



Food and Agriculture  
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**UNECE**

**ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry  
and FAO European Forestry Commission**

**70 years working together  
in the service of forests and people**



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Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
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ECE/TIM/DP/67

Forestry and Timber Section, Geneva, Switzerland

GENEVA TIMBER AND FOREST DISCUSSION PAPER 67

**ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry  
and  
FAO European Forestry Commission:**

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forests and people**



**UNITED NATIONS**  
New York and Geneva, 2017

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## ABSTRACT

The ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission emerged from the International Timber Conference held in 1947 as the key elements of the United Nations tasked with working on matters related to the forest sector in Europe. During their first 70 years of joint activity, the Committee and the Commission have contributed to post war reconstruction, to the expansion of the forest sector, to meeting the major challenges of the sector and to promoting and monitoring sustainable forest management. This paper chronicles the history of the Committee and the Commission's work, in the context of the 2017 celebrations of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ECE and to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fruitful cooperation of ECE and FAO on forests in the region.

ECE/TIM/DP/67
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UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATION
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Sales No.: E.17.II.E.21 ISBN: 978-92-1-117142-6 e-ISBN: 978-92-1-362800-3
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ISSN: 1020-7228
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United Nations publication issued by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

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## Foreword

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, forestlands in Europe were critically depleted, a result of centuries of conversion to agricultural land and overexploitation for the provision of wood for subsistence-based heat, shelter and a small but growing industrial sector. The birth of modern forestry occurred during this same period; forest managers realized that a day-to-day approach for managing forests did not work for a crop that takes about 70 years between planting a seedling to harvesting a mature tree.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, improved forest practices were sporadically implemented, forestlands increased somewhat and industrialization enabled more and enhanced ways of processing trees into useable and new products. Then came World War I and later World War II which, in addition to causing enormous human suffering, devastated buildings and infrastructure and depleted forests across Europe.

To facilitate the much needed reconstruction in Europe in the post-war period, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was established in 1947. The Second Annual Conference of FAO, held at Copenhagen in September 1946, recommended that an international conference should examine the urgent problem of lumber supplies in Europe. Lumber was essential for the reconstruction of countries devastated by the war, and there were clear indications that the timber shortage might produce a major social, economic, and political crisis.

Accordingly, in January of that year the Director-General of FAO joined with the former Government of Czechoslovakia in inviting to an International Timber Conference all countries of Europe and the Near East and certain interested nations of North and South America, together with appropriate international organizations.

The Division of Forestry and Forest Products of FAO worked with the Timber Subcommittee of the Emergency Economic Committee for Europe to prepare the conference. The agenda confronting the Conference was considerably large, covering short-term problems, long-term problems, and further steps.

The Conference agreed on the establishment of the ECE Timber Committee (now the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry) and the FAO European Forestry Commission, which were established by their respective governing bodies. These two European intergovernmental bodies were tasked with mobilizing wood for the

post war reconstruction and to coordinate and support national efforts to improve the state of forests in Europe, which included representation and cooperation from other sub-regions such as North America and the former Soviet Union.

This publication chronicles the 70 years of fruitful cooperation between the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission, both initiated with the aforementioned task of mobilizing wood for Europe's reconstruction and to assist in correcting centuries of misuse of forestlands. From this simple and purposeful aim, the cooperation has evolved into the sustainable management of forests and ensuring the provision of many other goods and services provided by forests.

Much of the work by the Committee and Commission now addresses forest ecosystem services including: the provision of clean air and water, challenges such as those related to climate change and the loss of biodiversity; and, ensuring the sustainability of communities through green economic development. Through, this report you will become aware of the long and impressive list of accomplishments that 70 years of cooperation has produced. However, 70 years as measured against the lifecycle of a forest is fleeting; decisions taken today will be shaping forests 70 years from now and well beyond our lifetimes. We have a great responsibility to ensure that our children and grandchildren will still be able to enjoy abundant and healthy forests and benefit from the goods and services that they provide.



