



Sino-ASEAN Network of Forestry Research Institutes (SANFRI)

Report of the Fifth Steering Committee Meeting

3-5 December 2025 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Overview

The Sino-ASEAN Network of Forestry Research Institutes (SANFRI) mechanism was formally launched by APFNet in 2018 to enhance collaborative forestry research and promote sustainable forest management among ASEAN economies and China. In line with the SANFRI framework, the Fifth Steering Committee meeting was held on 3 December 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Co-organized by the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet), and the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions (APAFRI). The meeting brought together nine Steering Committee member organizations to review SANFRI activities, discuss program priorities, and further explore regional collaboration opportunities.

The meeting has achieved its main goals: (1) Conducted the SANFRI leadership election for 2026-2027, selecting the Chair institution (National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia) and Vice-Chair institution (Royal Forest Department of Thailand); (2) Reviewed progress on SANFRI activities during 2024-2025; (3) Discussed and adopted the 2026-2027 Work Plan and revised the guidelines of Small Research Grant program, and (4) Planned for the 6th SANFRI Steering Committee Meeting.



Figure 1 Group Photo of the 5th SANFRI Steering Committee Meeting

Summary of Agenda Items

This summary reflects key messages of presentations and discussions of the agenda items as well as other points raised in the meeting.

Agenda Item 1: Opening Remarks

At the opening ceremony, Dr. Ismail Parlan, representing the SANFRI Chair Institute FRIM, extended a warm welcome to all SANFRI representatives and participants. Dr. Ratih Damayanti, representing the SANFRI Vice-chair Institute BRIN acknowledged the progress achieved since SANFRI's establishment in 2018 and expressed her support for continued collaboration. Dr. Wang Chunfeng, Executive Director of APFNet, expressed gratitude to attendees, reviewed SANFRI's development, underscored the importance of regional cooperation, and reaffirmed APFNet's continued commitment to supporting the SANFRI mechanism.

Agenda Item 2: Progress Report (2024–2025)

Dr. Ismail Parlan, Director General of the Forest Research Institute Malaysia representing the SANFRI Chair Institute briefed the Steering Committee on the progress and updates of SANFRI activities during 2024–2025.



Figure 2 SANFRI Work Report of 2024-2025 Presented by Dr. Ismail Parlan

(1) Online Work Meeting (January 2025)

In keeping with SANFRI's established practice of sustaining engagement and communication among member institutes between formal steering committee meetings, the annual online work meeting was held in January 2025. During the

meeting, participants reviewed achievements from 2024, including progress under the Small Research Grant Program and the Visiting Scholar Program, and confirmed plans for 2025.

(2) Visiting Scholar Program

During 2024–2025, the program sponsored 12 young researchers from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam to conduct research at the Yunnan Academy of Forestry and Grassland (YAFG). To date, it has supported 24 visits from 6 ASEAN economies. One notable success story is that of a Cambodian scholar who, after two visits, secured a master's scholarship to continue further study in China.

(3) Small Research Grant Program

Two projects passed expert evaluation and successfully concluded in 2025, including the Vietnam-Laos joint project and the Indonesia project. Additionally, two new projects were approved, namely the Myanmar-China joint project and the Malaysia project.

(4) Event Participation

SANFRI members, with support from APFNet, attended and actively participated in the Second Pu'er Forum on Asia-Pacific Forests in October 2025. They delivered presentations across multiple sub-forums and contributed to regional policy dialogue during the event.

Overall, SANFRI remained active in 2024-2025, successfully advancing its core programs (Visiting Scholars, Small Research Grants), strengthening its network through meetings and event participation, and planning for future collaborative activities to promote sustainable forest management in the region.

Agenda Item 3: Future Collaboration Proposals

Under the chairing of Dr. Ismail Parlan, representatives from SANFRI member institutions shared their insights and suggestions for the mechanism's future development.



Figure 3 Member Institutions' Presenting and Discussing Future Collaboration

(1) **Cambodia (Institute of Forest and Wildlife Research and Development)** identified the engagement of young researchers as a primary challenge, noting that most staff are over 45 and senior staff have limited availability for long-term capacity building. The institution requested that SANFRI develop accessible, short-term training opportunities to attract and build capacity among early-career scientists in the national forestry sector.

(2) **China (Yunnan Academy of Forestry and Grassland)** reaffirmed its commitment to SANFRI and proposed enhanced technical collaboration on the management of *Aquilaria* and *Eucalyptus*. It also suggested establishing joint working groups to share China's plantation management experience and develop collaborative research addressing common regional challenges.

