

Integrated programme of work on forests and timber of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission

Strategic review of the programme

Comments submitted by Switzerland

1. What should be the strategic objective of the integrated programme of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission, taking account of the needs of the region, inputs from other actors in the area, and the comparative advantages of the two partners?

The knowledge on and the awareness of the roles that forest and forest industry sectors play in overall sustainable development should be raised.

2. What major work areas should be covered by the integrated programme of work?

Working area 1: Markets and Statistics

In the light of the developments in the context of the forestry sector during the last years, there should be a strong focus on the economic issues in forestry and in forest industries. Developments within and outside of the forest and timber sectors have to be monitored, inter alia:

Developments within the sector:

- The impact of timber plantations on the timber, fuel and pulp markets
- The impact of timber plantations on comprehensive forestry approaches like close to nature forestry or near natural forestry

Developments in the context of the sector:

- The development of activities that are influencing the forestry and timber sectors, e.g. subsidies for energy from biomass etc.

Working area 3: European Forest Sector Outlook Studies

One of the highlights of EFSOS in the view of Switzerland is the increased engagement of the UNECE in the field of cross sectoral issues. There is a need for a stronger focus on the economic viability of the forest and timber sectors.

Working area 5: Policy and cross-sectoral issues

Many central cross-sectoral issues related to forestry and the timber industry require an international approach, for instance energy policy. Despite the earth summit in Rio and the world summit on sustainable development in Johannesburg, the forest sector is still

the only sector able to comply with the sustainability requirements of both conferences. The other side of the coin is the grotesque situation that products made from wood (which is a renewable raw material) are frequently more expensive than substitution products produced using fossil fuels that are much too cheap. At the European level, the UN Economic Commission for Europe provides a centre of competence, with wide expert knowledge of topics related to forestry, timber, energy, the environment, trade and transitional issues. From the Swiss point of view, it would be highly desirable for international cross-sectoral issues to be brought together through that centre, and for them to be seen in the light of sustainability.

3. What should be its main activities and outputs, taking account of the strategic objective and availability of resources?

Continue as before with a strong emphasis on dissemination of “in a nutshell” information.

4. What methods of work should it employ

5. What resources should it aim to mobilise, and how?

6. Is its formal structure (mandates, permanent bodies etc.) adapted to the needs?

A clear distinction of the agendas of the two parent bodies should be made, although more engagement of the UNECE/TC in the above mentioned field of a comprehensive approach in the cross sectoral energy/environment approach means more political commitment of the this parent body.

7. How should its success be measured and monitoring and self-evaluation be implemented?