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Organization**

Timber Committee

**Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party
on Forest Economics and Statistics**

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Guidance of Work Areas

Food and Agriculture

European Forestry
Commission

**Guidance of Work Area 2: Forest resources assessment
and indicators of sustainable forest management
in the region**

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The document presents an overview of the activities in Work Area 2, Forest Resources Assessment, and highlights the topics and issues to be addressed by Working Party, as follows:

- (a) Meeting of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management;
- (b) Update on the progress of work on global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2010;
- (c) Update on preparatory work for the finalisation of the State of Europe's Forest (SoEF) 2011 report;
- (d) Information on development of a method for sustainable forest management assessment
- (d) Results of pilot reporting by the new European forest types' classification and application of the classification in the pan-European reporting.

The Working Party is invited to provide guidance for current and future activities in Work Area 2.

1. This document is produced in accordance with the programme of work as approved by the Timber Committee in ECE/TIM/S/2008/6 and “to provide guidance on the implementation of work areas 1, 2 and 3 and parts of work area 5” as stated in the terms of reference of the Working Party as approved by the Timber Committee in ECE/TIM/S/2008/6/Add.1.

I. INTRODUCTION

2. The activities in Work Area 2 for the reporting period (April 2010 – March 2011) focused on the reporting process for the next Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Forest Europe), which will be held on 14-16 June 2011 in Oslo. The activities included collection and review of data on quantitative and qualitative indicators on sustainable forest management (SFM), data processing, drafting and review of the report. Preparatory works encompassed development of a new method for SFM assessment for the 2011 edition. Concurrently with the regular reporting process, the pilot implementation of the European Forest Types (EFT) and analysis of collected data was carried out during the reporting period. This document provides information about activities in this work area that have taken place since the Working Party’s last session. In addition, this note presents plans for the future and seeks the Working Party’s guidance on any specific issues as necessary.

II. UNECE/FAO TEAM OF SPECIALISTS ON MONITORING SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

3. The third meeting of the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management was held on 16-17 December 2010, in Geneva. The second meeting of the Team resulted in a recommendation to organize different types of meetings, tailored to the needs and audience. Following these recommendations and the conclusions from the external review of the SoEF 2007, the third meeting was entirely dedicated to the discussion of issues related to the preparation of the State of Europe’s Forest (SoEF) 2011 report. Given the main purpose of the meeting – discussion of the first draft of the SoEF2011 – report authors and all national correspondents were invited to this event. However, as is the case for all meetings of the Team, the December meeting was open to all Team members.

4. The main goal of the meeting was to discuss the first draft of the report on quantitative indicators with national correspondents. The meeting consisted of a series of sessions made up of regional groups of correspondents with authors of individual chapters. The participants were also notified on reporting-related activities, which included an update on the reporting on qualitative indicators, presentation of results of the pilot application of the new European Forest Types, and presentation of the concept for assessment of progress on SFM application. More information on these activities can be found in the subsequent parts of this paper.

5. Participants agreed that the organisation of the meeting according to the new format achieved the expected results. The meeting allowed authors to discuss reported data problems with national correspondents. On the other hand, national correspondents had the possibility to discuss the first draft with thematic authors. Both national correspondents and authors were able to implement the conclusions drawn from the meeting through the drafting of the second version of the report and the updates to the national reports.

6. The Timber Committee, at its 68th session, in October 2010 reviewed the mandates of the UNECE/FAO teams of specialists. Due to the reported problems with the Team’s ability to provide advice on policy-related reporting, a deletion of relevant text from the Team’s mandate was proposed. The Committee accepted the proposal - the updated mandate of the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management is available in the Timber Committee report in ECE/TIM/ 2010/7, Annex III.

7. The results of the third meeting of the Team confirmed the usefulness of having different meeting formations. The next meeting of the Team will be dedicated to problems that are common to the whole region. More information about the Team and its activities are available in the Team Leader’s report. The report, which includes evaluation of the hitherto actions, will be presented to the 33rd session.

8. *The Working Party is invited to review and comment on past activities and to advise on the future activities of the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management.*

III. REPORT ON OUTPUTS AND PLANS 2010-2011

A. Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010

9. The final report of the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2010 was published on 4 October 2010 at the start of the 20th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry and World Forest Week, in Rome. The published report was based exclusively on information provided by countries and it is second in the series of reports prepared with the involvement of correspondents from all over the world. More than 900 contributors were involved, including 178 officially nominated national correspondents and their teams.

