

**UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Resources Assessment**  
(*self-evaluation*)

*prepared by the Leader of the TEAM,*  
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## **1. What were the team's objectives and did it achieve them?**

### **Background**

The UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists (ToS) on Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) was established as the ToS on “*Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment (TBFRA)*” in accordance with the decision of the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the Joint UNECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics in June 1993. The ToS started its work in March 1995 (inaugural meeting of the TEAM, 20-22 March). The Terms of Reference and Mandate of the TEAM were approved by the Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics, adjusted in the process of the Regional FRA (TBFRA-2000) implementation, and confirmed/extended until year 2004 at the 25th session of the Working Party (24-26 February 2003).

### **Focus and brief listing of the major ToS work**

The activities of the FRA Team of Specialists were regularly/systematically (on annual basis) reported to the Joint UNECE/FAO Working Party, which provided the governance, support and clear guidance to the ToS activities, also on technical issues... The UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Resources Assessment, according to its Mandate and Terms of Reference, was focusing on the following aspects of the UNECE/FAO regional FRA work (depending on different stages of FRA planning, implementation and/or follow-up):

- preparation and the implementation of the Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment 2000;
- generation of recommendations on the concept, classifications, definitions and methods of the Assessment, including
  - objectives, users and users’ needs of the Assessment;
  - scope (parameters), structure and contents of the Assessment 2000;
  - methodology and organisation of FRA work, including establishing the network of national correspondents;
- analysis of the “Helsinki Process” on criteria and indicators for SFM, from the point of view the requirements and information needs in the region;
- running the FRA information users’ needs enquiry, and the following analysis;
- coordination FRA work with the Global Forest Resources Assessment;
- preparation together with the FAO global FRA the “*Expert Consultation on Global Forest Resource Assessment 2000 (Kotka-III meeting)*”;

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- elaboration of the framework for the global and temperate/boreal FRA 2000;
- elaboration of the TBFRA-2000 enquiry, including the set of terms and definitions (T&D);
- testing and finalising the TBFRA-2000 enquiry, including T&D set,
- financial aspects and resources for the implementation of the TBFRA-2000;
- advise on the analysis of national data and presentation of the TBFRA-2000;
- processing and analysis of country replies to the TBFRA enquiry;
- analysis of the TBFRA data comparability and reliability (data quality and adjustment);
- advise on the contents of the Main TBFRA-2000 Report and its accompanying discussion papers;
- overview of the Main TBFRA-2000 Results, advise on the electronic database release (CD-Rom), and presentation of results on Internet;
- recommendations on the presentation, publication, and dissemination of the TBFRA-2000 results;
- advise on the implementation of the Survey on *“TBFRA-2000 use and policy implication”*;
- further analysis of current FRA information needs, with reference to the pan-European and Montreal &I for SFM, and global forest policy dialogue;
- contribution to the preparation of the global FRA expert consultation *“Kotka-IV”*;
- contribution to the elaboration of the improved set of MCPFE C&I for SFM;
- advise and contribution to reporting of the up-dated FRA-2000 information to the Vienna Ministerial Conference – MCPFE-2003;
- advise and recommendations to the first draft of the global FRA-2005 update documentation (reporting tables, terms and definitions);
- contribution to the preparation of training the FRA national correspondents for the implementation of the global FRA-2005 update;
- advise on the future reporting to the pan-European Ministerial Conference (Warsaw round) on Criteria and Indicators of SFM, and on the possible harmonisation of the C&I reporting with the Montreal Process.

### **ToS Meetings**

1. The inaugural meeting of the Team of Specialists, Geneva, 20-22 March 1995;
2. The ToS “core group” meeting, Birmensdorf (Zurich), 16-17 October 1995;
3. The second meeting of the Team of Specialists, Geneva, 15th-17<sup>th</sup> April 1996;
4. The third meeting of the Team of Specialists, Birmensdorf, 5-7 March 1997;
5. The 4th meeting of the Team of Specialists, Ispra (Italy), 25-26 March 1998;
6. The 5th meeting of the Team of Specialists, Geneva, 22-24 March 1999;
7. The sixth meeting of the ToS, Joensuu, Finland, 21-22 May 2000;
8. The 7th ToS meeting, Victoria, BC, Canada, 3-4 June 2001;
9. The 8<sup>th</sup> ToS meeting, Krakow, Poland, 22-24 May 2002;
10. The 9<sup>th</sup> ToS meeting, Radebeul/Dresden (Germany), 18-20 September 2003.

### **Other activities / events**

- Provided recommendation on the elaboration, design and publishing of the TBFRA-2000 data base and Main Report on CD-Rom, and contributing to the dissemination of the information, also via Internet;

- Promotion and facilitating the dissemination of the regional forest resources assessment information at national and regional scales in Europe, in the UNECE region as a whole, and globally;
- Provided input to a number of the European Commission (EU-led) projects relating to the developments and harmonisation of National Forest Inventories, and analysis of the forest resources statistics (incl., EUROSTAT);
- Provided factual data referred and used in discussions and forest-related analysis by NGOs, to the work being done within Conventions (CBD, FCCCC), Kyoto protocol, MCPFE process.