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Chair

United Nations  
Economic Commission for Europe  
Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry



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European Forestry Commission

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## Executive Summary

### Background and objectives

The ECE Region<sup>1</sup> (hereafter the region) now contains about half the world's forests and provides 1.2 billion m<sup>3</sup> of wood, on a sustainable basis. Since the end of the Second World War, international cooperation in this region on forests and timber has been jointly led by the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (known over most of the period as the Timber Committee) and the FAO European Forestry Commission. This paper is intended to record the history of the Committee and the Commission's work, in the context of the celebrations of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ECE and to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fruitful cooperation of ECE and FAO on forests in the region.

### Post-war reconstruction

The Second World War caused immense destruction all over Europe, to people, cities, and forests. The first task of ECE was to coordinate the reconstruction effort in Europe in many different areas such as buildings, energy, industry, forests, etc. while FAO addressed issues of food, agriculture and forests, in Europe and globally. Timber was crucial for construction, and energy, but the forests had been heavily overcut and production and trade were at a standstill. The ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission emerged from the International Timber Conference held in 1947 in Mariánské Lázně in the former Czechoslovakia. They worked together to mobilise wood for post-war reconstruction, while reducing harvests from the predatory war-time level, by putting in place improved information on forests, trade and markets, and setting up market coordination mechanisms.

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<sup>1</sup> The ECE, which is also referred to as the UNECE (encompassing Europe, North America, the Caucuses, central Asia and the Russian Federation), is made up of the following 56 member states: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan.





*Charcoal Kiln, Austria 1947 (Austrian Federal Centre for Forests)*

### **The first European timber trends study**

In 1953, the joint secretariat of the two bodies carried out the first European timber trends study, an ambitious and original analysis of the outlook for the sector, based on the experience and improved information of the founding years. It analysed potential demand for wood, as well as the capacity of Europe's forests to supply wood. It forecasted rising demand and a growing timber shortage, and it called for a "dynamic forest policy"<sup>2</sup>. This study created the framework for much of the activities over the coming decades.

### **Continuing activities**

The main pillars of the Committee and Commission's activities, from the 1950s to the present, have been: the collection and publication of the best available statistics on forests, wood production and trade; the exchange of information on forest working techniques and training of forest workers; periodic surveys of the long term outlook on forests; and technical work on the rational use of wood (all under the umbrella of sustainable forest management). In addition, the Committee and the Commission reviewed forest product markets and shared experiences on forest and forest sector policy. This paper contains detailed information on major aspects of the Committee and the Commission's activities: the market reviews, policy work, the outlook studies, the Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire, the work on forest working techniques, the forest resources assessments and other forest studies.

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<sup>2</sup> See page 20 for an explanation on the meaning of "dynamic forest policy".

## **Emerging issues: energy, environment, forest damage, monitoring sustainable forest management, the green economy**

From the 1970s, the Committee and the Commission analysed and addressed policy development on the emerging issues of energy, environmental conservation and forest damage. In the 1990s, they made a significant contribution to the international effort to define and monitor sustainable forest management, notably through cooperation with criteria and indicators processes, as well as locating and matching existing information to the indicator sets. In 2013, a joint session of the Committee and the Commission approved the Rovaniemi Action Plan on the forest sector and the green economy, a voluntary and participatory approach to support the forest sector's transition to a green economy. Currently, the Committee and Commission seek to integrate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into the forest sector in the region.



*ECE Timber Committee 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary session, Geneva 1967 (United Nations)*

### **The next 70 years**

The paper concludes that it is safe to say that an open and pragmatic, flexible and evidence-based approach, addressing the complexity of sustainable forest management, based on partnerships and reaching out to other sectors, will serve the Committee and Commission, as well as the forest sector of the region, as well in the future, as it has in the past.





