

SILVICULTURAL PRACTICES AND SUSTAINABLE FOREST DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

OKORIE P.E 1 and A.M. AWODOLA²

¹Department of Forestry & Environmental Management Federal University of Agriculture, Umudike

² Department of Forestry & Fisheries Faculty of Agriculture, Usmanu OanFodiyo University, Sokoto

Abstract

With the creation of the Forestry Department of 1889, the thrust of forest management in Nigeria was the adoption of silvicultural practices to enhance the productivity of the natural forest through the Tropical Shelterwood System (TSS). Later in the century and subsequent decades, plantations of mainly exotic species were established to provide raw materials for industries, especially, the pulp and paper mills. Consequently, large hectares of natural forests were converted into plantations with attendant adverse consequences. Against the background of different forest formations and new challenges to rapid vegetation cover, this paper discusses the evolution and contributions of silvicultural practices towards sustainable forest development in Nigeria. These silvicultural practices range from scientific choice of tree species in reforestation and afforestation programmes, appropriate fertiliser application, efficient nursery operation, canopy management and prescribed burning to adoption of vegetative propagation for rapid vegetative cover. In order to avert persistent loss of biodiversity, intensive forestry practice through the coppice system is advocated while the natural forests, including the mangrove should be protected and managed on a sustainable basis as a major strategy for forestry development in the years ahead.

Keyword