(3) **Indonesia (National Research and Innovation Agency)** emphasized the urgent need to strengthen regional collaboration on species-specific forest monitoring, particularly for *Shorea* spp., which are economically vital yet face increasing trade restrictions due to sustainability concerns. The agency proposed that SANFRI prioritize joint initiatives on developing an integrated forest inventory and wood identification system for *Shorea* spp. across member economies. This could include facilitating knowledge exchange, organizing capacity-building workshops on identification technologies, and promoting policy dialogue to align national systems with regional timber trade frameworks, thereby enhancing both scientific cooperation and the evidence base for sustainable forest governance in the region.

(4) **Laos (National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute)** emphasized the weak dissemination of research to end users despite extensive institutional experience. The institute requested that SANFRI provide a platform for knowledge exchange and capacity building in scientific writing, technology transfer, and policy research, noting that national targets, such as increasing forest cover to 50% by 2030 could serve as potential areas for regional collaboration.

(5) **Malaysia (Forest Research Institute Malaysia)** would like to offer to the members on international training courses related to forestry forensic, tissue culture and carbon stock inventory. In fact, they could assist on courses of sustainable forest management (SFM) and forest certification, nonetheless have to be conducted with other agencies in Malaysia such as forestry department and Malaysia Timber Certification Council. The institute requested SANFRI-led capacity building in bamboo and eucalyptus related research and development as both species are widely being planted as forest plantation species in Malaysia.

(6) **Myanmar (Forest Research Institute of Myanmar)** expressed appreciation for SANFRI and interest in learning from China's experience in natural forest management amid national policy shifts to reduce logging. The institute sought SANFRI facilitation of study tours and knowledge-exchange programs on sustainable forest management techniques and policy implementation.

(7) **Thailand (Royal Forest Department)** outlined priorities to address forest degradation and enhance productivity, emphasizing the need for robust science,

innovative plantation models, and a joint monitoring framework. The department proposed that SANFRI support regional capacity building through technical workshops and training on silvicultural techniques for economic species, and enhance researcher mobility and experience-sharing.

(8) **Vietnam (Vietnamese Academy of Forest Sciences)** highlighted the dual priorities of attracting young talent and promoting sustainable management of key species such as Acacia and Eucalyptus, while noting difficulties in retaining skilled researchers. The academy requested that SANFRI support longer-duration, adequately funded research grants and visiting-scholar programs, the formation of thematic research groups, and support for young scholars' conference participation to strengthen collaboration on carbon sequestration and natural forest restoration.

In summary, the proposals emphasize engaging and training the next generation of researchers, strengthening technical collaboration on priority tree species and sustainable forest management, improving knowledge-sharing, and leveraging SANFRI as a platform for joint projects, capacity building, and science-informed policy dialogue across member economies.

Agenda Item 4: Leadership Election (2026-2027)

In accordance with SANFRI's operational framework and through a process of nomination and election among member institutions, the National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia, represented by Dr. Ratih Damayanti, and the Royal Forest Department of Thailand, represented by Mr. Duriya Staporn have been respectively elected as the new Chair and Vice-Chair of SANFRI for the 2026–2027 term.



Figure 4 Representatives Welcoming the Newly Elected Chair and Vice-Chair

Agenda Item 5: Work Plan Discussion & Revision (2026-2027)

Dr. Ratih Damayanti, representing the newly elected SANFRI Chair Institution from the National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia, presented the SANFRI Work Plan for 2026-2027. The plan has been formulated in consideration with the collaboration needs and proposals raised by member institutions during the previous agenda discussion. It outlines a comprehensive strategy for enhancing regional forestry research capacity and includes the following key components:



Figure 5 SANFRI Work Plan of 2026-2027 Presented by Dr. Ratih Damayanti

(1) Visiting Scholar Program Enhancement

The Visiting Scholar Program will be further strengthened to broaden participation and deepen research impact. Efforts will focus on expanding engagement to include underrepresented member economies, noting that Myanmar has not yet participated and improving program management through better-aligned research topics, optimized visit durations, and clearer outcome expectations. A dedicated communication network will be established to strengthen institutional collaboration. Visits will be extended to a minimum of six months to allow scholars adequate time for literature review, methodology training, field research, data analysis, and academic writing. Optional basic Mandarin Chinese language training will also be provided to facilitate smoother academic and cultural integration.

(2) APFNet Small Research Grant

Based on the implementation experience of the Small Research Grant Program since 2020 and feedback from member institutions, and with the collective agreement of all

representatives, the program guidelines have been revised. A key change is the extension of the project implementation period from one year to two years, allowing grantees more time to conduct thorough research and produce higher-quality outcomes that contribute to forest restoration and sustainable management in the region. A new call for proposals under the APFNet Small Research Grant will be launched for the 2026-2027 cycle, maintaining the competitive and thorough review process established in previous rounds. The program remains committed to supporting high-potential, regionally relevant forestry research within the scope of available funding.

(3) Conference Attendance Support Program

The Conference Attendance Support Program will be launched in 2026 to enable eligible early-career researchers to participate in international conferences. The program will provide financial support covering travel and related expenses, thereby encouraging broader engagement in global scientific exchange and enhancing the visibility of SANFRI-affiliated research.