## Introduction

In 2017, ECE and FAO celebrate seventy years of cooperation on forests in the region. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is also celebrating its seventieth anniversary. This paper presents the official historical records of the cooperation between one of the oldest ECE committees, the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI), known through most of the period as the Timber Committee, and the FAO European Forestry Commission, which also emerged from the Mariánské Lázně international timber conference. The Committee and the Commission have an Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW), and work closely together, notably through a joint office in Geneva.

Over the seven decades, the Committee and the Commission have adapted to changing circumstances and needs. Starting at the beginning with a focus on urgent post war reconstruction, leading the analysis of the sector's long term outlook, as an advocate of a "dynamic forest policy", and as a forum for exchange of experience and information. Finally, evolving to today's emphasis on monitoring and advocating sustainable forest management and the forest sector's contribution to the emerging green economy.

## Forests and forest industries of the region in the present day<sup>3</sup>

The region covered by the partnership contains about half of the world's forests, a total of 1.9 billion ha, of which nearly half are in Russia and nearly 40% in North America. In Russia, Canada and the western USA, most forests are natural: elsewhere in the region, they are mostly semi-natural or planted forests. Boreal forests dominate in Canada, Russia, the Nordic countries and Alaska, while the rest of the region has a wide variety of temperate forests. In a few countries, forests cover more than 60% of the land, with a regional average forest cover of 41%. However, some areas of central Asia, which are also in the region, have severe problems linked to the lack of forest cover. On average, there are 1.5 ha of forest for every inhabitant in the region, although this varies widely, from negligible to 6.2 ha/inhabitant in Russia. Forest area is stable or expanding almost everywhere in the region, partly because of natural expansion onto former agricultural land and

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<sup>3</sup> Data in this section is taken from a recent overview prepared for the UN Forum on Forests (ECE/FAO, 2015). Readers are invited to consult this study for more information, notably as regards the concepts and definitions used, and the limitations of the analysis.

partly because of planting programmes. Forests are lost every year, mostly to urban and transport infrastructure, but in our region, the area lost by forest is smaller than the area gained.



*Forest and other wooded land in percent of land area, 2015 (ECE/FAO, 2015)*

More than 1.2 billion m<sup>3</sup> of wood are harvested from the region's forests. Harvest is below net annual increment, in those countries for which increment data are available. The forest sector (including wood processing and paper industries) accounts for about 0.76% of GDP (although this share is falling, as other sectors expand faster), and employs nearly 5 million people. Russia, North America and Western Europe are all net exporters of wood and forest products in value terms, but central Asian countries are net importers.

Over 130 million ha of forest are designated for conservation of biodiversity, about 7% of the total, and this area is increasing. In addition, these conservation forests have many other economic, social and environmental functions.

About 80% of the region's forests are under forest management plans or equivalent, and between 2006 and 2013, the area of forests certified as sustainably managed in the ECE region expanded by 45%. Almost all ECE member States are members of one or more regional processes for sustainable forest management. Taken together, these trends indicate that there are very significant areas of sustainably managed forest in the region, and that this share has been growing over the past two decades – and that there is a stronger ability and determination to demonstrate this trend. Likewise there is evidence that the share of



consumption of forest products from sustainably managed forests has increased significantly over the last decade.

## European forests and timber trade before World War II and in the immediate post war period

### The context: recession, war and emerging international cooperation

In some European countries deforestation trends had been reversed by the end of the nineteenth century. During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, forests started to expand in Europe as protective laws and regulations were put in place. Wood was being replaced by coal as the primary energy source for industry and transport, but remained a vital strategic material, mainly for housing, but also for pit-props and railway sleepers, with the latter two at the core of the new industrial society (and of the new industrial war economy). Many houses were still heated by wood stoves, especially in rural areas. Like all wars, the First World War was disastrous for forests, with serious overcutting<sup>4</sup>, as well as physical damage to forests in war zones. During the 1920s and 1930s, despite the economic recession, forest and wood consumption recovered, and international trade expanded. International cooperation made its appearance in the forest sector.

