development of agroforestry. Four areas of strategic importance were identified and form the basis of the funding priorities: *Building Partnerships* to demonstrate agroforestry practices; *Raising Awareness* through supporting education, training & access to agroforestry information; *Improving Linkages* between producers, processors, wholesalers and consumers; and, *Supporting Marketing* with a marketing strategy and brand.

The Initiative began full operation late in 2003, and in that time has hosted or supported a number of agroforestry information sessions and six full-day regional agroforestry workshops. Other extension and information projects include development of the Initiative's website and a quarterly electronic newsletter, *Agroforestry Update*. The Agroforestry Initiative is working with the Boreal Centre for Conservation Enterprise to develop a Boreal Agroforestry Production Guide and the Peace Regional Agroforestry Directory; the Initiative is also supporting the Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation to develop publications and training to support birch agroforestry. Also in the works is the development of the BC Agroforestry Information Network, a web based directory providing producers with access to BC contacts with expertise in various aspects of agroforestry applications.

There are eight agroforestry demonstrations underway around the province (and one more awaiting final approval). The demonstration projects include:

- “Cedars and High Value Hardwoods” in partnership with Fraser Harrison SmartGrowth, to demonstrate the benefits of using agroforestry to blend conservation practices, production diversification and new business opportunities on farms in the upper Fraser valley;
- “Tapping Bigleaf Maple” in partnership with Gary Backlund and his family (Backlund's Backwoods, in Ladysmith), to fine-tune the commercial production and processing details of maple sap and syrup, to take West Coast maple sugaring from hobby to cottage industry;
- “Hawthorn Agroforestry Farm Trials” in partnership with West Kootenay Herb Growers Cooperative, Edgewood, to demonstrate the viability of growing hawthorn in BC as a new crop within an agroforestry management system to supply the health products market;
- “Page Creek Integrated Riparian Management” in partnership with Page Creek Farm in Matsqui to demonstrate both the potential for agroforestry to improve riparian protection and the economic viability of small agricultural operations;
- “Silvopasture: Christmas Trees and Forage” in partnership with Kootenay Tree Farms, Cranbrook, to demonstrate the benefits of integrated production of Christmas trees and forage;
- “Aspen Mulching Trials – An Agroforestry Approach” in partnership with the Peace Cattlemen's Association on behalf of the Peace Forest District Timber Range Impact Mitigation Committee, to demonstrate the benefits of co-operative planning and management of timber and forage resources in the Peace region;
- “Hybrid Poplar Alley Cropping – Peace Region” in partnership with the Doig River First Nation to demonstrate growing native and traditional seeds in a hybrid poplar alley cropping system and,
- “Hybrid Poplar Alley Cropping – Fraser Valley” in partnership with the Jayendee Farm and the Abbotsford Soil Conservation Association to demonstrate integrating swine nutrient management and floral crops in a hybrid poplar alley cropping system.

## **Agroforestry Programs at the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands – Dave Trotter**

Agroforestry is a land management approach that integrates the growing of trees and crops (or livestock) in interacting combinations which, overall, contribute to diversification and sustainability of production. Thus agroforestry represents the co-management of trees, crops and/or livestock and their interactions in an intentional and integrated manner.

The Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic has been described as a ‘...catastrophic natural disaster, causing widespread mortality of lodgepole pine, the Interior’s most abundant commercial tree species’ (BC MPB Action Plan 2005-2010). It is recognized that the epidemic affects not only forest ecosystems and values but also severely impacts the stability and long-term economic well-being of many communities. A large proportion of communities in British Columbia depend to some degree on the forest resource as a source of economic well being – from direct jobs created by the forest industry and their supply and service sectors, through to downstream community service sectors and the tourism industry, which is dependent in part on the visual and recreational landscapes created by BC’s forests.

As of December 2005, the area covered by red-stage trees was approximately 8.5 million hectares<sup>1</sup> with approximately 4.7 million hectares in the Southern Interior Forest Region, 3.7 million hectares in the Northern Interior Forest Region and the balance in the Coast Forest Region<sup>2</sup>. Modeling data from the Ministry of Forests and Range indicate that at the current rate of spread, 50% of the mature pine will be dead by 2008 and 80% by 2013 (BC MPB Action Plan 2005-2010).

