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Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry

European Forestry Commission

**Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics,
Economics and Management**

Forty-fifth session

Geneva, 22–24 May 2024

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Reporting on implemented and ongoing work

Reports of the Teams of Specialists

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document contains information about the work implemented by four of the five Teams of Specialists (ToS) since the last Joint Working Party session. The annex of the document contains their background information.

The ToS on Boreal Forests is currently dormant.

The Joint Working Party is invited to take note of the past activities and provide feedback and guidance on potential future work of the ToS.



I. Past, current and future activities

A. Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management

1. Meetings held in 2023 and 2024

1. Monthly coordination online meetings of the core group of the Team, with the participation of the leader, deputy leaders and coordinators of the task groups (on forest damage and forest data banks).
2. 30 May 2023, thirty-second (32nd) meeting of the “ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on monitoring sustainable forest management”, Geneva, Switzerland, and online.
3. 17 – 19 April 2024, thirty-third (33rd) meeting of the “ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management”, Larnaca, Cyprus.

2. Outputs and impacts achieved since May 2023

4. The ToS on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) contributed to the project of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), “Assessment of forest damage/disturbance in the ECE region” to improve methodology, reporting capacity and knowledge on forest damage in the ECE region. The implementation of the project was supported by Austria, Canada, Finland, Germany and the United States of America. The final study was published and presented at several events, including the FORESTA 2023 and the Team’s meeting in Larnaca, Cyprus on 17-19 April 2024, where discussion on a future forest damage assessment system was initiated.
5. The Forest Databanks Network (an informal sub-group of ToS experts in the field of forest databanks), supported the development of an updated version of INForest (<https://forest-data.unece.org>), with some functionality improvements and updated data. Furthermore, the Forest Databanks Network supported the implementation of the ECE project “Strengthening capacity of policy and decisions makers, and forest service specialists to develop national forest information systems in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia”. Guidelines on preliminary analysis and development of a Forest Information System (FIS) were finalized and will be published soon. A regional workshop on Forest Information Systems was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 10-11 October 2023, organized with the support of members of the Team.
6. The ToS supported ECE, FAO and Forest Europe in the 2025 cycle of the Global and Pan-European data collections. According to the mandates received, the work of the Team contributed to the preparatory work and training of National Correspondents on the dedicated online platform for pan-European forest data collection at a workshop in Helsinki, Finland, 11-14 September 2023. Members of the Team were also engaged in the process as national correspondents or international reviewers.

3. Outputs and impacts expected for 2024 and first half of 2025

7. The next face-to-face meeting of the Sustainable Forest Management Monitoring Team is planned for spring 2025. Prior to this, online events will be organized for the Team and its thematic subgroups.
8. The ToS will provide advice and support to the finalization of the Forest Information Systems Development project to produce a dedicated e-learning course on the topic and to support the dissemination of the project results.
9. The Team of Specialists will continue to support the dissemination of the results of the Forest Damage/Disturbance Assessment project. The Team will be involved in the development of the proposal for improved damage assessment in the ECE region.
10. Support will be provided to the ECE Forestry and Timber section's work on forest information dissemination. This will include the presentation and dissemination of the results of the Global and Pan-European 2025 reporting on forests and sustainable forest management.

11. The Team was invited to provide advice and support to the planned work on the next (2025) cycle on the reporting on forest ownership in the ECE region (the activity is subject to the approval and availability of funding). The first step of this work would focus on analysing the lessons learned from the previous cycle (conducted in 2015) and the needs of stakeholders.

4. Issues for the attention of the Working Party

12. As requested by the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forestry Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission at their joint session in San Marino in 2023, the ToS will work on a proposal for the further improvement of forest damage/disturbance reporting in the ECE region to follow up on the conclusions of the project "Assessment of forest damage/disturbance in the ECE region". The proposal will be presented to the next joint session in 2025.

13. The Team considers a possible third reporting cycle on forest ownership in the ECE region as an important activity, providing essential information on forests, forest management in terms of forest ownership and related impacts. Information on forest ownership is critical for the successful achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring the recognition of the interests of this key stakeholder group.

14. The ToS will continue to use both face-to-face and virtual means of communication, either separately or in combination, in its effort to ensure inclusiveness.

5. Other comments

15. At the invitation of Eurostat (European Commission), Mr. Mati Valgepea presented the Team and its work at the Working Group on Forestry Statistics, 14-15 March 2024 in Luxembourg.

