

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

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II. TIMBER COMMITTEE-GENERAL COMMENTS

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?

Maximize the complementary competencies of the two organizations to develop and deliver world-class actionable information to stakeholders in client countries. This will require frequent meaningful communication, coordination and cooperation between the two bodies.

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

The TC can not be “all things to all people’. Accordingly, a careful and honest self-reflection needs to be done to identify what can be provided effectively rather than providing mediocre outputs across a broad spectrum of areas. Generally, the current work areas are appropriate. The program review needs to determine if in fact all areas are being addressed and supported. The key is to be the premier entity to provide information and support in the areas that the TC focuses on. Leave the others to other entities that are better suited to do so.

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

The key constraint is (non) availability of resources. As mentioned elsewhere in my comments, the outputs and activities need to be commensurate with what is important, the willingness of participants to deliver the goods, funding and resiliency to modify priorities as conditions change.

4. What **methods of work** should it employ?

- 1) Surveys to collect current primary information
- 2) Intensive reviews of the secondary literature in each country to support areas of work
- 3) Collaboration and “business strategic alliances” with outside entities that are involved in similar or complementary areas of work.
- 4) Cross-team involvement.
- 5) A sub-session each year on research priorities, activities and planning
- 6) Develop a Research planning Team that can coordinate research activities across all ToS and for the TC in general. Right now, “research” is all over the map.

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

One of the major shortcomings of the TC is that there are numerous mandates of the body itself and of the sub Teams without commensurate funding. If new knowledge is to be developed through empirical research and disseminated effectively, there needs to be an internal source of funds and a funding mechanism. This mechanism would prioritise projects, create strict project parameters and deadlines, and clearly state deliverables.

The TC can not rely on ad-hoc small-scale non-coordinated funding for its activities. Volunteerism is a great thing but there needs to be some institutional support.

Perhaps an annual “Research Fee” can be assessed to member countries on a sliding scale depending on economic conditions or category.

In addition, members of the TC and ToS need to be more active in their involvement. Many good minds attend the sessions but it seems that the annual work of the group falls on the shoulders of a small subset. If active participation can be created, better information will be gathered and the work will be more equitably distributed.

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

The Team mandates need to be extended or made permanent with annual reviews. The need to request renewing mandates for the very existence of the ToS creates uncertainty of continuity for participants. The annual reviews will dictate the direction and evolution of the ToS.

An organizational chart needs to be developed and distributed to members. It is unclear what the structure is and who the reporting bodies and individuals are. In particular, it may seem that the FAO part of the partnership is deemphasized relative to UNECE.

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

Deliverables and accountability. Realistic goals and objectives need to be developed with input from the TC members, not by the secretariat alone. These goals require buy-in from all parties that will be required to execute them. There needs to be metrics and milestones for evaluation explicitly written and distributed to TC members. Often, the biggest source of lack of performance is a lack of communication.

Frequent, quarterly, project status updates need to be made by the individuals that are put in leadership roles for these projects. This process should take place at the ToS and TC level.

II. TEAM OF SPECIALISTS ON FOREST PRODUCTS MARKETS AND MARKETING

Overall, my only suggestion is to remove specific programme elements. There are many issues that warrant our attention. Each year, as we have done in the past, we can highlight a few key issues.

WORK AREA 1: MARKETS AND STATISTICS

Objective: Collect, analyse and disseminate information on forest products markets and forest fires in cooperation with partners in international organizations and countries. Provide for a for discussion of forest products marketing, especially in countries in transition, and on market developments and disseminate current, neutral information in order to support sustainable development in the forest products sector.

Guidance: Joint UNECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics

Programme elements:

- 1.1 Statistics on production, trade and prices of forest products
- 1.2 Analysis of markets for forest products
- 1.3 Capacity building for forest products marketing in countries in transition
- 1.4 Monitoring of markets for certified forest products (Would delete)*
- 1.5 Statistics on forest fires (Would delete)*
- 1.6 Information network, activities of team of specialists