Who owns the forest?
FOREST OWNERSHIP AND TENURE IN THE UNECE REGION

EXTRACT
Based on the UNECE/FAO/FACESMAP study
State of Forest Ownership in the UNECE Region

Unedited draft
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INTRODUCTION

Forest ownership may appear to be a relatively straightforward concept, but it is in fact quite complex, entailing different rights, responsibilities, organizational procedures and understandings that vary considerably depending on country and context. These differences, in turn, will profoundly affect the way forests are managed and thereby the benefits that can be derived from them. The UNECE region is characterized by some of the most diverse forest ownership structures in the world. Within the two broadest categories of ownership, public and private, forests are owned and managed through a variety of forest ownership and tenure arrangements.

The study “State of Forest Ownership in the UNECE Region”, prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the COST Action FACESMAP on “Forest Land Ownership Changes in Europe: Significance for Management and Policy”, with the support of the European State Forest Association EUSTAFOR, seeks to improve understanding of forest ownership and its linkages to forest management. This paper presents a selection of information gathered on forest policies and forest management under different ownerships and describes different public and private forest owners along with their perspectives on forest management.

Forest around the world are owned by individuals, businesses, communities, municipalities, associations and nations. Forest owners and managers are key actors in the delivery of forest ecosystem services and products, and in land use change. However, there are numerous factors shaping their decisional and operational space. Ownership is changing, and types of owners are changing. The motivations and actions of forest owners have been the subject of intense academic research over the last twenty years, yet we still lack a comprehensive framework for understanding forest ownership and making comparative assessments. The overview provided below considers the extent to which this study enhances the understanding of the following five questions:

1. Who owns the forest?
2. Who are the forest owners?
3. How is forest ownership changing?
4. What is the influence of governance and social structures on the forest ownership, including policy and forest owners’ organisations?
5. How does forest ownership and governance affect forest management?

SOURCES

This paper, as well as the full study, are based on the results of the Joint COST Action FACESMAP/UNECE/FAO Enquiry on Forest Ownership in the UNECE Region (hereinafter referred to as the FACESMAP/UNECE/FAO Enquiry), as well as the joint enquiry on Private Forest Ownership in Europe in 2010, by UNECE/FAO with the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (FOREST EUROPE) and the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF), and a more recent expert survey on Forest Land Ownership Change in Europe, carried out through the COST Action FACESMAP.

Unlike other ones, this study:

- Is based on information provided by national experts from UNECE member States, including more detailed information from 28 European countries;
- Includes all forms of ownership;
- Covers ownership and tenure/use, policy support, organisations, forest management, as well as services and products.
THE MEANING OF FOREST OWNERSHIP

The FAO Forest Resources Assessment defines forest ownership as “the legal right to freely and exclusively use, control, transfer, or otherwise benefit from a forest. Ownership can be acquired through transfers such as sales, donations, and inheritance” (FAO, 2018).

The FAO definition implies that forest ownership conveys exclusive legal rights over the forest resource, such as the right to fully utilize, control (manage) the forest, and/or transfer those rights to others. However, forest owners seldom have the full range of exclusive legal rights to “use, control or transfer” when it comes to benefiting from their forest, in particular, since ownership rights pertaining to forests are always, to a lesser or greater extent, restricted by legal regulations and social customs associated with the forest land in question.

This implies that forest ownership must rather be understood as a multi-layered system of relations between the legally entitled holder of the resource and the rights and duties involved in relation to the forest resource. Factors include the institutional setting, the allocation of property rights, the nature of ownership, the character of the owning entity and the regulation(s) and organisation of forest management (or stewardship). For all these aspects of ownership, the State has a role in conferring either a stronger or weaker public or private character, such as through regulatory laws or the allocation of jurisdictional powers.

The formal institutional framework for the regulation of forest ownership comprises policies, legislations, technical norms and operational guidelines that affect all levels of ownership. These refer not only to forest-related policy but also to cross-sectoral policies which influence the distribution of rights with respect to different forest ecosystem goods and services. The regulatory setting of forest tenure therefore determines “who can use what resource, for how long, and under what conditions” (FAO, 2002), which effectively means that the assignment of legal property rights is attributed in various combinations depending on the international, national and/or regional context.

