The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), in collaboration with the World Agroforestry Centre and Tree Aid and supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), is leading the West Africa Forest-Farm Interface Project (WAFFI). The project aims to identify practices and policy actions that will improve the income and food security of rural smallholder farmers in Burkina Faso and Ghana through integrated forest/tree management systems that are environmentally sound and socially equitable. In this way, it will contribute to the sustainable management of natural resource assets, poverty alleviation, gender equity and the support of sustainable livelihoods.
The forest-farm interface is a mosaic landscape of integrated management and production practices that combines agricultural, forest and livestock land uses. The interface is not a discrete line separating farms and forests but is a complex geographic and temporal mosaic of agricultural and forest land uses shifting across landscapes typically used by smallholders. Smallholder households in southern Burkina Faso and northern Ghana occupy mosaic landscapes shaped by extensive parklands interspersed with pastures, farmland with significant tree densities and woodlands. Their livelihoods integrate agriculture, forestry, livestock and natural resource management making it difficult to separate agricultural land use from forest and tree use. Unfortunately, these smallholder systems are often poorly accommodated by policies and programs that treat forests and agriculture separately. Integrated smallholder systems would be better understood as the management of a ‘forest-farm interface’ (FFI) involving multifunctional landscape approaches and practices. Examining how current policy frameworks address smallholder agriculture and forestry context would serve as a point of departure for improved understanding and for developing cross-sectoral policies and programs to improve opportunity for the rural poor.

WAFFI will generate evidence and dialogue to better conceptualize integrated production systems within the forest-farm interface and evaluate how smallholders in Burkina Faso and Ghana can manage these systems to better supply income and secure food sources. The project is equipping policy makers and practitioners with the practical knowledge and approaches needed to support smallholder livelihood strategies and natural resource management systems adapted to local mosaic landscapes. Project outputs will also inform IFAD programs addressing food security, poverty alleviation and gender equity in the region. Further, through greater engagement with policy makers, the project is empowering the rural poor in Burkina Faso and Ghana to sustainably manage the forest-farm interface to improve their livelihoods and incomes.
WAFFI is generating evidence to illustrate the effectiveness of integrated management systems to ensure robust and resilient food and energy supplies and increase income from forest and agricultural value chains. The project is working with multiple stakeholders to promote practices and policies supporting the management of the forest-farm interface and improve gender equity, while maintaining environmental and social sustainability.

The project uses the following approaches:

- **participatory action research** to increased village-level engagement with social learning, problem solving and dialogue;
- **multidisciplinary applied research** to generate greater understanding of how ecological, socioeconomic and gender characteristics affect the productivity and diversity of smallholder management systems. This will include an innovative, analytic gender approach to examine access and control over resources and to evaluate the gender-disaggregated impacts of resource use patterns, food security and income;
- **multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms** to engage policy makers, practitioners and village representatives in evaluation, negotiation and co-learning. This process uses evidence from multiple knowledge systems generated by the project to define strategies, approaches and actions that will effectively support the livelihoods of smallholders managing the forest-farm interface for improved income, food security and equitable benefits.
**Expected outputs and impacts**

**Knowledge and capacity enhancement**

The project’s multidisciplinary teams are collaborating with farmer experts and practitioners to facilitate social learning, knowledge sharing and capacity enhancement through farmer-to-farmer exchange.

**Strategies and approaches to support smallholders**

The project team is facilitating multi-stakeholder discussion platforms with policy makers, practitioners and farmers to define strategies, approaches and actions that will effectively support the livelihoods of smallholders managing the forest-farm interface for improved income, food security and equitable benefits.

**Evidence-based pro smallholder policies**

Engaging policy makers at national, regional and local levels through the forest-farm interface framework will improve understanding of integrated smallholder systems and support policy programs and governance institutions that aim to strengthen smallholder livelihoods. We expect that improved understanding of integrated smallholder systems by policy makers at national, regional and local levels will lead to the development of enabling policy frameworks and programs that will strengthen smallholder livelihoods and governance institutions.

*Photos by Ollivier Girard/CIFOR*

This research is carried out by CIFOR as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA). This collaborative program aims to enhance the management and use of forests, agroforestry and tree genetic resources across the landscape from forests to farms. CIFOR leads FTA in partnership with Bioversity International, CATIE, CIRAD, INBAR, Tropenbos International and the World Agroforestry Centre.