

UNECE/FAO Workshop on “National Wood Resource Balances”

31st March – 1st April 2008

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

1. The political importance of the need for better information for assessing wood supplies and uses has been widely recognised¹. In this context, a wood resource balance is a valuable tool to assess all different sources and uses of wood as part of comprehensive assessments of bio-energy and sustainable wood supply.
2. The study “Wood Resource Availability and Demands” represents significant progress in understanding these issues, using a wood resource balance approach, but is nearing the limits of what can be achieved with data presently available internationally. In some cases there are existing national studies or datasets which are yet to be exploited, however, there remain widespread weaknesses and gaps. Therefore, new empirical research, including surveys, is a crucial input needed to address these issues.
3. Where available, results of preliminary empirical research on wood use shows that in many countries there is more wood already used than previously reported. This is particularly true for wood for energy generation.
4. Results of preliminary empirical research on wood supply also indicate that more wood is already removed from the forest than previously recorded, e.g. that from legitimate but unrecorded harvests and sales, such as fuelwood for household use.
5. Furthermore, sources of wood supply other than forest removals, like woody biomass from outside the forest and post-consumer recovered wood, are relatively unknown but often play a crucial role in wood supply, including for material products such as wood-based panels and for energy use.
6. Forest inventories are the starting point for supply analysis. However, a distinction needs to be made between net annual increment and wood availability.
7. Throughout the forest-wood chain, conversion factors (material input/product output) are crucial for wood resource balances but they have wide ranges due to local circumstances and measurement conventions. Hence, international comparisons have to be approached carefully.

¹ e.g. in the 2007 resolutions of the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe.

8. The exchange of wood-energy information and data requires a harmonisation of terminologies, definitions and units at national and international levels.
9. In most energy sector analyses, wood is included in biomass but often not identified separately. As a result, forest sector analysis is sometimes not properly taken into account by policy-makers.
10. In reaction to changes in natural resource, energy and environmental policies, the needs for statistics in the forest-wood chain are evolving rapidly. Thus, national statistical systems need to be enabled to adapt accordingly so as to be able to deliver timely, policy-relevant data as the basis for analyses. However, appropriate adaptation requires changes in mandates, structures, networks and resources. Such challenges need considerable time, knowledge and collaborative efforts to be effectively addressed.
11. Assessing future wood supply and demand requires a comprehensive framework such as the European Forest Sector Outlook Study.

Recommendations

1. Countries are encouraged to bring together all relevant interested and concerned parties to work together to make available and share relevant data and expertise on sources and uses of wood.
2. To obtain a comprehensive overview on the forest sector, countries are encouraged to develop wood resource balances, or similar comprehensive wood flow models, encompassing all different types of wood sources and uses.
3. In order to help develop and improve such wood resource balances, empirical research is essential, in particular on:
 - logging residues, including tree stumps,
 - woody biomass outside the forest,
 - short-rotation plantations – as appropriate according to national forest definitions and possible changes of land use,
 - wood-industry residues (in certain countries),
 - post-consumer recovered wood,
 - combined heat and power (CHP) plants,
 - energy in private households.
4. Interested countries and organisations are invited to co-ordinate efforts for empirical research and to share the results. UNECE/FAO may assist this process.
5. Additional empirical research in this field cannot be done without new funding. This needs to be provided by governments, industry and other national, European and international stakeholders.
6. Appropriate changes in mandates, structures, networks and resources at national and supra-national levels need to be identified and enacted so as to enable official statistical systems to provide, on a regular basis: policy-relevant, reliable, objective and timely data necessary for wood resource balances or similar comprehensive wood-flow models.
7. Data for wood resource balances should be collected and analysis be carried out in close collaboration with the energy sector in such a way that the results be usable by all participants in the overall debate and work on renewable energy.
8. National and international co-operation on the harmonisation of terminologies, definitions and units is necessary to facilitate the exchange of wood-energy information and data such as for wood resource balances and similar comprehensive wood-flow models.
9. A task force should be set up to collect and validate national-level conversion factors for use in wood resource balances and outlook studies as well as to address conversion factors in the area of greenhouse gas exchanges. It should report back to the Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics session in 2009. Countries are encouraged to agree on and update a set of conversion factors (e.g. material input / product output) for forest-based industries and energy conversion as these become available.

10. Research assessing future demand for wood raw material and future wood supply should apply the framework and methodology of wood resource balances or similar comprehensive wood-flow models, to ensure the inclusion of all different sources and the consistency and comparability of the results.
11. UNECE and FAO should consider implementing and conducting a new forest sector outlook study which would provide a baseline scenario and a comprehensive framework for analysis.
12. The Task Force on Wood Availability and Demands should continue as a platform for discussion, and encourage and guide empirical research on recent wood supply and uses as well as their future potentials.
13. The workshop recommended the publication of Part I of the background document “Wood Resource Availability and Demands – national and regional wood resource balances 2005” as soon as possible (mid 2008), pending final adjustments of national data. Part II (Wood Resource Availability and Demands – future wood flows in the forestry and energy sector) should also be published after completion and review.