Property rights associated with ownership and tenure are often allocated only in part to the land owner, as well as to public authorities and/or other stakeholders. The complexities of property ownership is often explained using the “bundle of rights” framework (Schlager and Ostrom, 1992). The bundle of rights framework essentially explains how a property can be simultaneously owned by several entities and characterises the property rights system into five distinct categories:

1. **Access** rights (rights to enter forest land);
2. **Withdrawal** rights (rights to harvest or remove timber, firewood and NWFPs);
3. **Management** rights (rights to plan internal forest activities and transform the forest);
4. **Exclusion** rights (rights to prevent others from accessing and harvesting wood or NWFPs);
5. **Alienation** rights (rights to sell forestland and forest products as well as to lease or sell management and exclusion rights).

Forest ownership is commonly categorised either as public or private. Problems arise in the understanding of specific categories and whether they should be classified as public or private (Table 1). The difference between municipal or communal forests (as a public form of ownership) and community or common properties (as a private form of ownership) is one example. In some countries municipal forests are categorised as private, whereas in others municipal forests are classified as public. Moreover, representatives of municipal forests commonly claim that they should be seen as a distinct ownership category alongside public and private ownership.

Unlike communal forests, which are owned by local governments (e.g., municipalities), common (or community) forests are owned by a group of co-owners (e.g., local communities). Community forests
vary widely in their definition. Some are defined through customary rights; others, linked historically to a local community, may be defined and protected through law which provides them with a special status; still others are newly created forms of collective rights based on the adaptation of company law.

The FACESMAP/UNECE/FAO Enquiry, which was the main tool for the collection of data on ownership of this study, applies definitions developed by, and included in, recent international reports on forests, such as the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015 (FAO, 2015a) and the State of Europe’s Forests 2015 (FOREST EUROPE, 2015).

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Table 1. Categories of ownership as defined in FACESMAP/UNECE/FAO Enquiry.
KEY PATTERNS AND TRENDS

UNECE IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Public ownership of the planet’s forest cover, which is approximately 3,999 million ha, is the largest ownership category around the world, reaching approximately 76%. The area under private ownership is around 20% according to the latest estimates of world’s forests (FAO, 2015a, 2015b). The data also indicates that of forests under private ownership (approximately 720 million ha), 56% is owned by individuals, 29% is owned by private enterprises and 15% is managed by local communities and indigenous peoples (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1.** Global forest ownership and breakdown of private holders (Source: FAO 2015a).

Across the planet, private forests are on the rise, increasing by about 3% between 1990 and 2010 period, with most of the increase taking place in upper to middle income countries. The management of public forests by private companies has also increased from 6% to 14% in the same time period (FAO, 2015b).

REGIONAL PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Forest ownership status and dynamics vary significantly between regions; this section consequently provides the insights on major characteristics and trends outside the UNECE region.

Africa’s forests cover an estimated 624 million ha, of which 617 million ha (99%) are public and 6 million ha (1%) are private (FAO, 2015b). Customary (traditional) tenure systems prevail, and public participation has only emerged in public forestry in the past decade, presently reported to be implemented in 24 million ha (6%) of the total forest area (FAO, 2016, RRI, 2014). Private ownership has increased slightly (5%) in Africa during the 2002 to 2013 period.
In the Asia and the Pacific region forests cover an estimated area of 758 million ha, of which 508 million ha (67%) are publicly owned and 250 million ha (33%) are privately owned (FAO, 2015a). While most public forests are managed by the State, public participation in State forest management has been operationalized throughout most of the Asia-Pacific region to varying degrees. Some parts of the Pacific sub-region have customary tenure systems recognized by statutory law. In contrast, China has the largest share of forest land under private (community and smallholder) forestry tenure in the Asia-Pacific region, with 108.9 million ha (60%) of forest land.

Three notable forest tenure reforms have occurred in the Asia-Pacific region in the past decade: (i) rapid expansion of smallholder forestry; (ii) recognition of indigenous peoples’ right to own and manage land, including forests; and (iii) the increase in the total area of State forests that support different public participation regimes.

In the Latin American and the Caribbean region forests cover an estimated area of 844 million ha, of which 537 million ha (64%) are public, 180 million ha (21%) are private and 127 million ha (15%) falls under the “Other” category. Forest ownership patterns differ significantly across this region. For instance, in the Caribbean, 3.4 million ha (84%) falls under public ownership and 0.6 million ha (15%) are private, as compared to Central America, where 6.8 million ha (9%) are public and 36 million ha (48%) falls under private ownership. Large areas of public forests in the Latin American region are managed under varying community control and public participation systems.

