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on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management**

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**Food and Agriculture Organization**

European Forestry Commission

**GUIDANCE OF WORK AREA 2: FOREST RESOURCES ASSESSMENT  
AND INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT  
IN THE REGION**

AGENDA ITEM 5 (b)

Note by the Secretariat

*Summary*

According to its mandate, the Working Party is expected to provide guidance to Work Area 2: Forest Resources Assessment. This document provides information about activities in this work area since the Working Party's last session and plans for the future, drawing the Working Party's attention to any specific issues where guidance is needed. The main topics and issues to be addressed by Working Party are as follows:

- (a) Work 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); a road towards a joint reporting on forests resources;
- (c) Update on the completion of work and dissemination of the State of Europe's Forest (SoEF) 2011 report; evaluation of the outcome and the process;
- (d) Information about plans for the future activities and proposals for developments of SFM reporting and assessment as well as cooperation with Forest Europe and Montréal Process.

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

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The activities in Work Area 2 for the reporting period (April 2011 – March 2012) focused on the finalisation of the report State of Europe's Forests 2011 (SoEF2011), further dissemination of the report and related data as well as initial preparations and organisation of the next cycle of regional and global reporting. The Forest Europe/UNECE/FAO report SoEF 2011 was released and presented during the Forest Europe Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, which was held on 14-16 June 2011 in Oslo. Publication of the report was followed by dissemination activities that included a series of presentations and development of dedicated web-pages at the UNECE/FAO and Forest Europe websites. Dissemination of the main results was supported by completion of the web based interactive database and education tool for students.

2. Preparations for the new reporting cycle have been initiated; preliminary work included intensive consultations with the main partners on global and regional levels that aimed at harmonised, coordinated data collection systems. The backbone of the new scheme will be the FAO Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2015 process, supported by the main Criteria and Indicators (C&I) processes and UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.

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

3. Due to the calendar of global and regional reporting and the increased intensity and variety of activities related to the International Year of Forests, the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management did not meet in 2011. The Team members were involved in the set of dissemination and planning activities on global and regional levels that included Forest Europe Ministerial Conference in Oslo, Norway in June 2011, Joint Session of the UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission in Antalya, Turkey in October 2012 and FAO Forest Resources Assessment related meetings in Pajulahti, Finland in September 2011 and in Ispra, Italy in March 2012.

4. The next meeting of the Team of Specialists will be held on 22-24 May 2012 in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation. In the course of the preparatory work, the Team identified the main areas of activities, where the Team is expected to serve as platform for discussion and should provide essential advice. It was agreed that the Team will focus its work on:

- providing technical advice on the development and implementation of the FAO FRA 2015,
- completion of the evaluation of production process, dissemination and use of SoEF 2011,
- further development of assessment of sustainable forest management,
- assisting UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section and Forest Europe Liaison Unit Madrid in the reporting process according to pan-European C&I.

More information on these activities is provided in the subsequent parts of this paper.

5. The Team of Specialists will continue operating by organising activities and meetings that would be tailored to the needs of specific regions. The meeting in Saint Petersburg, in addition to the issues related to global reporting, will focus on pan-European issues. It is intended that the Team will contribute to the Workshop on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management, which will be organised with participation of Montréal Process, ITTO, Forest Europe and FAO in August 2012, in Jacksonville, Florida, in the United States. Possibilities for closer cooperation of the Team with the Technical Advisory Committee of the Montréal Process will be examined.

**6. *The Working Party is invited to advise on the general direction of work of the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management.***

## **III. REPORT ON OUTPUTS AND PLANS 2011-2012**

### **A. FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment**

7. At its 20<sup>th</sup> session the Committee on Forestry (COFO) decided that the next Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015 would be undertaken; furthermore COFO requested FAO to prepare a long-term strategy for the global forest resources assessment process consistent with sustainable funding. Answering this mandate the FAO has initiated the relevant process. A short description of results of the planning and organisational activities related to the future reporting and outcomes of work of FRA2010 is presented in Annex 1.

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

8. Forest Europe/UNECE/FAO report State of Europe's Forests 2011 was presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, which was held on 14-16 June 2011 in Oslo, Norway. The final content of the report includes an executive summary, parts on quantitative and qualitative indicators and a concluding section about sustainability assessment and policy challenges. Annexes to the report included selected source data, information about authors and contributors as well as a chapter with the results of pilot application of European Forest Types (EFT).

