

Preface

Sixty-seven percent of Japanese land is covered with forest, 40% of which is the result of afforestation. Despite this wealth and a history of silviculture that goes back hundreds of years, Japanese forestry has lost international competitiveness and faces a host of problems. Self-sufficiency is low, and 80% of the Japanese demand for timber is filled by imports. While the domestic cutting volume of forest has decreased rapidly, the annual growing stock has grown to twice the annual cutting volume. Forest areas left unplanted after harvesting have also been increasing, with serious implications for erosion control. Other countries have similar problems of forest management, but the situation in Japan appears to be dramatically worse compared with some of them.

In recent years, researchers in the areas of forest policy, forest economics, and forest management have gathered to exchange information and research results at international conferences and through bodies such as the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO). It appears, however, that information on forestry in Japan has not been available to many people in other countries.

Planning for this volume began three years ago, with the goal of disseminating information on Japanese forestry. From the many Japanese forestry researchers, 15 individuals working in the western part of the country contributed to this publication. They describe the real state of forestry and the forest industry in Japan and focus on its problems. The authors hope that this book will be read by researchers and others interested in forestry around the world, and that it will contribute to finding solutions to the problems of forestry and forest management in different countries, including Japan.

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August 2001