Informal tenure systems are widespread in countries outside the UN ECE region, although they are often not recognized in State law. Over the past four decades, countries outside the UNECE region have increasingly started to provide legal recognition to informal customary tenure systems. In parallel to the increasing recognition of community rights, many countries have also been granting large land areas (including forests) to private entities, such as for large-scale agro-industrial enterprises, outside the UNECE region.

**FOREST OWNERSHIP AND TENURE IN THE UNECE REGION**

The UNECE region covers 1.89 billion ha of forest and other wooded land, 41.4% of the global total, as compared to 34.8% of land area and 18.3% of population. The region’s share of the world’s forests in 2015 is one percentage point more than ten years ago. The average forest cover in the region is nearly 42%, higher than the world average, which is 31%. The region’s forests are not evenly distributed: three countries, Russia, Canada and the United States of America account for 1.6 billion ha, 85% of the region’s forest and other wooded land (UNECE/FAO, 2015).

Forest ownership and management patterns in the UNECE region are substantially different from those in the rest of the world. Historically, rural communities in pre-industrial Europe depended on forest commons for livelihood, as an integral part of traditional agricultural systems. Customary management systems were in place to govern these common forests. However, as Europe was industrialized and modernized, common lands were gradually enclosed and most customary rights were removed. Nowadays, customary tenure, formally recognized in statutory law, remains in only a few countries in the UNECE region. Over the past century, Europe, Central Asia and North America have pursued forest tenure reforms responding to different historical, social and political developments.

**Europe:** Overall forest ownership in Europe (excluding the Russian Federation) is balanced, 44% of Europe’s forest is public, whereas 56% of forests are under private ownership. However, this picture is significantly more diverse when looking at individual countries (see Figure 2).
Public forest management can be undertaken by both State and private companies to various extents. For instance, in countries like Croatia and Poland State owned companies manage 100% and 99% of public forests respectively, while in Belgium and Finland private companies manage 73% and 40% of public forests respectively. In Europe, levels of public participation in the management of State owned forests vary, although there has been a significant increase of such practice in the past two decades.

As far as private forest ownership is concerned, most of the forest land is owned by individuals and families. Indigenous communities own only 2%. Small scale land holdings prevail in European forests. Figure 3 illustrates that 88% of all private forest holdings are less than 10 ha, while the combined area of these holdings corresponds to 13% of the total private forest land.
There has been an overall increase in forest areas that are privately owned since the early 1990s. Significant changes in forest ownership have taken place in the former centrally planned economies in Central and Eastern Europe, through land restitution and privatization, aiming to reverse the nationalization of forests which took place mainly in socialist countries during and after the Second World War (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4.** Restitution of forest land. National correspondents’ assessment of the significance of restitution, in contributing to change in private forest ownership.

**The Russian Federation, the Caucasus and Central Asia:** Forests in the Russian Federation (815 million ha) and the prevailing majority of forests in the Caucasus and Central Asia are held by the State (UNECE/FAO, 2015) although new tenure regimes that allow for private, communal and other types of use have been introduced in the region.

As far forest management is concerned, 578 million ha (71%) of the forest land in the Russian Federation is managed by the State and 236 million ha (29%) by others under lease arrangements (UNECE/FAO, 2015). In the Central Asian region, State forests are also primarily managed by the State (over 95%).

**North America:** Ownership patterns and trends are significantly different between the United States of America and Canada. In the United States of America 37% of forests are public and 63% are private, while in Canada the share of public forests is 91%. Only 1.7% of the Canadian public forests is owned by the State at national level whereas 98% is owned by sub-regional governments and none by local governments.
Changes in forest ownership can be categorised as:

- Temporal and spatial changes within the respective forest ownership categories, such as changing shares of public and private forest land;
- Changes in the meaning of forest ownership, in this case referring to legal frameworks and customary rules that restrict or encourage specific use of forest resources, such as the definition of property rights that differ substantially across the ECE region;
- Changes in values, or lifestyles, which may not be as easy to investigate as the preceding issues.

Because of the lack of quantitative data on some of the factors that affect forest ownership, particularly changing meanings and lifestyles, the work described in this section often relies on expert opinion. National correspondents were asked to assess the significance of trends in public and private forest ownership, including changes within:

- Public forest ownership, such as (i) the privatization of public forest land and (ii) the introduction of new forms of public ownerships (see e.g. Figure 5);
- Private forest ownership, such as (i) afforestation/deforestation, (ii) changing lifestyle, (iii) motivations and attitudes of forest owners, and (iv) new forest ownership types (see e.g. Figure 6).