(4) The 6th SANFRI Steering Committee Meeting Planning

The 6th SANFRI Steering Committee Meeting is planned to be held in Indonesia in late 2027 or early 2028, hosted by BRIN. Proposed venues include Bogor and Bali, with options such as the historic Bogor Botanical Gardens and the Garuda Wisnu Kencana Cultural Park, etc., each offering unique settings for academic exchange and field-based dialogue.

Annexes

Annex I - Meeting Agenda

Annex II - List of Participants

The 5th SANFRI Steering Committee Meeting

Agenda

Day One - 2 December 2025		
Arrival		
Day Two - 3 December 2025		
Time	Agenda	Facilitator
09:00 - 09:15	Opening remarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest Research Institute Malaysia (SANFRI Chair) National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia (SANFRI Vice-Chair) APFNet (SANFRI Sponsor) 	PIN Kar Yong, Executive Secretary of APAFRI
09:15 - 09:25	Group Photo	
09:25 - 10:00	Progress Report: SANFRI Activities (2024 - 2025) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Key achievements summary</i> - by Dr. Ismail Parlan, Director General of Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), Malaysia	
10:00 - 10:20	Coffee Break	
10:20 - 11:00	Member Institutions' Future Collaboration Proposals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>8 institutions × 5 mins each</i> <i>Structured format: (1) Priority need (2) Expected SANFRI support</i> - by representative from each member institution	
11:00 - 11:30	2026 - 2027 Work Plan Discussion and revision of SANFRI Small Research Grant Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Linkage to members' proposals where possible</i> 	
11:30 - 11:40	Election of SANFRI Leadership (2026 - 2027)	
11:40 - 11:50	6th SANFRI Steering Committee Meeting Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Date and Venue</i> 	

Annex I - Meeting Agenda

11:50 - 12:00	Wrap-up and closing - by Dr. Ratih Damayanti, Director of Environmental Policy, Maritime Affairs, Natural Resources, and Nuclear Policy, National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia	
12:00 - 13:30	Lunch	
13:30 - 17:30	The Fourth Early Career Academics Forum	
18:30 - 20:00	Welcome dinner	
Day Three - 4 December 2025		
Time	Agenda	Organizer
	Field visit to Matang Mangrove Forest Reserve	FRIM & APAFRI
07:30 - 08:00	Gather at the hotel lobby (Impiana KLCC Hotel)	
08:00 - 12:00	Travel from hotel to Matang, Perak (by bus)	
12:00 - 13:00	Arrive at Matang Mangrove Forest Reserve Briefing by Larut Matang District Forest Officer	
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 - 17:00	Site visit to mangrove forest plot in Kuala Sepetang (by boat) Visit to Kuala Sepetang Charcoal Factory	
17:00 - 18:00	Depart to Taiping and check in Novotel Hotel, Taiping	
18:00 - 20:30	Free time / Dinner on your own	
20:30 - 21:30	Night Safari at Zoo Taiping	
21:30	Back to Novotel Hotel, Taiping	
Day Four - 5 December 2025		
Time	Agenda	Organizer
	Back to Kuala Lumpur from Matang Mangrove Forest Reserve	FRIM & APAFRI
09:00 - 09:30	Gather at the hotel lobby and check out.	
09:30-10:00	Stop by Antong Coffee Mill (the oldest coffee mill in Malaysia)	
10:00-14:00	Travel from hotel to Kuala Lumpur (by bus)	
14: 00	Arrive at Impiana KLCC Hotel	
Day Five - 6 December 2025		
Departure		

The 5th SANFRI Steering Committee Meeting

List of Participants

Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet)			
No.	Name	Organization	Position
1	Wang Chunfeng	APFNet	Executive Director
SANFRI Coordination Office (SCO)			
2	Zhang Jingfeng	SCO	Director
Cambodia			
3	Ma Vuthy	Institute of Forest and Wildlife Research and Development	Deputy Director
China			
4	Wang Lei	Yunnan Academy of Forestry and Grassland	Researcher
Indonesia			
5	Damayanti Ratih	National Research and Innovation Agency	Director of Environment, Maritime, Natural Resources, and Nuclear Policy
Laos			
6	Simone Vongkhamho	National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute	Director of Forestry Research Centre
Malaysia			
7	Ismail Parlan	Forest Research Institute Malaysia	Director General
Myanmar			
8	Ei Ei Swe Hlaing	Forest Research Institute	Assistant Director
Thailand			
9	Staporn Duriya	Royal Forest Department	Director of Silvicultural Research Division

Annex II - List of Participants

Vietnam			
10	Tran Lam Dong	Vietnamese Academy of Forest Sciences	Vice President
Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions (APAFRI)			
11	Pin Kar Yong	APAFRI	Executive Secretary