The *Comité International du Bois* (CIB) was established in September 1932, and led by Egon Glesinger, who was later to become the first Director of the ECE/FAO Office in Geneva. The CIB brought together sawnwood exporters from the Nordic countries and central Europe, with sawnwood importers from France, the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK. The CIB organised regular meetings, collected statistics, coordinated research on wood utilization, drew up agreements and promoted cooperation between wood producers and consumers (Glesinger, 1942).

### Mobilising timber for the reconstruction of Europe

The forest damage during the Second World War was even worse than that of the First World War, with longer and more widespread conflict, and more intense destruction of cities. Energy needs were acute, for military and civilian uses alike, and wood was often the only available solution. Furthermore, those countries without access to oil, and Germany in particular, turned to wood-based fuels for many transport uses (for instance wood gas generators on trucks).

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<sup>4</sup> Among many other pressures, the system of trenches was a massive user of wood.

Thus, as the war ended, forests had been heavily overexploited for many years, and there was an urgent need for wood to rebuild the cities and towns of Europe. Wood, in the shape of pit-props, was also essential to produce coal, the major fuel of the time. In addition, the physical and social infrastructure of wood production was also heavily damaged: working capital, labour and transport were all major bottlenecks.

However, well before the end of the war, the Allies had been putting in place institutions for the reconstruction of Europe, including the Emergency Economic Committee for Europe (EECE), the precursor of ECE. The EECE had a Timber Sub-committee which addressed the multiple challenges of mobilising timber to rebuild the devastated cities and infrastructure of Europe. The “timber deficit” was estimated in 1947 at 30% (e.g. Europe could only meet 70% of its need): the shortages were managed by the Sub-committee which assigned scarce supplies, matching supply and demand by pooling information, and setting priorities at the sessions which took place two or more times a year.

Finance was a major bottleneck for those countries which still had forests in a state to supply timber, as were labour, fuel and equipment. The Timber Sub-committee addressed all these issues, working in cooperation with EECE Sub-committees on industry and materials and on housing as well as the European Coal Organisation (later the ECE Coal Committee), financial institutions (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development - the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), and the newly founded FAO, initially based in Washington. The expertise and networks of the pre-war CIB were revived, under the leadership of Egon Glesinger.



*Forest planting day in the Tapa forest district, Estonia 1950 (RMK Sagadi Forest Centre)*

### ***Egon Glesinger, first leader of the secretariat***

Egon Glesinger was born in 1907 in Cesky-Tesin. His family owned forests in central Europe but he studied law and international affairs. When the *Comité International du Bois* (CIB) was founded, he became its first Secretary General, promoting cooperation between exporters and importers in the Nordic countries, central



Europe and north-west Europe. The CIB opposed the Nazi regime's efforts to control the forest resources of Eastern Europe, and after the *Anschluss*, Glesinger had to flee, first from Vienna, then Europe, pursued by the Gestapo (Glesinger, 1942). In exile in the United States, he participated actively in discussions on post-war forest institutions, being instrumental in ensuring that FAO cover forest questions (initially excluded from the mandate of the organisation), taking the discussion up to the level of Franklin D. Roosevelt. He developed a personal vision of a "coming age of wood",

drawing attention to wood's potential as a biofuel and raw material for chemical products, as well as a raw material for panels based on wood residues. As a staff member of the newly formed FAO, he led the secretariat of the Timber Subcommittee of EECE, whose methods were quite similar to those of the pre-war CIB. Subsequently, he then led the Timber Committee of ECE, under Gunnar Myrdal, Executive Secretary of the ECE and Glesinger's friend (Myrdal, 1979). He was also the driving force behind the first timber trends study (ECE/FAO, 1953), and called for a "dynamic forest policy". He later became the second Director of the FAO Forestry and Forest Products Division, from 1959 to 1963, and was Assistant Director-General in charge of the Department of Public Relations and Legal Affairs when he retired from FAO in 1969. He died in 1979 in Rome.

