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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE  
Timber Committee

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION  
European Forestry Commission

**JOINT FAO/ECE WORKING PARTY ON FOREST ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS**  
Twenty-second session

**Review of the collection and dissemination of statistics, including  
the use of Internet for dissemination**

(Item 6 of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

The Working Party is invited to review the whole programme of collection and dissemination of statistics and suggest improvements. In addition to the arrangements for the joint questionnaire and the results of the user survey, dealt with under other agenda items, delegates' attention is drawn to questions of information on secondary processed wood products, the definition of sawnwood, dissemination by Internet and next generation data needs.

1. It is part of the Working Party's mandate to review regularly and systematically the whole system for collection and dissemination of statistics. Under this item therefore delegates are invited to review any aspect of these activities and make suggestions for improvement.

2. However, some relevant aspects will be dealt with under other items of the agenda. These are listed below:

- format and content of the joint questionnaire, including scope and definitions (TIM/EFC/WP.2/1999/3);

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- procedures for data collection and interagency sharing, notably the role

of correspondents (TIM/EFC/WP.2/1999/3 and 7);

- conformity of *Timber Bulletin* and other ECE/FAO products with user needs (TIM/EFC/WP.2/1999/5).

3. There are a number of other aspects and questions, which the secretariat would wish to draw to the attention of delegates. These are listed below.

4. Should ECE/FAO attempt to collect publish and analyse information on *further (secondary) processed products*, such as joinery, furniture, wood floors and other manufactures, even paper products? While this would undeniably improve the understanding of sector trends, is it feasible with the resources available to the secretariat and to national correspondents? If so, how should the information be collected: from correspondents, general trade and production statistics, industry associations? Which further processed products should be included? Should the information be in physical units (tons, m3 equivalent) or value terms? Who could be potential partners in this work? (ITTO has carried out work in this area) Should these data be published on a regular basis (e.g. in the *Annual Market Review* or on the website) or an occasional basis (e.g. as periodic studies, or special chapters of the *Annual Market Review*)? As regards resources, the secretariat's resources are at present stretched to the utmost, and the two new staff members expected in summer 1999 are "earmarked" for forest resource assessment and outlook studies (although the latter topic might include an element of analysis of trends for further processed products). Thus if the topic of further processed products is considered important enough to merit increased attention, delegates should either suggest topics to drop from the programme, or work methods which make little use of secretariat resources. Such methods might include the loan of experts (or of postgraduate interns) for special studies, or a team of specialists.

5. It appears there is a certain ambiguity about what should be included under the heading of *sawnwood*. The definition in the Joint Questionnaire, which is in accordance with the 1982 FAO Classification is as follows: "Sawnwood, including sleepers, unplanned, planed, grooved, tongued, etc., sawn lengthwise or produced by a profile-chipping process (e.g. planks, beams, joists, boards, rafters, scantlings, laths, boxboards, "lumber", etc.) and planed wood, which may also be finger-jointed, tongued or grooved, chamfered, rabbeted, V-jointed, beaded, etc. Wood flooring is excluded. With few exceptions, sawnwood exceeds 5 mm in thickness. Under *production*, the quantity should include production from both domestic and imported roundwood." This is considered to include HS headings 44.06 (sleepers), 44.07 (wood sawn or chipped lengthwise, sliced or peeled, whether or not planed, sanded or finger-jointed, of a thickness exceeding 6 mm) and 44.09 (wood continuously shaped .. along face or edge). However, in some countries data are only provided for unplanned sawnwood, not finished in any way. Where data are collected separately for planed and unplanned sawnwood, there is a risk of double counting or omission in the international data set. As considerable (and increasing) volumes of planed or otherwise further manufactured sawnwood are produced, sometimes from roundwood and sometimes from wood which has been rough sawn or squared elsewhere, it appears that there is a considerable potential for misunderstanding and lack of comparability between countries. The Working Party is invited to consider what should be included as "sawnwood" in ECE/FAO analysis, including the question of cross references to other

classifications, and, if necessary propose modifications to the definition. The Working Party's views would be transmitted to the partners in the joint FAO/ECE/Eurostat/ITTO questionnaire, as any change would have to be adopted by all four organisations.

6. With regard to dissemination, the Working Party is invited to consider the question of how best to disseminate ECE/FAO statistics on the *Internet*. Considerable efforts have been made to upgrade the quality and convenience both of the Timber Committee website (at <http://www.unece.org/trade/timber>) and the F A O Forestry Department website (at <http://www.fao.org/waicent/forestry/Forestry.htm>). It is intended to continue this process, and to integrate the two sites more closely, so that Geneva can have more direct input to the FAO database for ECE countries. There are of course many aspects which can be improved, the main constraints are of resources to upgrade and, no less important, to maintain in the future, the websites. The Working Party is invited to review the organisation and content of the websites and to make suggestions as regards strategy and methods of running them.

7. At its meeting in Yokohama in September 1998, the Intersecretariat Working Group (IWG) identified a number of *next generation data needs* (see annex with fuller description). The Working Party is invited to review these suggestions and comment on them, possibly indicating some degree of priority among them for ECE/FAO (some of them apply more directly to the conditions of regions served by other organisations). In summary, these needs, as identified by the IWG, are:

- data on prices;
- industrial structure;
- secondary processed wood products;
- sources of fibre and wood fuel;
- conversion factors;
- undocumented production and trade;
- revision of categories of paper and paperboard.