16. In response to the invitation from the ECE/FAO ToS on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics, the secretariat and members of the Team of Specialists on Monitoring SFM contributed to the ad hoc task group on "Review of statistics regarding removals to share information, identify gaps and inconsistencies in definitions and methodologies", including through the participation in the meeting of this task group on 20 March 2024.

B. Team of Specialists on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics

1. Meetings held in 2023 and 2024

17. Meetings held since the 2023 Joint Working Party:

(a) 16 January 2024: ToS Leadership meeting to recap 2023 activities and discuss expectations for 2024, including ad hoc tasks (online);

(b) 20-21 May 2024: 3rd Meeting of the Joint ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics.

18. Ad Hoc Task Group Meetings:

(a) 11 August 2023: Planning Meeting for Ad Hoc Task Groups Reports to the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) (online);

(b) 8 September 2023: Planning Meeting for Ad Hoc Task Groups Reports to COFFI (online);

(c) 18 September 2023: Working Meeting on Task Group Reports with Coordinators (online);

(e) 20 March 2024: Meeting of the Ad Hoc Task Group on Removals Statistics (online);

(d) 5 April 2024: Meeting of the Ad Hoc Task Group on Wood Energy Statistics (online).

2. Outputs and impacts achieved since May 2023

19. In addition to the regular ToS work, the ToS has formed two ad hoc groups to organize work on specific topics. Specialists were invited to join either or both ad hoc task groups which have the following functions:

(a) Ad Hoc Task Group on Removals Statistics: Review of statistics regarding removals to share information, identify gaps and inconsistencies in definitions and methodologies;

(b) Ad Hoc Task Group on Wood Energy Statistics: Review of methods of data collection to better respond to policy questions on wood energy supply-chain.

20. The ToS submitted two documents to the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry, presenting findings of work to date and identifying areas for additional activities. This includes a Summary of Findings on Removals Statistics 2022-2023 and a Summary of Findings on Wood Energy Statistics 2022-2023. COFFI supported the activities proposed by the ToS including:

(a) A “Country profile” to develop national approaches and facilitate comparability of removals statistics across countries was decided as a follow-up of the “Removals Statistics” questionnaire. The aim is to design an intuitive tool to point to areas where data inconsistencies might exist, guide further work for future surveys (as/if needed), and possibly offer suggestions to the Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JFSQ). The “Country profile” template proposal was designed and shared with ToS members to collect further contributions and improvements;

(b) a first draft of a list of wood energy metrics derived from the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry, along with a technical report to identify opportunities for their use by policy makers, and areas where data gaps and apparent inconsistencies exist, have been developed.

21. The ToS also contributed to:

(a) A presentation titled “Wood Energy: Update on current trends and developments” at the COFFI market discussions in San Marino, November 2023;

(b) the preparation of an ECE/FAO Data Brief on “Wood Energy 2022”. Input included insights to market trends and developments across the ECE.

3. Outputs and impacts expected for 2024 and first half of 2025

22. Finalize the “Country profile” template with contributions/suggestions from the ToS and promoting the respective country replies.

23. Advance with the activities proposed in the summary of findings on “Removals Statistics” and conduct a review of statistics regarding removals to share information, and to identify gaps and inconsistencies in definitions and methodologies.

24. Finalize the compilation of policy-relevant wood energy metrics derived from the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE), and an accompanying technical report pointing to gaps, inconsistencies and opportunities to inform policy debates revolving around climate mitigation, cascading principles, sustainability and energy security.

4. Issues for the attention of the Working Party

25. The Working Party is invited to provide input to and guidance on the possibility of the ToS conducting the following activities:

(a) Developing a technical proposal on improving comparability through voluntary removals reporting;

(b) proposing new or edited metrics within the JWEE to better answer policy relevant questions;

(c) developing a document or publication on gaps and inconsistencies in current removal definitions and methodologies;

(d) developing a document or publication on data collection tailored to better respond to policy wood energy sector questions.

5. Other comments

26. The ToS has effectively managed online meetings of ad hoc groups and its leadership. It has provided a nice balance to the work of the ToS work and brought progress in the implementation of individual activities within the group.