10. The FRA 2010 is the most comprehensive assessment of forests and forestry to date - not only in terms of the number of countries and people involved - but also in terms of scope. It examines the current status and recent trends for about 90 variables covering the extent, condition, uses and values of forests and other wooded land, with the aim of assessing all benefits from forest resources. Information has been collated from 233 countries and territories for four points in time: 1990, 2000, 2005 and 2010. The results are presented according to the seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management. The main report and key findings (available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian), country reports, output tables and other related material can be found on the official FRA website (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/fra/fra2010/en/>).

11. The release of FRA 2010 was not the conclusion of the current FRA programme; publication of the results of the global remote sensing survey is expected in 2011. The programme also includes a number of thematic studies linked with FRA 2010, such as guidelines for assessment of forest degradation that will be successively released.

12. Along with the discussions on the FRA 2010 results, the 20th session of COFO also deliberated future steps and directions of FRA work. Among the recommendations received were the following:

- The next Global Forest Resources Assessment should be prepared by 2015;
- FRA 2015 should give priority to improving information on rates of deforestation and forest degradation, forest carbon stocks, trees outside forests and the roles of forests in the protection of soil and water resources and in the provision of livelihoods;
- Countries should actively contribute to the FRA process by providing high quality information on forests and forest-related social, institutional and legal framework conditions according to national capacities;
- Due attention should be given to finding a balance between quality of the data and information, and expanding the already extensive set of indicators.

13. Recommendations given by COFO will serve as a basis of a discussion on the future development of the FRA programme. They are also important for future work on forest reporting activities in the UNECE region. This applies to participation of the countries of the region in the next cycle of global reporting and in the regional initiatives. Discussion on the next FRA round would also be a good opportunity for advancing cooperation between global and regional data collection systems.

B. Reporting for the State of Europe's Forests 2011

14. The preparations of the report on the State of Europe's Forests for the 6th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe have reached their final phase. In addition to the organisations leading the process (UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, Forest Europe Liaison Unit Oslo and the FAO FRA, Rome), teams of correspondents, authors, reviewers and numerous experts from countries and international organisations were instrumental to the completion of the report. As described under Part II, key input was provided by members of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management

15. The Advisory Group on preparations of the SoEF held two meetings, since the last session of the Joint Working Party, and focussed its work on the final phases of the report's preparation. The third meeting of the Group (June 2010), discussed the way of processing national data, organisation of drafting process, as well as expressed its collective opinion on the report's outline. The fourth meeting (February 2011) consisted of two parts: 1) the Advisory Group members and Lead Authors of the SoEF 2011 discussed problems jointly, related to the formulation of key messages and highlights from the report; and 2) the finalisation of the discussion on the report's contents, in particular its conclusions. An important part of this discussion was dedicated to dissemination activities.

16. Collection of quantitative data included three groups of indicators. The first consisted of indicators for which no source of information (other than SoEF 2007) was identified. The second group included indicators for which national enquiries were prefilled with information received from FRA2010, Eurostat, Joint Research Centre Ispra and International Co-operative Programme on Forests. National correspondents were in position to reject, supplement, modify or replace this data. The third grouping consisted of the indicators (2.1 Deposition of air pollutants, 4.6 Genetic resources and 4.7 Landscape pattern) for which external information sources were used exclusively.

17. To aid national reporting, templates for qualitative and quantitative indicators were provided. These included terms and definitions, as well as specific guidelines for issues identified as the most difficult; mainly on reporting by European forest types and protected forest areas.

18. A process of national data collection started in February 2010. The majority of countries delivered the first drafts of their reports by the established deadline – 31 May 2010. The review process consisted of two phases: 1) the main process carried out by the team of 6 experts. This stage was completed by mid-October. 2) a supplementary review done by thematic authors, which included the joint meeting of authors and correspondents. The second review was finalised by mid-January 2011.

19. The collected data was organised and stored in three forms: 1) the basic set of information consisted of original national reports and desk-top studies, 2) numeric data was transferred into analysis tables; 3) output tables included partly processed information, which were expected to be the basis for report writing. The last form of data is planned to be presented in the main report. The first draft of the result tables was produced by the UNECE and FAO in mid-October while the final draft was completed by mid-February.