9. The final report, which was subject to a two phase review by 8 substance reviewers and two language editors, was published in English. The key findings were translated to French and Russian. All related material is made available through the UNECE/FAO ([www.unece.org/forests/fr/outputs/soef2011.html](http://www.unece.org/forests/fr/outputs/soef2011.html)) and Forest Europe ([www.foresteuropa.org/eng/State\\_of\\_Europes\\_Forests\\_Report\\_2011/Report/](http://www.foresteuropa.org/eng/State_of_Europes_Forests_Report_2011/Report/)) websites. In addition to the main report and the key findings, the websites include all national reports (quantitative and qualitative indicators as well as information by EFT), set of terms and definitions and extended set of output tables. It is expected that the website will be continuously developed along the progress of communication work.

10. As part of its dissemination strategy for the State of Europe's Forests 2011 report, the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, supported by countries, undertook a series of activities, which were:

- a) compilation of presentations given on general and dedicated events;
- b) preparation of 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the interactive database on quantitative indicators,
- c) development of the online educational kit for students.

For each of the above mentioned activities different means of communication were used that took into account the needs and characteristics of targeted groups of users of the report.

11. Presentation of the main findings and detailed results of the report was initiated at the Seminar on the State of forests in UNECE region organised on March 2011 in Geneva. The official inauguration of the report was the presentation at the Forest Europe Ministerial Conference, followed by the presentation of the report's results to the Joint Session of the UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission, held in October 2011 in Antalya, Turkey.

12. Formal launch of the report was followed by the series of presentations, supported by governments of Finland and Switzerland, delivered at the international and national meetings. Whenever possible and relevant the information about the status and recent developments of forest resources were combined with the results of European Sector Outlook Study (EFSOS) 2010-2030. EFSOS provides extension of the SoEF2011 data series, which for majority of indicators cover the period 1990-2010. The SoEF related information was presented among others at:

- a) EU Conference "Forestry for Climate and Biodiversity" and the Informal Meeting of the EU Forestry Directors General, Poland, September 2011;
- b) FAO Expert Consultation on a long-term strategy for FRA, Finland, September, 2011;
- c) workshop "Forest Sector's Contribution to the EU bio-economy", Belgium, September 2011;
- d) Meeting of EUROSTAT's Forestry Statistics Working Group November 2011, Luxembourg;
- e) side event at the 15th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biodiversity, Canada, November 2011,
- f) Policy Talk and Closing Ceremony of the International Year of Forests 2011 in Geneva, Switzerland, December 2011

The complementary form of dissemination consisted in organizing events, prepared in cooperation with individual countries, where national developments are discussed in the context of the regional trends. The first event of this type was organised in France in December 2011, the series is expected to be continued in the coming years.

13. Forest Europe and UNECE/FAO interactive database on indicators of sustainable forest management in Europe was released in December 2011. The database contains all the data delivered by countries through their reporting on quantitative indicators about forests, forest management and forest industry in the pan-European region. This new information tool, which builds on a database released for the previous edition of State of Europe's Forests, enables online review and simple analysis, but also allows selective extraction of the requested data in different formats. In addition to the English version, for the first time the database is available in Russian. The database, which was produced

with support provided by the Forest Europe Liaison Unit Oslo and Government of Finland in cooperation with UNECE Statistical Division, is available at: <http://w3.unece.org/> alongside other statistical data from different parts of the UNECE work programme.

14. The online educational kit was developed with substantial support provided by the Government of Finland. The kit, which is based on SoEF main findings, is designed for both teachers and students. It contains an interactive professional development program with materials on the principles of sustainable forest management and its monitoring tools for teachers to 11-12 year old students. The kit also includes a section with lessons, exercises, games and other interactive material to deepen students' understanding of forestry issues and the importance forests and forest derived products play in addressing global economic, social, and environmental issues. With this tool, the Forestry and Timber Section aims are to:

- a) make a leading contribution to evidence-informed development of SFM policy and practice in Europe across the education sector.
- b) build capacity amongst individuals, subject communities and institutions to recognize the role forests play in the transition to a green economy and embed the principles of SFM in curricula and pedagogy.
- c) develop strategic and operational partnerships with key stakeholders across professional and community sectors.
- d) stimulate the dissemination of the SoEF key findings using tailored language and material developed to reach out to wider audiences across academia and the wider public.