On Glesinger, Gunnar Myrdal wrote "He was always deeply honest in his strivings, which never were directed toward his own personal advantage but always toward a general purpose. In that sense he remained intellectually and emotionally an aristocrat, who could afford to be unselfish" (Myrdal, 1979).





## The International Timber Conference, and the foundation of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission

It soon became apparent that it was necessary to take stock of the whole situation of forests and timber in post-war Europe, both with respect to future demand for timber and the capacity of European forests to supply the necessary wood. New institutions would also be needed to improve cooperation and promote mobilisation of wood, on a sustainable basis, after the predatory war time levels of harvest. The ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission emerged from the International Timber Conference held in 1947 in Mariánské Lázně in the former Czechoslovakia. They worked together to mobilise wood for post-war reconstruction, while reducing harvests from the predatory war-time level, by improving information on forests, trade and markets, and setting up market coordination mechanisms.



*International Timber Conference, Mariánské Lázně 1947 (FAO)*

At the Conference “agreement was reached regarding the allocation of the urgent tasks confronting the two organizations concerned, ECE and FAO. FAO was given the task of halting the drastic overcutting of forests as soon as possible, while ECE was to concern itself with helping forest industries to re-equip themselves and to raise production, and also to ensure that such supplies as were available, particularly of sawn softwood and pit-props, were directed to the areas where they were most needed” (Unasylyva, 1947) (FAO, 1967).



The report of the International Timber Conference laid out the broad lines which would be followed in the coming decades by the forest sector: prevention of overcutting, investment in silviculture and wood mobilisation, rational and economic use of wood, a skilled and healthy work force, transparent markets and greater international trade flows; all based on improved information, better research, rational decision making and international cooperation (Unasylva, 1947). These principles, articulated in 1947, contained many of the elements of sustainable forest management, as conceived in the twenty-first century, with the significant absence of biodiversity concerns and the other non-wood functions of the forest, which were not fully appreciated at the time.

## **The first years of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission**

The first session of the ECE Timber Sub-committee<sup>5</sup> took place in October 1947, and addressed the urgent timber shortage, on the basis of shared information, and hardnosed bargaining. The Executive Secretary of ECE, Gunnar Myrdal, made an urgent plea to delegations not to “play safe” by waiting for market adjustment at lower levels, as that would mean “fewer houses and prolonged distress for thousands of Europeans”, but to “achieve statesmanship”, by setting up cooperation between exporters and importers of timber, on prices and currency arrangements (the latter a major bottleneck at the time) (ECE, 1947).

The FAO European Forestry Commission held its first session<sup>6</sup> in July 1948 (FAO, 2017). It focused on wood supply of the post-war crisis, notably bringing together national estimates/commitments of wood supply, as well as generating recommendations on silviculture, afforestation, harvesting techniques and preventing overcutting. Many of the main elements of today’s “sustainable forest management” were addressed by the Commission in its early meetings (although the term was not used). The Commission’s wood supply estimates were analysed with the Committee’s market and trade estimates to generate a comprehensive picture of the emerging situation.

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<sup>5</sup> By its second session, the Sub-committee had become a full Committee

<sup>6</sup> Until 1953, the Commission’s formal title was FAO European Commission on Forestry and Forest Products.



*Forest inventory equipment, Austria 1952 (Herbert Hackl, Austrian Federal Centre for Forests)*

Over the next 3-4 years, the Committee met regularly, twice per year. The quarterly bulletin of timber statistics started to appear in June 1948, as statistics and market information improved. The worst bottlenecks faded, as the European economies recovered, thanks to the efforts of ECE and many other bodies and, later, of the Marshall Plan. The USSR and other eastern European countries participated actively in the Committee's work, as did Canada and the USA, despite the intensification of the Cold War. All these countries were major players on timber markets, and ECE was one of the few places where pragmatic discussions of supply and demand on the timber market were possible. Indeed, the regular Committee sessions were the major source of information on trade and markets in Europe, which at the time accounted for most of the world's trade.