### **Some more contribution**

- To Global Forest Resources Assessment programme (FRA-2000, FRA-2005 update preparation);
  - o “*Kotka-III*” meeting, global FRA-2000, SOFO publications, “*Kotka-IV*” meeting, global FRA Advisory Group meetings, etc
  - o Other global FRA related meetings, e.g. the global FRA 2000 planning workshop, Nogent-sur-Vernisson, France (16-18 September 1997);
- To EUROSTAT, research and scientific community working with FRA statistics, to the development of NFIs and Assessment;
- To the EU/JRC *FIRS* (Forest Information from Remote Sensing) Project, by providing statistical data for analysis, and recommendations concerning the nomenclatures (terms and definitions);
- To the EU project “*Designing a System of Nomenclature for European Forest Mapping*”, by presenting the system of nomenclature and methods of the data collection and analyses;
- To EU *EFICS* (European Forest Information and Communication System), by providing the networking with TBFRA national correspondents and sharing the experience in the related FRA work;
- To *EFIS* Prototype of the European Forest Information System, by facilitating the use of the TBFRA-2000 database in the process of the elaboration of the prototype, assisting the evaluation of the prototype and providing feed-back on its functionality;
- To the elaboration of the MCPFE “*Assessment Guidelines for Protected and Protective Forest and OWL in Europe*”;
- To the MCPFE process on the Improvement of pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, including:
  - o Participation in the MCPFE Scientific Advisory Group,
  - o Contribution to 4 technical workshops related to specific criteria and indicators,
  - o Contributing expertise, knowledge and TBFRA experience for the evaluation of the relevance of the pan-European Indicators for SFM.
- To the UNECE/FAO Baseline Outlook Study and other EFSOS Working Papers, Geneva, 2003-2004.

### **Some Products**

1. UN-ECE/FAO Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment 2000: “*Terms and Definitions*”, United Nations, New York and Geneva, July 1997; GE.97-22231;

2. UN-ECE/FAO Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment 2000: “*Enquiry*”, United Nations, New York and Geneva, July 1997;
3. UNECE/FAO, 2000, “*Forest Resources of Europe, CIS, North America, Australia, Japan and New Zealand*” (industrialised temperate/boreal countries). UNECE/FAO Contribution to the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2000. Main Report. Geneva Timber and Forest Study Papers, No.17. United Nations Publications, New York and Geneva, 445 pp.;
4. CD-Rom (electronic database and Main FRA-2000 Report), United Nations, 2001;
5. The electronic TBFRA-2000 data-base and Main Report in .pdf format at the <http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/fra/welcome.htm> (this website has taken one of the leading positions in UNECE according to “hits”, “downloads” or “visits” during the last years);
6. Forest and Forest Products Sector Country Profiles on Georgia, Russian Federation and Ukraine;
7. UNECE/FAO, Reports of the meetings of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on the Forest Resources Assessment, Geneva, 1995 – 2003;
8. “Structural, compositional and functional aspects of forest biodiversity in Europe. Joint FAO/UNECE and JRC Paper. Geneva Forest and Timber Discussion Papers 22. Janna Puumalainen, 2001;
9. Data contribution to UNECE/FAO EFSOS Working Papers, Geneva, 2003-2004;
10. UNECE/FAO, 2003, Analysis of the Historical Development of European Forest Resources (1950 – 2000); Geneva Timber and Forest Discussion Papers, ECE/TIM/DP/ (in press), United Nations, Geneva, 2003;
11. “*Biological Diversity, Tree Species Composition and Environmental Protection in regional FRA-2000*” by Mr. Nigel Dudley and Ms. Sue Stolton, “Equilibrium”, United Kingdom/Geneva, (in press), 2003;
12. UNECE/FAO and MCPFE, 2003 “*State of Europe's Forests 2003*”. The MCPFE Report on Sustainable Forest Management in Europe. Jointly prepared by UNECE/FAO and the MCPFE Liaison Unit Vienna for the 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, 125 pp.

### **Feed-back from FRA data users**

There is the long list of the positive feedback notes from the wide range of the TBFRA-2000 and its accompanying products users, and stakeholders in the regional and global FRA process. ( some feedback points are compiled by the UNECE secretariat in a separate file). The UNECE/FAO “*Certificate of Appreciation*” was awarded in July 2000 to the TBFRA National Correspondents and ToS Members to mark a “*significant contribution to improving knowledge and understanding the world's forests*”.

## **2. What difference did the team's work make?**

It is the general understanding of the ToS as well as of the participating nations that the Regional FRA (formerly called Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment, TBFRA 2000) should utilize available (national) data, but not carry out independent forest resources assessment. National forest inventories do have a long

history in the temperate and boreal region and are currently carried out in most of the 55 nations covered by the regional FRA on regular intervals. However, the assessment methodology and the systems of nomenclature applied at the national level differ. Those differences may corrupt the reliability of results, if they are not taken into account when data are submitted and analysed. Taking into account the specific national information needs and the desire to maintain national time series lead to the team's recommendation not to implement a common standard for the TBFRA 2000. Alternatively methods were considered that allow nations to harmonise their data sets according to a common set of terms and definitions.