8. At the same meeting, the IWG identified the need to improve *national capacity for collecting, reporting and dissemination of statistics*. This aspect is also recognised in Helsinki resolution H3. Some organisations reported successful approaches, e.g. the ITTO regular two-week training courses for the national correspondents. The Timber Section has also participated in Nordic-Baltic cooperation in this area, which has been one of the factors which have resulted in the present regular, complete statistical reporting from the Baltic countries. It is clear from the non-response to regular questionnaires from many countries in transition, notably in the CIS, that there is considerable need for capacity building as regards forest sector statistics. The constraint however is resources as organising such workshops needs significant input from organisers, presenters and for travel<sup>1</sup>. It is also worth pointing out that much of the knowledge and experience necessary to set up such workshops is directly

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<sup>1</sup>There are however economies of scale if a series of workshops are held on essentially the same lines in different countries or regions.

available to Working Party delegates. The Working Party and individual delegates are invited to consider whether there is any possibility of setting up a series of workshops on capacity building in forest sector statistics, in cooperation with other organisations, notably FAO, ITTO and possibly EU institutions and programmes, and whether their countries could contribute to such an effort. Although the ECE/FAO secretariat has practically no regular budget resources for this type of work, it is ready to support it to the extent possible, recognising the importance of such work.

9. The Timber Committee decided to review regularly the *markets for certified forest products* at its annual discussions on the basis of information provided by delegations on developments in their countries and statements by experts (ECE/TIM/89, para. 11). At the Committee's 1998 session the markets for certified forest products were discussed as a separate market sector, based partly on the special chapter in the "Forest products annual market review" titled the "Certified forest products marketplace." The chapter's author cited the difficulties in obtaining reliable, objective statistics on consumption, trade and production in this sector and called on the Timber Committee to consider this need in light of its desire to review annually this market (ECE/TIM/BULL/51/3, Chapter 3). He listed a number of considerations in collecting these statistics:

- information needed to appropriately monitor developments in this growing market segment;
- potential information sources (governments, certifiers, associations, etc.);
- questions of confidentiality;
- methods of collecting information (regular official enquires may not be the most effective method).

In response the Committee referred this question to the Working Party (ECE/TIM/91, para. 16), which is therefore invited to address the issue of how to monitor markets for certified forest products, and make suggestions for future ECE/FAO work in this field.

10. The Committee also referred a number of other questions to the Working Party, most of which have been covered elsewhere. One item concerned the proper *monitoring of developments for OSB and MDF*. These are now both covered in the joint questionnaire which has been sent to all countries in the world, so it may be assumed that data quality will improve gradually.

## **Annex**

### **Extracts from the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group meeting at Yokohama, September 1998**

#### **"Additional findings and recommendations"**

During its discussions on the proposed joint questionnaire, the working group identified several topics where enhanced statistical coverage would benefit all participating organizations and their members. These topics are identified below as "next generation data needs." Where annual coverage is desirable, some of these topics could be considered for inclusion in future versions of a joint questionnaire. Other topics would benefit from collaboration by two or more of the organizations to jointly undertake periodic or ad hoc studies/projects of special interest to their members. The topics identified are as follows:

#### Communications

**Electronic communication.** The working group felt that all organizations should encourage electronic submission of data by making spreadsheet versions of the questionnaires readily available on their respective websites, by e-mail and on diskette. Statistical outputs should also be available in electronic format.

**Communication strategy.** The organizations should develop coherent strategies to increase the visibility and utility of their statistical outputs. This could involve undertaking user surveys to gain feedback on existing/desired outputs, as well as distributing statistical summaries in formats that meet the needs of various end-users (e.g. periodic reporting of production, trade and price trends in trade journals, etc.).

**Regional institutions.** The organizations should seek to involve and engage regional institutions in gathering market, trade and production data relevant to their mandates (e.g. collaboration with ATO (African Timber Organisation) to seek species level trade information).

#### Training/capacity building

The working group recognized that a key to successful data collection is a strong network of correspondents in member countries. The organizations should collaborate to improve statistical infrastructure where it is lacking, and to train and recognize statistical correspondents in all countries.

#### Next generation data needs

**Prices.** There is a need for more up-to-date interactive data, while ensuring that coverage of benchmark species/products used for constructing long-term price series is continued.

**Industrial structure.** Detailed studies of particular sectors (e.g. wood based

panels, tropical sawmilling) could be carried out periodically, as also recommended by the Technical Working Group on ITTO's Statistical Functions and Networks.

**Secondary processed wood products.** There is a need for the organizations to agree on definitions of products to be tracked and measurement units to be used. Following an initial study to ascertain these and current levels of production and trade, it would be useful for such statistics to be collected annually due to the increasing importance of SPWPs in a wide range of countries' forest sectors.

**Sources of industrial fibre and wood fuel.** The organizations should undertake studies to determine where wood fibre and fuel are being supplied from (e.g. plantations vs. natural/semi-natural forests, non-forest land, etc.). Such analyses would assist in obtaining more realistic fibre balances. Reference could be made to the recently completed FAO Global Fibre Supply Study.

**Conversion factors.** The organizations should work with member countries to review and update forest products sector conversion factors (e.g. weight/area to solid volume, roundwood equivalent factors, etc.).

**Undocumented production and trade.** The organizations should review the current situation regarding any undocumented forestry activities relating to their objectives. This could include an examination and comparison of bilateral trade flows as well as better estimates of small-scale and informal processing.

**Revision of paper and paperboard categories.** These categories should be reviewed and revised to better reflect industry practice and the actual customs classifications in use.

**Forest management data.** The organizations should collaborate in data collection efforts for the Forest Resource Assessments and in general dissemination of forest management data of relevance to their members.

The working group recommended that all participating organizations review this list periodically in the IWGFS and undertake activities as deemed appropriate by their members."

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