Potential activities identified by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands addressing community and resource sustainability challenges created by MPB, relate to: identification of opportunities to augment agricultural production through increased access to arable and suitable Crown lands; fostering of forest and agricultural management practices compatible with one another on the same landbase; and, diversification of crops and products<sup>3</sup>.

Two opportunities to increase agricultural sector capacity reside with integrated management systems whereby both the timber and non-timber resources are managed concurrently. Silvopasture integrates tree and livestock production. Forest farming systems integrate timber and non-timber crop production. Both systems provide opportunities to add stability to and diversify both local and provincial economies and will be discussed in greater detail.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Forests and Range. Update. Mountain Pine Beetle Affects 8.5 Million Hectares. Dec 20, 2005

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Forests and Range. Background. Mountain Pine Beetle: District Breakdown. Dec 20, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Source: MAL Input – February 4, 2005. BC’s MPB Action Plan (2005-2010).

## **From Farm to Market: Lessons From the Direct Marketing Industry – Brent Warner**

North America has a long-standing cheap food policy and we continue to spend a diminishing portion of our income on food: e.g. North Americans spend 10% of income on food, Europeans spend 20%. An increasing proportion of food expenditures is on food consumed away from home (restaurants). In a low commodity price environment, agricultural producers have been forced to expand the size of their operations to remain profitable – the number of farms and farmers are declining and the size of individual operations is increasing. But bigger is not necessarily better and can lead to quality control issues (e.g. E. coli outbreaks). The market for food commodities is global and low-cost producers (e.g. China) are gaining market share. There is money in food, however, it requires capturing greater margins at the retail level – e.g. farmers currently only capture 20 cents of every dollar spent on food in the United States. The key is to move beyond an undifferentiated commodity and serve growing market demand for health products, luxury items and experiences (agri-tourism) and using direct marketing (e.g. farmers markets) and local/regional “branding” of products. In the last century, urbanization of our population has increased to 75%, while farm population has shrunk to <2%. This means that agriculture is a unique experience for most of our population, and people are willing to pay for the experience. Producers should learn from the success of cottage wineries in North America. The short lesson for developing agroforestry markets is don't become a commodity - brand products and diversify with experiences, health; connect with partners (in and out of the industry), set a quality standard and reinforce it.

## **Making Money With Agroforestry - Detmar Schwichtenberg**

Every farm has underutilized areas, such as fence lines and field corners, which can be used to grow trees and provide additional income. In the Fraser Valley, western red cedar trees are an attractive choice for this underutilized land because they grow quickly, are disease-resistant, do not shed branches, make excellent windbreaks and have high value as rot-resistant wood once they reach maturity. In addition, there is a ready market for cedar boughs and a trial study indicates that each tree over ten years of age can yield \$25 a year in boughs. Yellow cedar is also a good choice – even though it grows more slowly than red cedar – because the wood is highly prized for its colour, grain and rot-resistant properties. Both red and yellow cedar make good, clean, valuable barriers along riparian areas.

Landowners can also choose to plant high-value hardwoods in underutilized areas, including red oak, white oak, English walnut, black walnut, chestnut and black cherry. These high-value hardwoods, which are available as fast-growing hybrids, can reach maturity in 30-35 years. Properly pruned, each could be worth as much as \$2000 at current market prices. That means 500 high-value hardwoods can yield a million dollars. These trees generally require rich, well-drained soil to grow well.

## **Agroforestry and Fisheries Habitat Management – Michelle Boshard and Marlene Best**

The traditional approach to fisheries habitat management on farmland can involve a farmer trying to do something along a creek; DFO or Province have a problem involving fish; neither understand each other and this leads to unnecessary barriers to implementation. But fish, farmers and government can all win.