27. The ToS has identified the following as areas of growing interest among member States that might also be of interest to the ToS' work. These regard statistics of:

- (a) Post-consumer recovered wood;
- (b) wood by-products;
- (c) market of wood in construction;
- (d) input-output flows on wood market.

6. Team of Specialists on Sustainable Forest Products

1. Meetings held in 2023 and 2024

28. The ToS held its annual meeting on 18 December 2024.

29. The ToS further held an informal online consultation followed by written comments on the draft text of “General Conditions for a Transition to a Sustainable and Circular Bio-economy in Forest-based Industries” and “Circularity Concepts in the Pulp and Paper Industry” on 7 July 2023 (link: <https://unece.org/info/Forests/events/383558>).

30. The core group of the team held the following online meetings:

(a) 18 December 2023: to discuss forthcoming work, with a focus on the likely market impacts of the Regulation (EU 2023/1115) on deforestation-free products (EUDR);

(b) 21 February 2024: detailed discussion what role the ToS could play regarding the forest sector's efforts to respond to the impact of the EUDR on the market for forest products sector in the ECE region, with follow-up to carry out a targeted (online) survey of (ECE) regional forest products' supply-chain stakeholders;

(c) 25 April 2024: discussion of the results of the online survey, prioritize these with a view to discussion with the European Commission;

(d) 8 May 2024: preparation of the EUDR related events.

31. The ToS participated in the review by the ECE of its Integrated Programme of Work on 15 April 2024 (online).

2. Outputs and impacts achieved since May 2023

32. ToS Members including: Orifjon Abidov (European Panel Federation); Delton Alderman (United States of America Department of Agriculture Forest Service); Diego Benedetti (European Organisation of the Sawmill Industry); Ivan Eastin (University of Washington); Kathryn Fernholz (Dovetail Partners) and Jeremy Wall (Deputy Leader of this ToS) contributed to the writing of the Forest Products Annual Market Review (FPAMR) 2022/2023. In addition, Eoin O'Driscoll, (Team Leader ECE/FAO ToS on Sustainable Forest Products) proofread the FPAMR (2022/2023).

33. The TOS Assisted the secretariat to organize and run the market discussions at FORESTA 2023 in San Marino on 22 November 2023.

34. The ToS organized a hybrid workshop at FORESTA 2023 on “How to Minimize Carbon in Buildings” in November 2023.

35. The ToS responded to the call by Member States at FORESTA 2023 for discussion on the impacts of emerging European Union legislation, in particular the EUDR, in the ECE

region. In a first step the ToS held an online consultation with forest-based industries associations from the ECE region on how to best comply with legislations on legal, deforestation and forest-degradation-free supply chains in April 2024.

36. March-April 2024: on behalf of the ToS, the Secretariat conducted the online survey of the issues facing the forest products sector regarding the introduction of the EUDR, focusing on identifying technical and other potential barriers to its implementation.

3. Outputs and impacts expected for coming 2024 and first half of 2025

37. The ToS will provide support for the Secretariat in the following ways:

- (a) Organize the ECE market discussions (2024);
- (b) track developments of the EUDR. This is likely to continue into 2025;
- (c) provide market guidance to the ToS on Forestry Statistics and Wood-biomass Energy;
- (d) contribute inputs to and proofread the ECE FPAMR (2024-2025);
- (e) hold ToS meetings (online);
- (f) organize online workshops as required;
- (g) improve communications with other ToS and externally regarding ECE outputs, including the improvement of website and social media outputs.

4. Issues for the attention of the Working Party

38. Financial, material and staffing support is required for the ongoing production of the FPAMR and for other ToS activities. Accordingly, member States are invited to propose and discuss all feasible options, including in-kind and financial support to the activities.

39. The ToS needs to further improve our communication output, especially on social media. The Working Party is invited to help disseminate ToS events and outputs.

5. Other comments

40. As in previous years, the ToS on SFP is open to active collaboration with other ToS and with all relevant organizations.

D. Team of Specialists on Forest Communication

1. Meetings held in 2023 and 2024

41. The UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators' Network annual meeting and workshop was held in Prague on 20-22 June 2023, hosted by the Czech Ministry of Agriculture and the Faculty of Forestry and Wood Sciences of the Czech University of Life Sciences.

2. Outputs and impacts achieved since May 2023

42. The ToS secured and held a forest session during the International Union of Architects 2023 World Congress. At the session, entitled "Convince or Compel – How to Communicate Effectively to Shape a Sustainable Future with Wooden Buildings", selected ToS members showcased communication techniques that promote wood as a sustainable building material and also presented the "Grow the Solution" advocacy initiative.