15. The educational kit for the SoEF 2011 report should be finalized in May 2012. The kit will be reviewed and tested by different groups of professionals from the education and forestry sectors. The UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section is working closely with the ECE/FAO FCN Sub-Group on Forest Pedagogics, the Natural Enquirer, Peace Child International and other education professionals for guidance and to review and test this new tool.

16. Following the successful exercise carried out after publication of the 2007 edition of the SoEF, the Forestry and Timber Section is planning on carrying out an evaluation of the SoEF 2011 as well. The 34th Session of the Joint Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics, and Management will begin this process, which will be continued by on-line enquiry and discussion at the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring SFM. Experts are invited to comment on any aspect and lessons learnt regarding production process, the final report and related products as well as communication of the results. The conclusions obtained from this assessment will serve as important input to the organisation and conduct of the new cycles of reporting process.

17. Publication of the chapter on "Pilot application of the European Forest Types" concluded work done by Forest Europe Liaison Unit Oslo, UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section and the European Environment Agency on applying and developing the new classification. The results of the process were presented to the Forest Europe for consideration and decision on the next steps. The European ministers in the Declaration from the 6th Forest Europe Ministerial Conference held in Oslo noted "the progress made on European Forest Types and encouraged continued refinement of forest classification integrated with work on further reporting and development of sustainable forests management and its tools". It is anticipated that further information on the future of this tool may be expected in the result of the actions scheduled in the Forest Europe Work Programme. The UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, is planning to publish results of the application project, — the final form of these material will be agreed with partner organisations.

### **C. The next cycle of reporting in the pan-European region**

18. The UNECE/FAO, Forest Europe and FAO have been actively cooperating during preparation of the pan-European reports, using all opportunities to avoid duplication, inconsistency and any unnecessary burden. However the different nature of modalities of global and regional reporting made further coordination impossible and as a result data reporting cycles had to be carried out separately. Despite the efforts made by the secretariats, cooperating organisations and countries, the existence of two separated processes and related outputs increased the risk of miscommunication and ambiguous interpretation of provided information, in particular to the users outside the sector. Repeated reporting resulted in the duplication of the part of activities on both secretariat's and national sides, that could be easily avoided if the systems were more coordinated.

19. The new arrangements for the FAO Forest Resources Assessment 2015, in particular development of the Joint Questionnaire on FRA, and overlap of the global and pan-European reporting cycles, created an enabling environment for further harmonisation of these two processes, see Annex 1. The new arrangement, which includes joint reporting of the set of variables agreed among the FAO and regional processes, should ensure consistent, harmonised and steady data provision on the state of forests and basic aspects of the forest management. Additional information requested by the C&I processes would be included in a complementary questionnaires, prepared for countries of particular regions.

20. The proposal of data collection on quantitative pan-European indicators in coordination with the global ones was discussed and finally accepted by the Forest Europe Expert Level Meeting on 14-15 February 2012 in Madrid as one of activities of the Forest Europe Work Programme. FAO, UNECE/FAO and Liaison Unit Madrid are leading actors for this activity.

21. At the time of writing this paper, the detailed arrangement for organisation of this reporting are discussed among the responsible organizations. Without prejudice to the shape of the final agreement, according to the secretariat's understanding, the expected, harmonised system of data collection should envisage:

- a) preparation of one questionnaire containing two complementary but independent parts;
- b) development of the system of unified terms definitions and classifications, and to the extent possible, reporting formats;
- c) designation of one national contact point, responsible for organisation of the reporting process, communication with the secretariat and delivery of final data,
- d) designation of one international contact point, responsible for communication with a country.

The current process include plans for cooperation also in terms of sharing and dissemination of information; however rules of storage, use and dissemination of collected data should be agreed among the leading actors later on.

22. It is expected that the joint data collection process should lead to significant reduction of burden, in particular of overlapping meetings and all efforts should be undertaken to utilise already planned and existing facilities. To this end, consultancies and training sessions envisaged in the FAO FRA programme should be applied for relevant activities on a regional level. To the extent possible the potential of the Team of Specialist on Monitoring SFM should be used for developing reporting modalities and providing advice to the main actors on all aspects related to the data collection, review and storage.

23. The Team of Specialists on Monitoring SFM, fulfilling its mandate, analysed the areas related to the international reporting on forests and forest management, that would need substantial improvement and involvement of the Team. As presented in the report from the Team activities, the future work should focus on:

- a) further development of the SFM assessment method;
- b) improving meaningfulness and consistency of reporting on forest growth and drain;
- c) developing quality and completeness of reporting on socio-economic and other "difficult" indicators;

Preparatory work on all of these activities has been initiated, in order to prepare discussion of the Team at its 4th meeting in Saint Petersburg, which is expected to deliver clear guidance and a plan of work.