*Data processing forest inventory, Austria 1952 (Austrian Federal Centre for Forests)*

At the same time, the Commission was active in collecting information on European forests, using questionnaires and country visits to prepare the first serious international overview of the post war situation, and to discover the extent of wartime damage. The sessions of the Commission focused on national estimates of wood supply and reports on forest policy in the member countries (at a time when even basic information was hard to obtain from a reliable and up-to-date source). Delegations to the Commission were usually at a very high level (e.g. heads of ministerial forestry departments or leaders of national forest services): the Commission was one of the few places at the time for informal contact between senior officials, and the exchange of ideas on topics of common interest.

The Committee and the Commission cooperated closely from the beginning, while each kept its own identity and specific formal mandate and institutional framework. The modalities of cooperation developed over the early years have mostly continued over the whole 70 year period. In summary, these are:

- A subsidiary body<sup>7</sup>, notably the ECE/FAO Joint Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics, In addition, the Commission has the Silva Mediterranea (the Working Party on Mediterranean forestry issues) which also reports to the Near East and African Forestry Commissions and the Working Party on Management of Mountain Watersheds, which reports to the Commission only, even though the scope of its activities has widened recently to other regions.
- The ECE Teams of Specialists, which, although formally ECE bodies, provide advice to both bodies for the implementation of the IPoW
- Statistical enquiries and publications, notably on production and trade, and the forest resource. Cooperation was originally between the Committee and the Commission only, but has expanded to other organisations, notably in the context of the Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (FAO, ECE, Eurostat, ITTO), and the Collaborative Forest Resource Questionnaire, in the context of the FAO Global Forest Resource Assessment.
- Timber trends studies/forest sector outlook studies, bringing together expertise, funds and networks from both sides, to address issues of crucial interest to both, in a broad perspective
- Seminars, workshops and publications

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<sup>7</sup> The titles given are those used over most of the period: the formal titles and the scope of the bodies were adapted to address topical issues.

- Joint sessions, of which there have been 13 over the 70 years<sup>8</sup>,
- A joint office, with staff of both organisations working together. This has made it possible to avoid duplication, combine resources and to work with the technical services of both ECE and the FAO Forestry Department.

Given the complex interaction of the issues, and the close cooperation between the Committee and the Commission, it is difficult to define precisely the boundaries between the activities of the two bodies. At the first session of the Commission, Marcel Leloup, Director of the FAO Forest and Forest Products Division (predecessor of today's FAO Forestry Department) addressed the "duties and responsibilities" of the Commission. He said the "Commission would be primarily concerned with medium and long term problems but would operate in close relationship with the ECE Timber Committee, which are concerned with matters of immediate urgency. The principal problem facing the Commission was to plan for the self-sufficiency of the continent of Europe in the long term as regards its timber requirements" (FAO, 1948). In later years, the distinction between short term and medium/long term issues was replaced by reference to "upstream" (forest) issues and "downstream" (forest industries, trade and markets) issues, but here too, it has proved difficult to make meaningful distinctions, given the multiple interactions. Indeed the ability to address markets, consumption, trade and recycling in the same framework as forest management and ecosystem services has been a comparative advantage for the Committee and the Commission, as many forest related bodies have little downstream expertise. Since the mid-1990s, an integrated programme of work has set out all the activities of both bodies in a coherent framework: both bodies review and approve all parts of the integrated programme, which efficiently eliminates duplication of activities, streamlines processes and reduces the burden on countries. No specific activity is attributed to one body or another, as work is undertaken in full partnership. The IPoW is supported on behalf of ECE by a COFFI programme of work, which, as for other ECE Committees, is approved on a biannual basis by the ECE Executive Committee.

