

# UNECE/FAO Timber Section

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Comments and suggestions from the timber and forestry community are most welcome. Please write to us at: [info.timber@unece.org](mailto:info.timber@unece.org)

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United Nations



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# 2008 2009

## Review of the year: Kit Prins' personal assessment

2008 was a year of reflection, consolidation and achievement. The Strategic Review which reached a climax with the special session in May, systematically reviewed the whole programme, confirmed its general direction and laid down a structure and priorities for the next 5 years. Energy and climate change are the major challenges of the next five years for the programme and the Section.

The high spot of the year was the European Forest Week, especially, for us, the intense week in Rome which saw high level policy forums and a crowd of policy dialogues (too many, according to some), in addition to the regular business of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission.

Despite the demands of these two exceptional events, the Section continued to produce high quality outputs in a range of fields. I can only mention a few here. The *Forest Products Annual Market Review* continues to be our flagship, with the highest standards of accuracy, relevance and presentation, even though the news it transmits has been bad this year. The Timber Committee market discussions remain central, and addressed "green building". We are working with the Forest Resource Assessment (FRA) team in Rome to collect and validate data for the global FRA 2010. We have had a series of capacity building workshops on forest policies and on wood energy. We are also at the centre of work on potential wood supply (for energy and other uses) and harvested wood products in the context of climate change. We are working to improve and systematize our knowledge of forest sector policies, as well as of non-forest sector policies which influence the sector.

The outlook for 2009 is challenging. Two major projects are on the launch pad: the next sector outlook study (EFSOS), more necessary than ever in the changed policy landscape, and the report on the State of Europe's Forests for the next ministerial conference. We must also define more clearly our role on climate change and strengthen our activities for countries in transition. All of these will require fund raising and strengthened partnerships.

None of this would be possible without the active participation of hundreds of people: experts, delegates, national correspondents, members of teams of specialists and bureaux, partner organisations. We thank them all, and look forward to more cooperation in the coming year. Personally, I take this opportunity to thank our partners in Rome, especially Wulf Killmann for their cooperation on many points and the team in Geneva for their hard work, intelligence and creativity and ever positive attitude.



From left to right: Sybille Vermont, Jan Heino, Wulf Killmann, Johann Dengg, Christopher Prins, Alain Chaudron, Virginia Cram-Martos

**WORKING TOGETHER TO STRENGTHEN THE FOREST SECTOR AND ITS CONTRIBUTION  
TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE UNECE REGION**

## FOREST DAY IN POZNAN

Forests are becoming one of the central issues in the climate change debate, so the second Forest Day was organised in conjunction with the negotiations at **Poznan in December 2008**. Forest experts from all over the world, and all parts of society (over 800) gathered in Poznan to exchange ideas and lobby the climate change negotiators. The hot topic was **REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation)** but other topics were addressed, in 20 parallel side events. ECE/FAO, with Switzerland and helped by Sebastian Hetsch, Sebastian Rueter (Germany) and Keith Anderson (Switzerland) organised a side event on **“Accounting for harvested wood products: why bother?”**, based on the workshop in September 2008. Interesting presentations led to lively discussion.

**A consensus may emerge on harvested wood products, but if differences of opinion are not resolved, the elements are so complex that the deal could sink. Answers in Copenhagen 2009!**

### SUPPORTING CAPACITY BUILDING ON FOREST POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Around 40 representatives from countries of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia and International Organizations attended the workshop on *“Enhancing Contribution of Forest Management to Sustainable Development in Eastern European and Central Asian Countries”*, held on 24-28 November 2008 in Czech Republic. Participants exchanged their experiences and updated the *Krtiny Declaration*, in which country representatives specify their priorities and recommendations for the next two years.

Still in a phase of transition from centrally planned economies, eastern European and central Asian countries are facing challenges in developing forest policies and institutions to ensure sustainability of forest management, rural livelihoods, environmental services, and to address market requirements and improve economic efficiency.

The workshop was an opportunity for the countries to be informed about UNECE, FAO and the European Commission activities and possible support in the field of forest policies and institutions in the Region.

Countries exchanged their experience in this field and presented their strategies, difficulties, needs and recommendations to governments and International Organizations. They also briefed participants on the progress that has been made since the previous workshop which took place in 2007 in Hungary.

A number of countries have revised their legislation, developed a forest policy and/or reformed their institutions. However, this does not guarantee improved forest management, since implementation is another problematic issue. Moreover, deficiencies in the legal framework (especially with regard to tenure issues) and weak institutions are still a major concern. Countries also pointed out priority issues like their difficulties to receive funding for the forest sector, the need for improving training capacities (e.g. through establishing a regional training center), as well as the lack of information available in Russian. They also recognized the usefulness of information gathering and dissemination on forest policies and institutions, and encouraged the UNECE/FAO proposal of information repository on Policies and Institutions. The *Krtiny Declaration* was updated to include these priorities.

The workshop was organized in Czech Republic, on 24-28 November 2008, by the UNECE/FAO Timber Section, the FAO Sub-regional Office for Eastern Europe, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic and Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry in Brno).

