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Geneva

A new UN-ECE/FAO publication

Did you know that …

Europe's forest area is expanding by half a million hectares a year, this expansion would cover Belgium in 6 years or Switzerland in 8 years?

Temperate and boreal forests absorb about as much carbon every year as is released by tropical deforestation, thus slowing the speed of climate change?

In the EU, 75% of forests are privately owned and 55% in the USA?

Russia's forest resource is the world's largest, covering 54% of the country's land area?

Natural regeneration accounts for 75% of regeneration for the US forests?

There are 4.4 ha of forest for every Finn and 13.7 ha for every Canadian, but only 0.02 ha for every inhabitant of the Netherlands?

In Europe, only half of the wood which grows in the forest is harvested. The volume of wood in Europe's forest is increasing by nearly 1 million m3 a day?

For each inhabitant of the ECE region, there are 159 m3 of wood growing in the region's forests, about 100 big trees for each person?

Non-wood forest resources are important as illustrated by Russia's stock of 43 million tons of mushrooms, of which less than 1% is harvested?

Biodiversity is desirable, but introduced animals, like the possum, pose a significant threat to New Zealand forests?

Australia reported 1168 native tree species in its forests and Japan over 1000?

Recreation demands on forests are increasing. Hunting generates income for forest owners of about $13 million/year in Belgium and $20 million in Hungary?

All countries have some protected forests. Over half the region's forests are considered "undisturbed by man," but these are almost exclusively in two countries, Russia and Canada?

Fire, air pollution, insects and disease affect forest growth. Over 5 million ha of forest in Canada were moderately or severely defoliated by the Eastern Spruce Budworm in 1994; in Europe in 1997, over 85 000 forest fires burned a total area of nearly 300 000 ha?

All these facts, and many more, are contained in the new UN-ECE/FAO publication *Forest Resources of Europe, CIS, North America, Australia, Japan and New Zealand* (known as the Temperate and Boreal Forest Resource Assessment or TBFRA-2000). "It's the most comprehensive set of internationally comparable data on the temperate and boreal forests ever issued," according to Alexander Korotkov, TBFRA Project Manager, ECE Timber Section. "This data set is the region's contribution to the global Forest Resource Assessment 2000, led by FAO, which will be issued later this year," said Kit Prins, Chief, Timber Section, ECE Trade Division.

Unlike earlier assessments, which concentrated on forest area and wood supply, TBFRA expands to provide information on practically all aspects of the forest. The six main chapters are:

Area: status and changes

Ownership and management status

Wood supply and carbon sequestration

Biological diversity and environmental protection

Forest condition and damage

Socio-economic functions.

The publication provides indicators of sustainable forest management. For example, TBFRA figures are used by the Ministerial Conference on Protection of Forests in Europe.

The publication contains about 100 main tables, with statistics and comments by 55 countries (over 700 parameters were requested for each country). A special chapter assesses the reliability and comparability of the data, which were supplied by national correspondents who adjusted the raw national data to the internationally agreed definitions.

Hundreds of experts from all over the world contributed to this major project, led by the UN-ECE/FAO in Geneva. The data contained in TBFRA are intended for policy makers, international organizations, NGOs, forest industries, ecologists, environmentalists and researchers both inside and outside the forest sector. The media will find these statistics to be an objective and valuable reference source when discussing any aspect of forests. A paper version is available now from the UN Sales Section and a CD-ROM version with the information in a relational database is being prepared. A website is under development on the Timber Committee site (address below).

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