Conflicts arise because government environmental bodies are removed from the everyday realities of farmers. There is a lack of consensus on how environmental and economic issues should interact – a range of perspectives and prescriptions exist. Agricultural interests have done a lot to lessen their impact on fisheries, but less emphasis has been placed on restoration. Government bodies are challenged by how to change without compromising their mandates. An example of successful integrated riparian management was needed.

The Page Creek Integrated Riparian Management demonstration (“The Best Project”) sets out to be that example. The project is establishing an economically viable agroforestry site by developing an integrated area involving three agroforestry systems; addressing nutrient loading and riparian stabilization / re-vegetation issues in adjacent salmonid-bearing stream, Page Creek; and establishing educational and agri-tourism initiatives in conjunction with the site.

The Page Creek project approach is to use economically viable species to restore ecological function in riparian zone, judged to be technically and economically sound, as a case study to develop further programming / support. Progress to date includes completion of environmental farm and business planning, a market survey, habitat assessment/plant selection, planting of red osier dogwood, establishment of media outreach and education program, and engagement of regulatory bodies and NGOs.

Challenges faced include landowner uncertainty on where to obtain advice and support; developing a controllable system that achieves environmental goals; seeming lack of inter-governmental coordination; plant material supply; and building a realistic business plan.

An advantage in using an agroforestry approach is that it is diverse, and therefore it can accommodate both riparian and terrestrial elements on one parcel.

### **Specialty Crops – *Raman Gill***

Specialty crops include: a new crop (e.g. wasabi, beta sweet carrots); a new use for an existing commodity (e.g. medicinal herbs); an established crop new to another region (e.g. Saskatoon berries) that are not a part of mainstream agriculture (e.g. broccoli, blueberries, corn, etc.).

The connection between specialty crops and agroforestry is the opportunity to integrate specialty crop production with an agroforestry system; this is an option for diversification and generating another revenue stream.

What to grow and what is going to make money depends on a variety of factors and can be determined by using the specialty crops evaluation framework and tapping into growth trends (aging population – baby boomers; increasing diversity – age, gender, cultural; and, changing eating habits and lifestyles).

Opportunities are endless in specialty crops and they could be integrated with agroforestry. To be successful it is essential to understand the challenges and issues. The market is heavily diversified, and it is key to find your niche.

### **Small Lot Agriculture and Agroforestry – *Mark Robbins***

Small lot agriculture (SLA) is self described as innovative and diversified farm based businesses; community-focused compared to commodity-focused; major providers of diversity in food system; agriculture’s interface with the consumer; and, contributors to rural atmosphere and the environment.

SLA is the center of growth in new farms in BC because of the size of land available in close to markets, efficient size for wide range of scale, accommodates a wide range of family structures, allows for farm innovation. SLA provides general locations of farms that respond to demand for products that are local, direct marketed or produced differently. A Small Lot Agriculture Initiative provides cost-share funding for industry development projects.

Opportunities for agroforestry in a small lot setting include diversification, use of isolated areas on farm properties or unused part of small holdings with indoor agriculture (e.g. poultry, mushroom), multi-functional conservation plantings, harvestable riparian areas, and harvestable buffers/wind breaks/ dust intercepts.

## 2.2. Participant Feedback

The workshop participants were provided with “participant feed back ” forms to relay their rating of the workshop content and delivery, as well as to provide information on regional agroforestry practices to assist the Agroforestry Initiative to develop and prioritize support for agroforestry in the Fraser Valley. Seven workshop participants submitted partially completed feedback forms. Questions and responses received are listed below.

### **How did you hear about this workshop?**

No response =3  
Agroforestry Initiative mailing list=3  
Personal communication =1

### **Overall, how would you rate this workshop?**

(1= poor, 2=below average, 3=average, 4= good, 5 =excellent).  
Seven responses; average = 4.6 ( $\pm 0.5$ ), median response =5.

### **What elements of the workshop content did you find the most informative? The least?**

*Most (5 responses)*  
Riparian management ties to restoration and economic incentives (2)  
Landowner/ AF practioner experiences and sharing  
Direct marketing (2)

*Least (2 responses)*  
Specialty crops  
“There weren’t any uninformative ones”

### **What additional content, if any, would you like to see in future workshops?**

Five responses:  
Plenary session, discussion groups.  
Information on starting up; details on variety of choices.  
More of the same; more on demos, existing examples.  
Just more workshops.  
Information on agroforestry developments in First Nations communities.