This significant contribution of the ToS was a milestone in improving the reliability of the TBFRA 2000 report. The TBFRA '*Set of Terms and Definition*' has become widely accepted and is now *the* reference in the boreal and temperate region. The most significant criterion for evaluating the team's success in providing a well accepted way of harmonizing national data can be seen in the adoption of the "TBFRA set of terms and definitions" for most attributes and indicators in the MCPFE process on the "*Improvement of pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Management*".

Another significant task was the assessment of information needs and the design of a questionnaire for gathering national data. For this task the team utilized outside sources as well and came up with a well-accepted set of information needs. In comparing the desired information needs with the availability of comparable data on the national level the questionnaire was drafted. Several team members volunteered to evaluate the drafted questionnaire with respect to their national sets of data and facilitated an iterative process in developing the final design of the questionnaire and contributed to the final design of the questionnaire, which clear and intuitively understood and facilitated the data analysis for the final report.

Team members contributed to the final TBFRA 2000 report by sharing their scientific expertise.

In addition ToS initiated a cascade of projects and activities on the multi-national level including the '*European National Forest Inventory Network (ENFIN)*' and several joined research projects.

### **3. Did the team work efficiently and effectively? Were resources (country, secretariat, other) efficiently used? What was the secretariat's role?**

Since 1995 the ToS met annually. For the preparation of the TBFRA 2000 report the team could utilize some 20 days in total. The ambitious tasks and the limited availability of time and financial resources rendered efficient meetings necessary. It was possible to conduct all meetings of the team in a very fruitful and rewarding way. Discussions were always open and constructive. Despite the fact that some of the issues were controversial in nature the team was able to come up with approaches and solutions that were accepted and supported by all team members.

Harmonizing national systems of nomenclatures was an ambitious task. As the financial resources of the UNECE/ FAO were very limited to support this effort by accompanying studies, several team members got involved in fund raising for and

contribution to studies that aimed at providing a scientifically sound approach for implementing the harmonization process. Team members made the harmonisation issue a problem of their own and established a network between several institutions in order to develop an optimal and well-accepted approach for harmonising national systems of nomenclature. For example, team members got involved in the EU-funded studies on “*Designing a System of Nomenclature for European Forest Mapping*”, “*European Forest Information and Communication System (EFICS)*”, or the development of the European EFIS Prototype. In addition team members played an active role in elaborating MCPFE’s “*Assessment Guidelines for Protected and Protective Forest and OWL in Europe*”.

The organisation and conduction of meetings of the team was sponsored by national bodies in Switzerland, Canada, Poland and Germany.

A major contribution of the success of the team was the engagement of the Geneva secretariat. The secretariat prepared all meeting of the team in an outstanding way by providing material and information in time and in a comprehensive way. The secretariat was especially helpful in supporting accompanying studies to a maximum extend. All team members felt well informed about processes and initiatives relevant for the regional FRA. And - as any team is an aggregation of human beings - the cordially and cooperative way of handling the personal interrelationship between the team members and the secretariat was highly valuable and well appreciated. The personal engagement of the secretariat’s staff is not to be underestimated and was by far more than could be expected.

#### **4. Is the team's task completed? If not, what should be done over the next 4 years?**

The team has completed most of his tasks. Due to the outstanding efforts of the Geneva secretariat in preparing the TBFRA 2000 report and in disseminating the TBFRA 2000 results the TBFRA 2000 has achieved a very high reputation and is widely accepted as an (if not the) important information base concerning boreal and temperate forests. These developments have initiated new tasks and demands for the team, which is actively involved in several international processes and programs. The following list is a selection of new demands and resulting needs for activities of the team.

- Concerning the FRA 2005 update a new approach and modifications of the methodology as well as terms and definitions have been proposed. The team was urged to monitor the changes and the implications on maintaining the consistency and comparability of information over time.
- The regional FRA has direct implications in the reporting for the Pan-European and Montreal process, as both processes utilize both the information collected by the regional FRA as well as the underlying terms and definitions. The regional FRA ToS plays a major role in the harmonisation of C&I approaches within the two proecesses
- The capability of monitoring forests is directly linked to the consistency of time series. Any changes in methodology and nomenclature over time bear the risk to confound in-situ changes with artefacts. The expertise of the team should be used to assess the effects of new assessment approaches on the consistency of time series.

- The team should assist the Geneva secretariate in the preparation for reporting FRA-related data to the next pan-European Ministerial Conference in Warsaw, with special reference to outlining the scope and coverage, methods and modalities, and the background structures, incl. terms and definitions.
- The existing networks should be maintained and their benefits be utilized for the FRA 2010.
- The team should be involved in the preparation of the FRA 2010, including the consideration of new information needs.

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