Figure 5. Privatization of forest land. National correspondents’ assessment of the significance of privatization, in contributing to change in private forest ownership.
Figure 6. Appearance of new forest owners, through afforestation. National correspondents’ assessment of the significance of afforestation, in contributing to new forest ownership.

**FOREST MANAGEMENT**

**MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC FORESTS**

One important contribution from the study relates to the identification different levels of governance of public forests, and the ways they are managed (see Figure 7):

- Most countries reported that decisions about management of public forests, whatever the scale, are almost entirely made by the forest owner (i.e., at the same spatial level as that at which the forest is owned);
- Only a few countries reported that State-owned forests are managed by ‘others’, including State-owned companies, private management companies, and NGOs;
- In most countries, municipal forests are more like private forests than the national public forests in that they are often free to operate autonomously. Indeed, in some countries they are classified as private, not public forests;
- Where public forests are managed by a government forest agency (at any level), operations can be undertaken by agency staff or by private contractors.
Management of operations in private forest is more diverse than for public forest. There are several reasons for this, including the varied interpretation of the question on management responsibility by the national respondents (see Figure 8):

- Small-scale private forest owners generally undertake the work themselves;
- Medium to large-private forest owners usually outsource operations to other companies. New forest owner types generally have limited forest skills and usually outsource the forest works to companies or become members of forest owners’ associations;
- In some Central and Eastern European countries (e.g., the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Slovakia) forest works are mainly undertaken by the forest owners while in some Western European countries (e.g., Ireland, Norway, Belgium, Switzerland) forest work is mainly carried out by forest contractors;
- Forest owners may hire different types of contractors according to the type of operations required for which a company may need to be licensed as in Croatia or may be encouraged to take out a long-term contract with a forest management company as in Lithuania.

Figure 7. Disaggregation of public forest ownership in UNECE countries.
Although fragmentation and parcelisation was identified by almost all authors of the study as a significant concern across the UNECE region, the data available is inadequate to provide a detailed picture of the situation. However, this does not mean the trend is not real – but highlights the lack of data to facilitate policy and planning. The importance of this concern could be illustrated by a static snapshot of parcel size in 2015 (see Figure 9).

National correspondents’ assessment of the significance of fragmentation through inheritance is presented in Figure 10. The significance of this splitting of properties is considered important to the changing ownership structure in Belgium, Croatia, Finland, the Netherlands, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.
Figure 10. Fragmenting forest holdings through inheritance. National correspondents’ assessment of the significance of inheritance, in contributing to new forest ownership.

OBJECTIVES OF PRIVATE OWNERS

The data provided for the FACESMAP/UNECE/FAO Enquiry on the objectives of management for private individual forest owners is very scarce and was only provided by five countries. Nevertheless, the data illustrates how forest owners have multiple objectives that are a mix of production, household economy and intangible benefits (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Objectives of individual forest owners.
Lifestyles, as a concept and as way of combining societal megatrends with material conditions, objectives, values and attitudes at the individual level, are frequently used in research to explain the increasing heterogeneity of private forest owners (Ficko et al., 2017). The importance of lifestyle choices is also apparent in the data obtained through the FACESMAP/UNECE/FAO Enquiry and the FACESMAP Country Reports (see Figure 12). Changing lifestyles, motivations and attitudes among forest owners are scored as important drivers of change in 22 UNECE countries, and in Germany, Norway and Switzerland in peculiar.

Figure 12. Changing lifestyle, motivations and attitudes of forest owners. National correspondents’ assessment of the significance of changing values, in contributing to new forest ownership.

OBSTACLES TO FOREST MANAGEMENT

The most common obstacles to effective sustainable forest management in the 28 countries covered by the FACESMAP enquiry include the following, from the perspective of the owners:

- Lack of incentives and/or financial support to the implementation of innovative practices (reported by 11 countries).
- Fragmentation of forest land (reported by 10 countries).
- Insufficient profit from forest management (reported by 9 countries).
- Restrictive forest policy framework (reported by 9 countries).