### **How would you rate the following elements of the workshop delivery?**

(1= poor, 2=below average, 3=average, 4= good, 5 =excellent)

#### **Venue?**

Seven responses; average = 4.6 ( $\pm 0.5$ ), median response =5.

#### **Catering?**

Seven responses; average = 4.3 ( $\pm 1.3$ ), median response =5.

#### **Registration process?**

Seven responses; average = 4.6 ( $\pm 0.5$ ), median response =5.

### **Do you have any other suggestions to help us deliver future agroforestry information and training?**

Three responses:  
“Events could be advertised to the broader public to elicit interest from ‘not-yet’ growers.”  
“Farm Credit Canada would like to provide financing support to growers/processors.”  
“Combination of workshops with tours is a great format.”

**What regional agroforestry practices and opportunities exist? Do you have some specific examples that would be suitable demonstration sites?**

One response:

“The Great Blue Heron Nature Reserve has excellent, accessible examples of riparian restoration.”

**Who are the current and potential regional partners for developing agroforestry?**

Three responses:

Pacific Salmon Foundation  
Habitat Conservation Trust Fund  
Evergreen Foundation.

**What are the regional markets for agroforestry products?**

One response:

Farm Credit Canada for funding commercial/large size operations

**What regional agroforestry information and extension needs exist?**

Three responses:

China  
United States  
Montreal

**What are the marketing challenges and needs for agroforestry products in the Fraser Valley?**

No responses.

## 3 Conclusions

### Similarities and Differences to Previous Workshops

This workshop attracted many participants for whom this was their first major exposure to agroforestry and the Initiative. This provided an excellent opportunity for broadening the stakeholder base of the Initiative, however, most did not offer much feedback or novel information to further development of Agroforestry Initiative activities.

In common with the previous Fraser Valley agroforestry workshop, integrated riparian and small-scale diversification opportunities that incorporated conservation elements were of most interest to participants.

Unlike previous regional workshops, potential demonstration sites were not identified in feedback process, possibly a result of using a passive feedback mechanism rather than using facilitated breakout sessions. As with previous workshops, producer groups, the local First Nations, conservation groups (e.g. Pacific Salmon Foundation, Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, Evergreen Foundation) and government organizations (BCMAL, BCMFR, Farm Credit Canada) were identified as potential partners.

Also in general agreement with previous workshop feedback, participants identified a lack of knowledge about agroforestry practices and opportunities as limitations to agroforestry expansion though it was recognized that the concept is still relatively new. Additional workshops in the region and elsewhere in the province to raise awareness and provide basic agroforestry education were suggested.

### Recommendations

On the basis of the delivery and feedback from the Fraser Valley workshop, the following recommendations and potential action items are proposed to the Agroforestry Management Committee (AMC) for consideration:

- Interest in the Agroforestry Initiative in the region remains strong and the AMC should continue to support development of demonstration and extension projects in the region;
- General interest in agroforestry is growing but specific knowledge is still low. Further promotion of the Agroforestry Initiative will be necessary to ensure a broader awareness of the objectives and funding opportunities. Moreover, additional basic extension of the opportunities and environmental, social and economic benefits of adopting agroforestry practices is needed through more workshops, publications and technology transfer;
- As with previous workshop recommendations and survey results, there is strong interest in having better access to regional and provincial information on product markets, wholesale and retail buyers, processors and distributors. Additional support is needed for developing appropriate, accessible market information;
- The workshop format was well received and in particular, pairing the workshop with a tour was seen as a valuable delivery model. The lack of a formal feedback session allowed for a wider variety of workshop presentations but may have contributed to a lower intake of regional information and needs. A brief breakout session for participant feedback should be included in future workshops. Future workshops should also continue to include a mix of speakers, including those with production experience and local knowledge, and covering the range of environmental, economic and social considerations.