

# Forestry Co-operatives and Sustainability: A Comprehensive Update

( [USherbrooke.ca/irecus](http://USherbrooke.ca/irecus) )

## → Context

Forests provide infinite ecological, social and economic functions. International policy dialogue around the need to manage forests in a sustainable manner sparked the emergence of new societal expectations as well as the establishment of new or renewed institutional and technical instruments worldwide. This policy dialogue has, therefore, transformed the forestry sector on many aspects. Forestry co-operatives are adapting to these new trends, but their contribution in terms of sustainability remains unknown, like the numerous challenges they face. Based on an exhaustive review of the scientific and professional literature written in English, French and Spanish, from 2005 as of now, this research summarizes the challenges and practices of forestry co-operatives from 27 countries.

## → Plurality of co-operatives and plurality of the challenges linked to the forest tenure

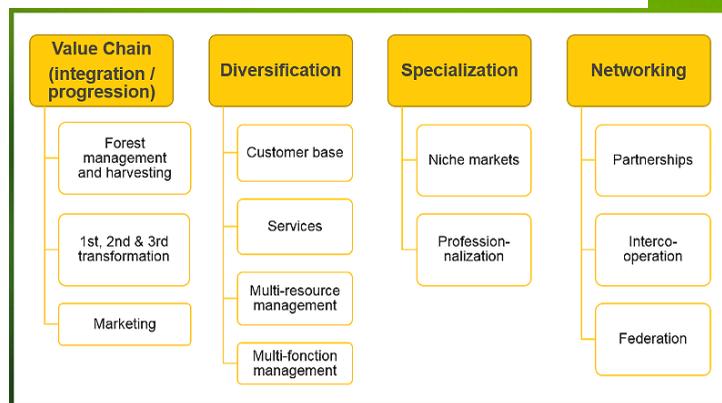
Co-operatives in the forestry sector are a diverse set of organizations including worker co-operatives, forest owners' co-operatives and community forestry co-operatives. The legal framework surrounding forest tenure affects co-operative action. We generally recognize three forms of ownership: public, private and community. Co-operatives rarely own the forest land on which they operate. Their rights are delegated to them by the forest owners, usually on a temporary basis and under certain conditions. Forest tenure creates different challenges for co-operatives, in addition to the cross-cutting challenges of access to capital and governance.

Public forests	Community forests	Private forests
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal, political and social recognition	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal, political and social recognition	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal, political and social recognition
<input type="checkbox"/> Short term agreements	<input type="checkbox"/> Bureaucratic procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> « Neo-rurals »
<input type="checkbox"/> Dependency	<input type="checkbox"/> Multiplicity of actors and conciliation of interests	<input type="checkbox"/> Parcelization
<input type="checkbox"/> Competitiveness	<input type="checkbox"/> «Borders» management	<input type="checkbox"/> Fragmentation
	<input type="checkbox"/> Collective organization of economic activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Tax system

**← Access to capital and governance →**

## → Strategies adopted

To ensure sustainability, forestry co-operatives are adopting different strategies. They ensure to consolidate their business model, whether through the integration of or the progression in the value chain, diversification of clients, activities and products, or by specializing in various niches. Moreover, in order to overcome the difficulties in terms of capitalization, economies of scale, access to resources and specialized facilities or to facilitate the development of technical, managerial or organizational competencies of their members, co-operatives partner with private, public or co-operative entities. Many of them also choose to join forces within national federations to increase their collective power.



## → Globally, forestry co-operatives...

- are active in the entire forest value chain;
- participate in forestry and co-operative education of many stakeholders;
- reinforce social bonds within communities;
- contribute to the forestry industry at the local, national and global levels;
- constitute an economic, social and environmental development vector;
- engage in adopting more sustainable practices.

**In addition, and most importantly, they show a great ability to adapt to the needs of their members, the expectations of society and their sociocultural context!**



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