20. Out of 46 Forest Europe countries, 36 countries submitted national reports on quantitative indicators. The reports mentioned 222 national experts directly working on data provision; however, the number is likely to be much higher. National reports on qualitative indicators were received from 38 countries; more information on this part of the national reporting is available in a paper on activities under Work Area 5.

21. Over 43,000 data variables were collected through national enquiries on quantitative indicators, the number was significantly higher than in 2007 (approximately 26,000). This increase should not entirely be seen as an improvement of data completeness, as it was also due to the increase of requested data. The amount of collected data, together with variables received from other international processes (i.e. JFSQ, ICP Forests/JRC Ispra, Bioversity International), did not differ significantly from the data-points collected for FRA 2010.

22. The enquiry requested the provision of 2120 variables. However the level of response did not depend only on national reporting capacity but also on national conditions. The country with the highest number of variables provided 1702 pieces of information. Five countries (Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Slovakia and Sweden) reported more than 1500 data entries. On average, a national report included 937 variables (slightly less than 50% of the requested scope).

23. Drafting of the report began upon finalisation of the first stage of national data review. The report contents follow the structure of pan-European criteria and indicators, in-line with the 2007 edition. It consists of the main three parts - quantitative indicators, qualitative indicators and conclusions. To increase the report's impact, more attention was paid to the parts summarising the main conclusions from the report (key messages, highlights and key findings). The data was analysed

at country and sub-region level. The composition of six sub-regions was modified compared to the 2007 edition.

24. The preparation of the 2011 report is coordinated by six Coordinating Lead Authors. The main parts were drafted by 12 Lead Authors who were supported by more than 50 thematic experts. The report was subjected to external review. In order to assist report preparation, guidelines for drafting, illustrating, review and formulation of key messages were prepared. The report's authors actively participated in reviewing national data. In addition to written consultations, the authors met twice: December 2010 in the meeting with national correspondents; and in February 2011 to discuss key findings from the report. It is also likely that authors will remain active during the dissemination of the report.

25. Compared to the previous reports, more attention will be paid to dissemination activities. The main launch of the report will occur at the 6th Ministerial Conference in Oslo. In addition, to strengthen the impact of the report, the key findings and key messages will be presented at the meetings of UNECE/FAO (21 March 2011) and the Forest Europe (30-31 March 2011). Next to the report itself, shorter forms of the report's results will be a focus, as well as efforts to reach professionals in countries, and audiences outside the forest sector. Following the successful activity of the 2007 editions, the interactive database containing all national data will be constructed and launched together with the release of the main report.

C. Assessment of SFM advancement

26. Reporting on 35 quantitative indicators and 17 qualitative ones for 46 countries provides a relatively good insight into the state of forests and SFM in Europe. However, such an extensive and detailed way of presentation of information does not ease data interpretation and formulation of conclusions on sustainability of forest management in Europe. Brief conclusions, in particular, are important for communicating the results of the assessment to high level policy makers and the general public.

27. Descriptive analysis, applied in the early reports, was considered as insufficient, due in part to the influence of subjective assessment. An alternative solution was the application of a "traffic light" approach, in which change rates in the selected variables are visualised through the three-colour "traffic light" scale. The approach was applied for the first time in the FRA 2005 and later in SoEF 2007, whereby trends on selected variables were graphically presented for the whole pan-European area of established sub-regions.

28. This "traffic light" approach helped with the consistent presentation of collected data; however, some problems were left unresolved. The approach encompassed only that part of indicators (variables) where relatively complete data on trends were available. The analysis did not cover:

- quantitative indicators with data reported only for one point in time,
- qualitative indicators,
- indicators with incomplete or non-existing reporting.

Furthermore, the assessment did not allow for summarisation of results at criterion level.

29. In the formulation of conclusions for the SOEF 2011 report, the method was developed further with the aim of removing the above mentioned problems. According to the assumptions the new approach should:

- be based on the Forest Europe criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, as endorsed by the Vienna Ministerial Conference;
- be comprehensive, balanced, cover all criteria (quantitative and qualitative), and give equal weight to each criterion;
- cover all Forest Europe countries;
- be based exclusively on the data supplied by officially nominated correspondents.