Additional country-specific obstacles to the implementation of sustainable forest management listed from the policy perspective include:

- Illegal logging (Georgia, Cyprus, Slovenia, Greece, Romania).
- Fragmentation of forests (Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Portugal, Poland).
- Limited or absent cadastral survey or land registry of forest holdings (Portugal, United Kingdom).
- Forest fires (and impact of insufficient SFM on forest fire risk) (Portugal).
Forest Services and Ownership

Many factors affect how forest owners decide to manage their forest holding(s), including, amongst other things, cultural, political, socio-economic and demographic issues. This effectively means that different forest owners also have varied individual priorities that affect the provision of Forest Ecosystem Services (FES) and/or Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs). It also means that forest use is significantly affected by the forest owner’s status (e.g., urban or absentee ownership) and perspectives (e.g., willingness to harvest timber and/or woody biomass). So in addition to physical and biological attributes of the forest land, forest ownership and use are important determinants of provision of wood as well as NWFPs and other FES.

Having this in mind, the study aimed to consider how forest ownership relates to provision of FES. However, while the FACESMAP/UNECE/FAO Enquiry asked countries about wood removals, growing stock, FES and NWFPs, the data provided only allows for a comparison of wood removal and growing stocks. There is insufficient data available to compare forest ownership in relation to FES and NWFPs across the UNECE region. This means two things. First, while quantitative data is available on wood removal and growing stock, information on FES and NWFPs is limited to qualitative information, principally taken from the FACESMAP Country Reports. Second, as a general message, there is a need for high-quality and reliable quantitative data on FES and NWFPs in relation to forest ownership types and preferences.

The total area of forest available for wood supply, as reported on in the FACESMAP/UNECE/FAO Enquiry, amounts to 1,107 million ha. Out of the total area reported on for wood supply, where forest ownership is also reported, approximately 765 million ha (81.5 per cent) is publicly owned, 209 million ha (18.3 per cent) is privately owned, and 1.61 million ha (or 0.2 per cent) is unknown (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Total area (%) of forest available for wood supply, by forest ownership category

1 FES are limited to those “goods and services” provided by “forest ecosystems”. It should however be recognised that FES classifications vary across classification schemes, such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, MAES, CICES, FORVALUE and TEEB (FOREST EUROPE, 2014).

2 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) defines NWFPs as “goods of biological origin other than wood derived from forests, other wooded land and trees outside forests” (FAO, 1999). Different terms, such as non-timber forest products (NTFP), are also in common use. NWFP cover both animal and plant products (other than wood) derived from forest ecosystems and/or forest tree species.
It should however be noted that the distribution of forest available for wood supply according to ownership categories varies significantly across the UNECE region. For instance, the Russian Federation, Cyprus and Turkey, where all the forest is publicly owned, account for 69.4 per cent of the total area reported on. This affects aggregate results on felling rates related to forest ownership, as countries vary significantly across the UNECE region (see Figure 14).

Forest utilisation (expressed as felling as a proportion of net annual increment) is another important factor to consider. Changes in felling rates reflect changing forest management practice, which in turn affect prospects for the provision of FES. Results from the FACESMAP/UNECE/FAO Enquiry demonstrate that most countries report felling rates between 50 and 100 per cent (for both private and public forest owners), with the exception being Albania (see Figure 15 and 16).

The trend from 1990 to 2015 period appears to be generally stable (see Figure 15 and 16). Despite some variations across countries, the ratio of fellings to increment is relatively stable over time, and indicates that the forest stock will continue to increase in the UNECE region. It furthermore opens prospects for increased provision of other types of FES (e.g., carbon sequestration).

Results from the FACESMAP/UNECE/FAO Enquiry show significant variations in the utilisation rate of the net annual increment depending on whether the forest land is privately or publicly owned. In general, this indicator is substantially higher amongst private forest owners (61.7 per cent) compared with publicly owned forests (36.3 per cent). The data also reveal differences between countries, in the way that felling rates have changed over time (Figure 15 and 16). For instance, for the 1990 to 2015 period, there are no significant changes in the Nordic region (e.g., Norway, Finland and Sweden) and in Luxembourg. However, amongst Central and Western European countries, changes in fellings rates across private and public ownership are seen (e.g., Austria and the United Kingdom). For Eastern European countries there are no specific trends, excluding cases such as Albania, which experienced sharp changes during the 1990 to 2015 period. Despite these variations, there appears to be no regional patterns in terms of forest fellings by forest ownership categories over time. This suggests that nationally specific conditions (e.g., restitution processes and the general importance of the forest-based sector) influence changes in forest utilisation. Moreover, there appears to be a general increase in felling rates over time, in particular amongst private forest owners.
Figure 15. Private forest utilisation rate per country, by forest ownership category and year

Figure 16. Public forest utilisation rate per country, by forest ownership category and year
* Albania reported on public felling rates as follows, 1990: 194.6%, 2010: 717.8 and 2015: 233.5%.
Forest policy is considered within a multi-level framework, that include several components, namely policy, regulations, administration, informal rules and markets.