24. The new method of the assessment of the SFM, with the use of 5-grade "tree" scale was applied in the SoEF2011 on the experimental basis. The results were presented on the level of sub-region, calculated on the basis of scores received for individual countries. The experimental application proved the general value of this method as a tool for SFM assessment and improvement. Nevertheless several questions still have to be answered before the method is used in the future reporting. The Team is going to further elaborate the method, means of its application in the course of the preparations for the next cycle of reporting. The work of the Team, supported by the core group of experts, is expected to answer the questions, regarding the applied approach, scale, methods, and other related issues. It is expected that the improved method would be developed, before the national enquiry is sent to countries, and presented for consideration of the parent bodies.

25. Recent political debate reconfirmed the importance of assessment of potential yield of wood, and discussed the relevance and quality of related information provided by the global and regional reporting. Wood resources and their use are covered by several indicators, reporting on which is not always complete and consistent. Furthermore there is

concern that the main measure used for evaluation of intensity of use i.e. ratio of the fellings to the net annual increment would need further development. The proposed activity is expected to analyse the quality of reported information and, with the use of supplementary information, propose necessary improvements. The expected results, would encompass proposals for technical measures for improving quality of reporting, that could be directly applied in the next cycle, as well as proposal for policy developments, which would be submitted to the relevant bodies for possible endorsement.

26. Despite the visible improvement in reporting on socio-economic indicators, the quality and completeness of the obtained results still indicate a need for further work on both international and national levels. Thanks to the experience received during the last reporting period, it was possible to identify specific issues that need to improve this situation. Next to the problems that are of general nature (e.g. current vs. real prices) several problems are specific to individual indicators and could be addressed by smaller groups of experts, working in particular on modalities for reporting, availability of data and interpretation of results. In addition to socio-economic indicators, the Team is expected to address some other indicators from other criteria, where improvement is sought.

27. The main schedule for the preparations of the harmonised reporting on forest resources assessment foresees that the final questionnaire will be sent to countries by the end of 2013. This date sets a deadline for all preparatory activities that should be concluded well ahead of that date in order to give time for completion of technical work on reporting forms and necessary training for national correspondents.

28. *The Working Party is invited to:*

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

## **I. Annex 1**

### **Developments in the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment**

Reference to the Note of Secretariat on Guidance of Work Area 2: Forest resources assessment and indicators of sustainable forest management in the region

1. FAO's global forest resources assessments, made at about five to ten year intervals, have evolved over time to respond to changing information needs. The 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) requested FAO to prepare a long-term strategy for the global forest resources assessment process consistent with sustainable funding. FAO has developed a document outlining a draft strategy and that explains the objectives, activities and outputs for the period 2012-2030.
2. The draft strategy envisages that the main FRA activities in the period covered by the strategy would focus on:
  - (a) continuing and strengthening country reporting process with concentrating work on improvement of quality and credibility of data provided through a network of officially nominated national correspondents;
  - (b) further developing remote sensing to support national forest resources assessment and reporting;
  - (c) working with countries and partners to harmonize and where possible streamline reporting mechanisms;
  - (d) building and strengthening the capacity of countries to improve information essential for sustainable forest management;
  - (e) adapting the methodologies and specific variables to changing needs of member countries and international processes;
  - (f) tailoring the extent of data, analytical tools and dissemination approaches to the needs of key FRA user groups.
3. The strategy was a subject of discussion of several technical meetings, including the global Expert Consultation on "A Long-term Strategy for Global Forest Resources Assessment" Pajulahti, Finland, 13-15 September, 2011, and consultations with the FAO regional commissions. The final version of the document will be presented to the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of COFO, in September 2012.
4. The first findings from a new, satellite-based, FAO global remote sensing survey were released in November 2011. The results showed that the world's total forest area in 2005 was 3.69 billion hectares (30 percent of the global land area), which was less than 4.06 billion hectares reported on the basis of national reporting for FRA 2010. However; the new findings suggest that the rate of world deforestation averaged 14.5 million hectares per year between 1990 and 2005, which is consistent with previous estimates. The gross reduction in forest area was partially offset by gains through afforestation and natural forest expansion (10.1 million hectares per year between 1990 and 2000 and 8.8 million hectares per year between 2000 and 2005). This resulted in net losses of 4.9 million hectares of forests per year between 1990 and 2005.
5. The figures presented in the remote sensing survey are based on the most comprehensive use yet of high-resolution satellite data to provide a sample of forests worldwide, verified by national and international experts. They differ from previous FAO findings in the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010 (FRA 2010), which were based on a compilation of country reports that used a wide variety of sources. Although the observed difference partly could be attributed to the differences between methodologies for these two assessments, uneven distribution of these differences among regions indicates the need for further exploration of reasons of this divergence. This is particularly important for sending consistent information to other sectors and public, which may be not aware of detailed, technical and methodological aspects of reporting.
6. The release of the final report of the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2010 was followed by dissemination and communication activities. As in previous cycles, the main outcomes, graphs and tables were made available through a special website. For the first time all data delivered by countries was published in the form of an interactive database, compatible with the format in which SoEF data was presented, available on <http://www.fao.org/forestry/fra/fra2010/en/>. FRA 2010 outreach activities also included preparation of the second edition of the "Natural Inquirer" - education material aiming at dissemination of information about global forests among young people. The 2010 edition, which was prepared in cooperation with the US Forest Service, provides basic data, tools and support material for students and teachers.