The results should be presented in a clear, yet non-judgmental way, employing a rigorous and transparent methodology.

30. Before its application in the SoEF 2011, the method was presented to the Team of Specialists meeting and discussed by the Advisory Group on SoEF report. Results of the assessment, carried out at regional and sub-regional level were used for the formulation of the concluding part of the SoEF 2011. Additional information on the method, assumptions and applied solutions is available in Annex I.

31. *The Working Party is invited to:*

- (a) comment the results and plans for development of global FRA process and in the context of direction of coordination between SoEF and FRA reporting*
- (b) provide comments and suggestions in relation to the finalisation of the SoEF 2011 and plans for dissemination of its results*
- (c) comment the approach on SFM assessment applied in SoEF 2011, and advise on the direction of future work on this concept.*

IV. UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF WORK ON EUROPEAN FOREST TYPES CLASSIFICATION

32. Seven of the “Improved Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management” (out of 35) require reporting ‘by forest type’. In the past, reports used three types (predominantly conifers, predominantly broadleaved, mixed). Following the provisions of the Forest Europe Work Programme and Joint UNECE and FAO Integrated Programme of Work, the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, together with partners, has worked further on the refinement and pilot application of the new classification of forest types.

33. The basis for the work was the new European forest types’ (EFT) classification prepared by a consortium led by the Italian Academy of Forest Sciences (EEA Technical report No 9/2006). The final shape of the new classification and a format for pilot reporting had been developed during the refinement process. The SoEF 2011 was used to test the new forest type classification. Parallel reporting, according to the old and new classification, was requested for indicator 1.1 (Forest area) only.

34. Due to the pilot character of this reporting, and problems that countries faced during the application of the new classification, a separate workshop, dedicated to this issue, was held on 19-21 May 2010, in Bordeaux, France. The workshop helped countries in their efforts to reduce the rate of unclassified forest area and ensure a more harmonized application of EFT (report from the workshop is available on <http://timber.unece.org/index.php?id=280>).

35. The workshop, in particular the field exercise, enabled experts to understand the difficulties of reporting according to the new classification. The workshop’s participants identified several problems, including lack of guidance on how to classify permanent and temporary unstocked areas by forest type. These and other problems were addressed in the guidelines for reporting by the new EFT, updated as follow up to the workshop. However, it should be mentioned that resolving some of the problems may need more substantial changes, including adjustments to national inventory systems, which is a long-term process.

36. Pilot reporting by EFT included two groups of indicators. Reporting on 1.1 (Forest area) and 1.2 (Growing stock) was compulsory and included all reporting years (1990, 2000, 2005 and 2010). Reporting on the remaining indicators was voluntary and required data on 2005 only.

37. Out of the 35 countries that participated in international reporting (excluding Russian Federation), 28 countries provided information on forest area by the EFT, while 26 countries provided information on growing stock for at least one of the reporting years. Complete time series (1990, 2000, 2005 and 2010) for forest area and growing stock were available from nine countries. The proportion of the total forest area reported as unclassified was 8 percent, with countries ranging from less than 0.1% to 27%. The main reasons for unclassified forest area were as follows:

- problems with classification of unstocked forest areas,
- lack of information on stocked forests
- lack of corresponding types in national systems.

38. More information on the results of pilot reporting can be found in the Technical Report “Pilot reporting on pan-European indicators by European forest types” (Annex 2). The results of pilot reporting were the basis for drafting of the chapter on state of forests by the new EFT, which will be included as an annex to the main report SoEF 2011.

39. Following the Bordeaux workshop recommendation, the concluding part of the pilot implementation report was prepared by a team of experts consisting of EFT authors and national forest inventory experts. The group was invited to address key questions, related to the application and use of the classification:

- What are the pros and cons of the new classification versus the existing one?
- How well can the new classification be applied? What are the difficulties?
- How well does the new classification serve the purposes?
- If EFT were implemented, which indicators would have to be reported using this classification for future Forest Europe C&I reporting?

The answers to these questions and results of the group’s work will be presented to the meeting orally.

39. The Working Party is invited:

- (a) to take note and comment the results of the pilot application of European forest types’ classification;*
- (b) to advise UNECE/FAO on the next steps and future application of the new classification,*