Policies that support the creation of new forest owners include:
- Property restitution in post-socialist Europe;
- Afforestation subsidies.

Policies that support current forest ownership structures include:
- Inheritance laws;
- Defragmentation policies;
- Shared property;
- Land consolidation.

Regulatory frameworks are often designed to set, prioritise or encourage forest owners, managers and resource users in order to achieve desired policy objectives. This may include the provision of more freedom for forest owners in order for the State to establish stronger incentives for the production of certain forest-related goods and services. This is reflected in different settings of the national or regional regulatory frameworks defining what a forest owner may or may not do in relation to their forest resource. The levels of managerial freedom experienced by private forest owners in Europe are presented in Figure 17 (Nichiforel et al., 2018).

Policy instruments addressing specific ownership categories include:
- **Forest-related financial instruments** that differentiate between forest ownership categories based on the size of forest holding, often with a specific focus on small-scale forest owners;
- Policy instruments that focus on specific forest management activities, such as supporting management planning by forest associations;
- **Taxation**. Property tax in the United States of America is reported as having a significant impact on private forest owners. In Romania, forest owners who adhere to specific certification schemes (e.g., Forest Stewardship Council Certification) are exempt from paying property taxes;
- Financial instruments are also used to support the implementation of regulatory frameworks, in countries where there are few legal requirements that affect private forest owners;
- **Information and advisory programmes**.

Regulatory instruments include:
- Agencies in charge of enforcement – usually by the State but at different spatial levels;
- Enforcement related to illegal logging – which needs to take into account underlying causes;
- Market-driven forest certification schemes, which play an increasingly important role in promoting responsible forest management and governance.
Figure 17. Overview of the property rights distribution in private forestry across Europe (Nichiforel et al., 2018).
Data from the UNECE region demonstrate varied organizational models for State Forest Organizations (SFOs) used to provide all types of services. SFOs, in general terms, either integrate forest authority and forest management services within one organization (Integrated State Forest Organization (SFIO)), or separate them, so that State Forest Management Organization (SFMO) exclusively provide forest management services.

This report indicates that SFOs are significantly oriented toward market demands, supplying national and international markets with timber. In some countries, SFOs are in fact competitive actors on the market, while in other countries (e.g., with economies in transition), there is a need to reduce timber market restrictions and to improve (professional) marketing activities of SFOs.

All SFOs generate some profit, while in some countries SFOs generate substantial revenues and take the lead in technical efficiency. Owing to the need to provide of goods and services that are of public interests, profitability is not always a priority for SFOs. In countries with high unemployment, employment security provided by SFMOs can limit progress in technical efficiency.

Multiple functions of SFOs (market based, and non-market based) represent a unique opportunity for the State to guarantee sustainable forest management in State-owned forests. At the same time, the complex range of activities carried out by SFOs creates challenges to optimize organizational and management related activities. For instance, best practice cases demonstrate how identifying and specifying different tasks clearly and organizing management activities, through (financially) independent organizational units (profit centres) can help to improve the organisations’ performance.

The study includes a unique overview of the development of forest owners’ organisations (FOOs). FOOs are a diverse group of associations that have the common objective of facilitating forest ownership and management. Different terminology is used to describe and analyse FOOs across the ECE region. Terms that are used in the country reports include: forest owners associations (FOA), cooperatives (FOC), commons, community woodlands, corporations, municipality forests, joint properties, and communal land-owners. Figure 18 demonstrates how these terms are derived and used.

The organisation of private forest owners is ultimately determined by the tenure structure and legislative framework at the national level. From a legal perspective, there are several basic categories of private forest ownership that affect the prospects for FOOs, including private ownership by individuals and families, private business entities, private institutions, tribal and indigenous communities, and common forms of forest ownership (see Figure 19). The study distinguishes between different types of ownership, organisations, and motives for joining forest owners’ organizations.
Figure 18. Various ways in which terminology of FOOs is used in the ECE.

Figure 19. Links between Forest Owners Organizations and private ownership.
REFERENCES


This Extract provides a selection of results from the study on forest ownership in the UNECE region, which was developed through a joint project by the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section and the COST Action FACESMAP on “Forest Land Ownership Changes in Europe: Significance for Management and Policy”, with the support of the European State Forest Association EUSTAFOR.

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