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<sup>8</sup> 1952, 1953, 1968, 1975, 1987, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2011, 2013, 2015





## The work of the Committee and the Commission during the Cold War

The early 1950s saw a slowdown in reconstruction activity, as well as the bubble associated with the Korean War. The forest sector was split between those who saw an expansion of markets in the future, leading to higher prices and timber shortages, and those who foresaw a collapse of demand leading to permanent surpluses of timber.

In 1952, the joint secretariat, on its own initiative, started a major study of the outlook for the sector. It brought together the data on production and trade of major forest products, on harvests and potential cut, from 1913 to 1950 (with gaps for the two wars) (ECE/FAO, 1953), and looked in some detail into how timber was used, and the trends in each market<sup>9</sup>. It tried to identify long term trends, but also constructed a vision of future economic growth and timber demand, which was considerably more optimistic than that of most experts at the time. Forest and timber experts worked together with leading economists in the ECE secretariat to produce a draft which was reviewed at a joint session of the Committee and the Commission, revised and then published in 1953.



*Sawmill, Upper Austria 1957 (Austrian Federal Centre for Forests)*

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<sup>9</sup> Housing and non-residential construction, rural uses, mining, transport and communications, packaging, printing, textiles.



*Felling spruce trees, Lower Austria 1962 (Ottokar Baschny, Austrian Federal Centre for Forests)*

The European timber trends study, abbreviated to ETTS I<sup>10</sup>, foresaw rising demand for wood in a prosperous Europe (+30% in ten years in the highest scenario), and increased imports from other regions, notably the USSR. However, a slight reduction in European wood production was foreseen, as foresters struggled to repair the war time damage, and bring harvests back down to a sustainable level, leading to an expected “timber shortage” in 1960. The study advocated a “dynamic forest policy” to address these issues and prevent the timber shortage, including, in the short term, improved access to remote forests, increased thinnings<sup>11</sup> to boost productivity and provide small-sized wood, more accurate and comprehensive forest inventories and safer and more productive forest working techniques, as well as reducing wood losses during harvest, diverting fuelwood to the emerging pulp and panel industries, and using more sawmilling waste. In the longer term, the “dynamic forest policy” called for significant afforestation and reforestation, to recover the pre-war forest area by 1975.

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<sup>10</sup> European timber trends study, available at <https://www.unece.org/forests/publications.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Thinning is a process in forestry in which trees are selectively removed in order to enlarge space between trees. Thinning helps to increase the resistance to environmental stress or the health and growth of the remaining trees.



*ECE Timber Committee 24th session, Geneva 1966 (United Nations)*

ETTS I sparked a vigorous debate in forestry circles: it was criticised by many as optimistic; but over time, appeared to have underestimated the rate of growth in the 1950s and 1960s. The second timber trends study, ETTS II, recorded the fact that growth in wood supply and demand had been higher than forecasted by ETTS I (ECE/FAO, 1964). ETTS I strongly influenced the activities of the Committee and the Commission over the next decades.



*Symposium on the consumption of wood-based panel products, 1968 (United Nations)*

For a long period, ECE/FAO occupied a privileged position on the international forest/timber scene, as it was based on a partnership of two stable official organisations with a tradition of pragmatic cooperation, one (ECE) with good links to other parts of the economy, and the other (FAO) with strong links to forestry in other regions, as well as agriculture worldwide. Furthermore, no possibly competing international organisation had a strong mandate on forests and

timber<sup>12</sup>, and one major player on timber markets, the USSR, had few other ways of participating in international work during the Cold War. At the time, neither the private sector nor civil society were strongly organised on forest and timber issues. Both the ECE and FAO focused on sustainable timber supply and on the forest industries, which were the main policy concerns at the time.