43. The ToS also presented the "Grow the Solution" advocacy initiative and campaign at the World Forum on Urban Forests 2023.

44. The ToS provided strategic communication advice, input and support to develop and disseminate key messages and communication products on the theme of "Forests and Innovation" for the International Day of Forests 2024.

45. The ToS organized and held a technical workshop on "Communicating the value of wood: advancing sustainable wood in forest policies" at FAO Headquarters. The workshop

explored communication approaches to promote forest policies embracing both the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources and to explore potential communication products, including key messages, to engage policy makers.

46. The ToS made a presentation on the crucial importance of communication in the prevention of forest fires and risk management at the "8th International Wildland Fire Conference" and the ToS presented the "Grow the Solution" advocacy campaign at a symposium held in the United Kingdom for architects, planners and specifiers of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

3. Outputs and impacts expected for 2024 and first half of 2025

47. Organize a communication session at a Science and Society Sub-plenary Session at the 26th World Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) in June 2024 in Stockholm, Sweden. The display of branded billboards at the Congress will also be explored to promote "Grow the Solution" initiative.

48. Support FAO Forestry communication activities, including "Grow the Solution" and other prospective initiatives, including at major international events, such as the 27th Session of the Committee on Forestry and 9th World Forest Week, the World Food Forum 2024 and twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

49. Hold the UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators' Network annual meeting and workshop in Vienna on 16-18 December 2024, hosted by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management.

50. Contribute to the theme selection for the International Day of Forests 2025 and provide strategic communication advice and input on key messaging and communication products.

4. Issues for the attention of the Working Party

51. None to report.

5. Other comments

52. None to report.

Annex

A. Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management

1. Team website
https://unece.org/forests/team-specialists-monitoring-sustainable-forest-management
2. Period covered
May 2023 – May 2024
3. Leader/Deputies and Secretary
<p>Leader: Friedrich Schmitz, Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Germany</p> <p>Deputies: Stefanie Linser, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU) Andrzej Talarczyk, Forest and Natural Resources Research Centre, Warsaw</p> <p>Secretary: Roman Michalak</p>
4. Members
74 members, of which 22 female.
5. Countries
<p>26 countries: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, United States of America.</p> <p>14 organizations, processes and universities: Armeniatree, Confederation of European Forest Owners, European Commission (DG AGRI, DG ENV, EUROSTAT, DG JRC), European Environment Agency, European State Forest Association - EUSTAFOR, European Forest Genetic Resources Programme – EUFORGEN, European Forest Institute (Forest Policy Research Network and EFI Forest Europe Support Team), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Forest Europe - Liaison Unit Bonn, Montréal Process, Forest and Natural Resources Research Centre – Warsaw, Sylva Nova, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences – Vienna (BOKU), University of Molise.</p>

B. Team of Specialists on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics

1. Team websites
https://unece.org/forests/team-specialists-forest-products-and-wood-energy-statistics
2. Period covered
May 2023 – May 2024
3. Leader/Deputies and Secretary
Leader: Francisco Aguilar Deputies: Branko Glavonjic, Ewa Leszczyszyn, Graça Louro, Holger Weimar Secretary: Daniel Griswold
4. Members
64 members, of which 23 female.
5. Countries
27 countries: Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

C. Team of Specialists on Sustainable Forest Products

1. Team website
https://unece.org/forests/team-specialists-sustainable-forest-products
2. Period covered
May 2023 – May 2024
3. Leader/Deputies and Secretary
Leader: Eoin O’Driscoll Deputies: Jeremy Wall, Delton Alderman, Christoph Pfemeter and Ivan Eastin Secretary: Florian Steierer
4. Members
93 members, of which 21 female
5. Countries
30 countries: Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan.

D. Team of Specialists on Forest Communication

1. Team website
https://unece.org/forests/team-specialists-forest-communication
2. Period covered
May 2023 – May 2024
3. Leader/Deputies and Secretary
Leader: Kai Lintunen Deputies: Jennifer Hayes, Lourdes Lázaro Marín, Boris Rantaša, Gerda Wolfrum Secretary: Maria De Cristofaro
4. Members
269 members
5. Countries
35 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Iceland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.