Presentations as well as the updated *Krtiny Declaration*, are at: [http://www.fao.org/regional/SEUR/events/Krtiny2008/Krtiny2008\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/regional/SEUR/events/Krtiny2008/Krtiny2008_en.htm)

### WOOD ENERGY WORKSHOP

#### “WOODY BIOMASS - THE FUEL OF CHOICE FOR SERBIA”

This second wood energy workshop in the South-Eastern European sub-region in 2008 was co-organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Prof. Dr. Branko Glavonic, chair of the Timber Committee, and his team from the Faculty of Forestry of the University of Belgrade arranged the meeting in Belgrade and successfully attracted over 100 participants from ministries (energy, environment, forestry/agriculture), municipalities, science, enterprises from forestry and energy sector, investment funds from Serbia and abroad.

Wood based fuel production in Serbia and neighboring countries gained considerable economic momentum since woody biomass was presented as a modern, clean, efficient and domestically available fuel during the last workshop in 2007 (see newsletter no. 16).

Namely wood pellets and briquettes from sawmill co-products and residues, attracted investors' interest and production capacities boosted in the Western Balkans. The regional production capacities for wood pellets are expected to exceed 6 million metric tonnes in 2008.

However, domestic pellets producers are now often facing difficulties in marketing and selling their products as high transportation costs decrease significantly economic margins of the producer.

Hence, discussions focused on how to create a domestic market for processed wood fuels. Participants acknowledged that domestic use of processed wood fuels & residues would provide greater opportunities for the national economy as they help to offset imported fossil fuels.

During the short field trip, participants visited a pilot project of such a domestic application. One local district heating plant in Belgrade replaced lignite (coal) and generates heat and warm water for 300 households only from domestically produced wood pellets.

Despite this success story, the efficient use of woody biomass for energy generation always depends on the local conditions. Wood pellets only make sense in urban areas, with limited transport and storage capacities. In rural areas, wood chips or fuel logs might be the first choice.

[www.unece.org/timber/workshops/2008/belgrade/belgrade.html](http://www.unece.org/timber/workshops/2008/belgrade/belgrade.html)

## UNECE/FAO TEAMS OF SPECIALISTS

As the UNECE/FAO timber and forestry strategic programme entered its next period 2008-13, it was decided that its implementation would be supported by relevant Teams of Specialists. Countries in the UNECE region have been requested to nominate experts to the seven new Teams of Specialists which cover the following work areas:

- **Forest Products Markets and Marketing**
- **Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management**
- **Forest Sector Outlook**
- **Joint ECE/FAO/ILO Expert Network on Implementing Sustainable Forest Management**
- **Forest Communicators Network**
- **Forest Policy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia**
- **Forest Fires**

The UNECE/FAO Teams of Specialists are an important means to involve national experts in the work of the UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission, and to advise the secretariat on the implementation of the timber and forestry work programme.



Teams of specialists are comprised of governmental experts and can also include eminent specialists or representatives of international organisations, NGOs and the private sector, in compliance with the UN rules and practices in this respect.



Most Teams meet once annually, with meetings normally lasting between one to three days. In addition to the meetings, Team members are expected to review and



comment on pieces of work circulated by the secretariat, and to contribute actively to the implementation of the work programme in their area of expertise.



Teams are a way of outreach to both country-level and international experts, and have their own specific outputs. Their activities will enable access to knowledge and the sharing of developments in other countries and activities at the international level.

The process of implementation of the new Teams has reached a very advanced stage and it is expected that inaugural meetings for most of the teams will be held in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2009. On 2 April, all team leaders will meet at the Bureaux meeting and seek for synergies.

For further information on UNECE/FAO Teams of Specialists, please visit our website or contact:

[eve.charles@unece.org](mailto:eve.charles@unece.org)

## NEW INTERACTIVE DATABASE ON INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN EUROPE

The Timber and Forestry programme of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has released a new web-based resource tool designed by the international community to enable researchers, policymakers, practitioners and the general public to access data on Europe's forests. The database is a comprehensive research tool based on the report *State of Europe's Forests 2007*, and includes data which have so far not been published.

This is the first time that such a comprehensive set of information pertinent to sustainable forest management and forest resources assessment in Europe is being published via an online data management system. It provides an unprecedented scope of information, collected by hundreds of individuals and dozens of agencies, and is accessible through a user-friendly interface which enables users to extract all the data for a single country, or to compare indicators across several countries.

These data are presented alongside other statistical data from different parts of the UNECE work programme. The UNECE/FAO Timber Section encourages the international community to take advantage of this resource, and to make suggestions for further improvement.

The database is available at: <http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/Dialog/>.