7. At its 20<sup>th</sup> session COFO decided that the next Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015 would be undertaken. The overall shape of the next assessment should fit to the framework delineated by the long-term FRA strategy, which includes intensification of work on streamlining and, wherever possible, harmonising of data collection and reporting. Answering this request, the FAO has initiated the process leading towards preparation of the 2015 report with active participation of Criteria and Indicators processes and other relevant organisations.

8. The current process is carried out with involvement of a "Consortium of the Willing" – a group of organizations that are open to active consolidation of data collection, leading to Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire (CFRQ) and data sharing plan. In addition to the FAO the "Consortium" consists of International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Forest Europe, Montréal Process, Observatoire des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale (OFAC) and the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section. It is expected that successful resolution of identified problems and development of a system of joint data collection and sharing would significantly improve the current situation. Potential benefits would include:

- a) reduction of overlap and duplication of efforts in reporting;
- b) limited inconsistencies between different reporting on the same topics;
- c) reduction of costs and efforts of data collection;
- d) reduction of ambiguity in interpretation of data;
- e) provision of consistent figures on global forests that would allow joint elaboration and communication of the common messages/key findings to the "outside world".

9. The preparatory process has included a series of workshops and consultations organised by FAO and other participants that worked out the main proposal for organisation of CFRQ 2015. It is anticipated that the future reporting will consist of three modules:

- a) Joint Questionnaire, comprising variables agreed to by the "Consortium";
- b) supplementary global enquiry, asking for information requested by FAO;
- c) sets of regional enquiries, that would request, in addition to the Joint Questionnaire, information relevant to the individual C&I processes.

Data collection will be organised in the harmonised way, there should be no duplication in requested data and inconsistencies in definitions among the modules. The process of data production, collection and review will be streamlined as well as ensuring a "single window" for data providers and collectors.

10. In order to provide for a more comprehensive assessment of the implementation of SFM, the FRA 2015 will report the area of the world's forests where SFM is practiced. The challenge for the FRA community (information providers, managers and users) is to agree on a practical and credible method for each country to identify and report its progress in the application of the principles of SFM. The approach being considered envisages that the FRA will request information about the area of forest where SFM is practiced through a government led/managed/sanctioned process, classified by different levels of strictness and enforcement of management.

11. It is expected that the main outcome of the process - the report "Global Forests Resources Assessment 2015" will be launched at the World Forestry Congress in Durban, September 2015. Processes and organisations taking part in the "Consortium" were invited to participate in the production of the main report. The suggested milestones on the way towards the final publications on the global levels are:

- a) development of the global data collection formats - by the end of 2012;
- b) launch of national reporting - April 2013;
- c) country reporting finalised - by the end of 2013;
- d) analysis and report writing – by the end of 2014;
- e) launch of FRA key findings – 1st quarter of 2015.

12. Information presented in this note is based on the information available at the time of release of this document. The organisation, contents, reference year and further details of this process will be topic of a global FRA consultation, which will be held in Ispra, Italy, on 11-15 March 2012, i.e. after the release of this note. The final results of the meeting and expected recommendations for the process, will be presented to the Working Party orally.