



**Timber Committee
Economic Commission for Europe**



**European Forestry Commission
Food and Agriculture Organization**

UNECE/FAO Policy Forum on The Forest Sector in the Green Economy

15 October 2009

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

Context

The current economic and financial crisis impacts the forest sector with diminished demand for wood and paper products causing falling prices, reduced income, mill closures, job cuts and budget reductions throughout the UNECE region. The devastating short-term ramifications span from the forest, to manufacturing, to trade and the links between them, including dependent, often rural, communities. However, the sector could benefit from economic stimulus programmes and other green public spending which are being put in place in many countries, some of which directly target the forest sector¹ or influence it indirectly, notably through support to renewable energy.

UN Agencies have called for “a world-wide transition to a low carbon, resource efficient Green Economy able to deliver multiple economic, social and environmental benefit”, by “re-focusing the global economy towards investments in clean technologies and ‘natural’ infrastructure such as forests”. A “Green New Deal”², an idea advocated by some governments and major international organizations, could lead towards a Green Economy by channelling major government investment to green sectors such as energy-efficient building, sustainable transport and renewable energy. Such initiatives, implemented at the global and national level, would simultaneously improve the world’s environment while addressing the economic and social emergency.

The forest sector has strong potential to contribute to a greener economy and a more sustainable society, in particular by providing timber for buildings, wood for energy and environmental services. The long-term development of the sector and its ability to improve social welfare will depend, among other things, on the extent to which the sector will benefit from the major economic stimulus programmes and green subsidies, and thus influence policy-making.

Forum questions

What are the implications of green economic stimulus programmes and other forms of public spending for the forest sector, from forest management and protection, to forest industries and recycling? In the

¹ For instance the allocation of \$1.6 billion by the US recovery plan to the USDA Forest Service for forest management and protection.

² According to the UNEP, who developed the concept, “the three objectives of a Global Green New Deal (GGND) are:

- Revive the world economy, create employment opportunities and protect vulnerable groups.
- Reduce carbon dependency, ecosystem degradation and water scarcity.
- Further the Millennium Development Goal of ending extreme world poverty by 2015.

Very few of the current governments’ stimulus packages contain all three of the above essential elements”.

context of major interrelated economic, social and environmental challenges, leading to increased green public spending, what are the opportunities for the forest sector? How can the forest sector be proactive and influence policy-making processes to its benefit? What can Governments, forest managers and companies specifically do so that the sector not only survive economically, but emerge strengthened, with its “green” characteristics reinforced? How can the forest sector enhance its cooperation with other sectors, such as environment, energy and water, in its way towards a green economy?

Forum topics

- Green economy and the forest sector
- Green jobs and the forest sector
- Forest products markets and long-term outlook, including for green building
- Investing in mitigation and adaptation to climate change and proactive risk management
- Renewable energies: targets and policies to develop wood energy systems
- The importance of communication and promoting the rational use of wood
- Forests providing environmental services, rural employment and income
- Strategies for short-term survival and long-term development of the forest sector

Target audience

Governments, industry, researchers and other stakeholders from all parts of the forest sector will gather to present case studies and exchange information and ideas on strategies for short-term survival and long-term development of the sector. Experts from other sectors are invited to provide the vital cross-sectoral perspective.

Discussions

UNECE/FAO policy forums are designed to facilitate discussions. Participants will have opportunities to react to the presentations and provide their viewpoints.

Background paper

A background paper will be prepared by the secretariat, based on up-to-date information, including governments’ responses to an enquiry on the situation of their country’s forest sector as well as existing green economic stimulus programmes and subsidies.

Other events surrounding the forum in Geneva

12 October: Workshop on “Responding to climate change: towards a global approach to green building”.

13-14 October: Start of the Timber Committee session with the annual Market Discussions. Theme: UNECE region forest products markets in a global economic crisis.

9 October: International Timber Trade Federation Day. See www.tropicalforesttrust.com

More information and registration

See: www.unece.org/timber

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