For more information, please contact Roman Michalak ([roman.michalak@unece.org](mailto:roman.michalak@unece.org))

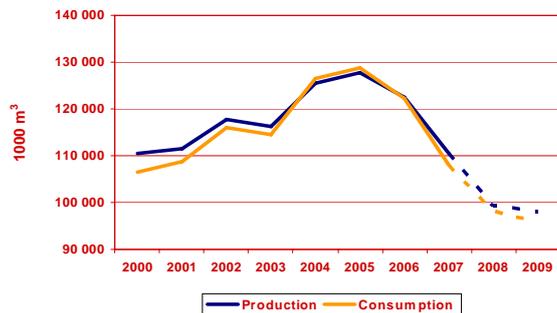
### THE 31ST SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON FOREST ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS GENEVA, FROM 31 MARCH TO 1 APRIL 2009

The Working Party meets annually to discuss issues concerning forest statistics. This year it will meet to review and discuss the results of the 2008 Joint Wood Energy Enquiry and to provide guidance on activities in forest products markets, forest resource assessment and forest sector outlook studies. The forest resource assessment will include updates on the state of FRA2010 and forest types. The outlook studies item will discuss preparations for a new outlook study for the ECE region. The meeting is open to all interested participants, subject to approval by their head of delegation.

Prior to the Working Party on 30 March will be a **one-day workshop on estimating potential wood supply**. The workshop focuses on potential wood supply in the ECE region and aims to bring together national correspondents and resource specialists from member states in order to discuss the methodologies, definitions and results of wood potential studies in general and the UNECE/FAO draft study on "Potential Sustainable Wood Supply in Europe". In particular national contacts are invited to comment on the figures concerning their specific country.

**The registration form and the documents can be found at:** <http://www.unece.org/timber/docs/stats-sessions/stats-31/stats-31.htm>

## NORTH AMERICAN FOREST PRODUCTS MARKET CRASH WILL SPREAD THROUGHOUT UNECE REGION



Graph: North American sawn softwood

The joint UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission Market Discussions took place in October 2008 at the European Forest Week. It was a period of considerable uncertainty due to the escalating global financial and economic crises. In the United States, residential housing starts declined from 2.2 million units in 2006 to well under 1 million units forecast in 2009. This housing crash has severely depressed North American forest products markets. The global financial crisis is also affecting Europe and Russia.

In general forest products markets were forecast to fall in 2008 and early 2009, ending long-term upward trends for many products. A six-year growth of forest products consumption to record levels ended in 2006, and fell slightly in 2007 (by 1.4% according to the UNECE/FAO *Forest Products Annual Market Review*). Consumption is forecast to fall further in 2008 and 2009. Recovery depends in part on the housing market bottoming out in the U.S. and elsewhere, which is hoped for in 2010. More information is available via our website.

### Staff changes

Our former colleague **Volker Sasse**, who led work on sector outlook studies and countries in transition, before moving to the FAO subregional office for Europe in Budapest has returned to German government service and will work in the German embassy in Kiev from March 2009.

**Sebastian Hetsch** who was a member of the team for two years, first as intern, then as consultant and made important contributions in many areas, including renewable energy policies, wood mobilisation, climate change and potential wood supply has joined TÜV SÜD, a company developing certification for carbon-related forest projects. He made a major contribution and we wish him well in his future career.

**Wulf Killmann**, our contact point in FAO Forest Department, faithful supporter and stern guide, is retiring at end January. We wish him well in his new career in South America.

### DID YOU KNOW

Forest ecosystems are the largest terrestrial carbon pool. They store more than 80% of all terrestrial aboveground carbon and more than 70% of all soil organic carbon.

Roughly half of total carbon is found in forest biomass and dead wood combined, and half in soils and litter combined.

Deforestation is one of the main anthropogenic emissions of carbon to the atmosphere, accounting for nearly a fifth of the total.

The total carbon content of forest ecosystems is only 15% less than the amount of carbon in the entire atmosphere.

The carbon stock in forests is increasing in the UNECE region. Since 1990, the total forest carbon stock in Europe increased by 2 billion tonnes, or an average of 137 million tonnes C per year.

**National market forecasts for the UNECE region countries 2008-2009** cover the main forest products and include data on production, consumption and trade. The figures were supplied to the Timber Committee meeting during the European Forest Week in Rome in October 2008. Data are in 1000 m<sup>3</sup> or 1000 m.t. <http://www.unece.org/timber/mis/forecasts.htm>

### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

- Geneva, 4-5 February, UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook
- Pushkino, Russian Federation, 16-19 February, Workshop on Forest Products Statistics for National Statistical Correspondents
- Pushkino, Russian Federation, 20 February, Intersecretariat Working Group (IWG) on Forest Sector Statistics
- Geneva, 25-27 February, UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management
- Budapest, 5-6 March, UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Policy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia
- Rome, 16-20 March, COFO 2009 / World Forest Week
- New York, 20 April-1 May, UNFF8
- Geneva, 30 March, Workshop on Estimating Potential Wood Supply
- Geneva, 31 March-1 April, Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics
- Geneva, 1 April, UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Fires
- Geneva, 2 April, Joint TC/EFC Bureaux meeting with Team of Specialists Leaders/Representatives
- Geneva, 3 April, Joint TC/EFC Bureaux meeting