*Forest Work, Poland 1968 (United Nations)*

## **Economic expansion, followed by limits to growth: energy, the environment and forest damage in the 1970s and 1980s**

The rapid economic expansion which had started with post-war reconstruction was brutally slowed with the so-called oil shock of 1973, which came after a rise in awareness of the “limits to growth”<sup>13</sup>. After the temporary halt in GDP growth, and the shocking (at the time) rise in energy prices, as well as growing awareness of biodiversity loss and tropical deforestation, the attention of the Committee and the

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<sup>12</sup> In particular the Treaty of Rome, which founded the EU, does not mention forests, so there was no competition between Geneva and Brussels, as occurred in several other areas, at least until the links between forests and other areas, such as environment and trade, where the EU does have a mandate, became clearer.

<sup>13</sup> The title of a very influential study by the Club of Rome, published in 1972.

Commission turned to new issues, while maintaining their close monitoring of markets, wood supply and forest sector policy.

In 1975, a major joint symposium addressed all aspects of “Forests, wood and their role in the environment”. A message approved by the symposium addressed these complex issues, and stated that “in this time of accelerating change, the principle of continuity of forests, as a constant resource of renewable and highly versatile raw material, and as an essential part of the total ecosystem, must be firmly established”. The symposium also pointed out in its report that “to fulfil their role of service to society, forestry and the forest industries need public understanding of the problems and implications of the policies which they are asked to implement” (ECE/FAO, 1976). From the mid-1970s, the balance in the approach of the Committee and the Commission changed significantly from the post-war emphasis on wood supply to a more holistic approach, focused on forest policy and sustainability.

The third timber trends study (ETTS III) (ECE/FAO, 1976) projected slower growth than in the past and analysed the potential of recovered paper and sawmilling residues. It acknowledged the “constraints” on wood supply arising from the multi-functional nature of forests and the management choices to be made by society to maintain and ensure wood supply, biodiversity conservation and recreation.



*Counting annual rings, Austria 1979 (Herbert Haberl, Austrian Federal Centre for Forests)*

In 1978, a seminar on “the energy aspects of the forest industries” was one of the first to address the consequences for the forest sector of the oil shock of the mid



1970s and the resulting rise in energy prices. It made the first estimates of the share of wood-based energy in the industries and outside them, and established that energy remained a major use for wood all over the region, as well as a competitive advantage for forest products in a high energy cost era. In fact, the oil price quickly fell to pre-1973 levels, reducing the emphasis on wood energy, but the main policy conclusions were to return to prominence when the oil price rose again in later decades.



*Professional competition of forest workers, Pärnu forest 1979 (RMK Sagadi Forest Centre, Estonia)*

In 1979, a symposium on the utilization of tropical timber was seen as a contribution to the growing attention to tropical wood trade and utilization and assistance to developing countries in establishing their industries and exports. The emphasis on developing markets for tropical timber can be seen as a precursor to the establishment of the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO), some of whose market focused activities were based on the Timber Committee's experience.

Also in 1979, a joint symposium on the effects of air-borne pollution on vegetation brought forest issues into the public eye, especially in central Europe. In some areas, significant damage to forests was highly visible, and attributed both to airborne pollution, short and long range, and to silvicultural errors (choice of species not adapted to the sites). In the following years, the Committee and the

Commission monitored the situation with regard to forest damage, and the consequences for markets and the long term outlook. Elsewhere in ECE, the ground-breaking Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution was being negotiated (signed in 1979, came into force in 1983). One of the Convention's subsidiary bodies, the International Co-operative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests, has collected and analysed data on this damage, which is also incorporated into the ECE/FAO monitoring. In 1986, ETTS IV examined the consequences of forest damage, including that attributed to air pollution, and the possible implications for wood supply and forest products markets (ECE/FAO, 1986).



*Mr. Ganiev with the all-union (USSR) forest magazine "Лесное хозяйство",  
Nukus State Forestry in Karakalpakstan 1987 (Uzbekistan)*





## Sustainable forest management: the 1990s

Around 1990, forests worldwide became the object of widespread public concern, which centred on tropical deforestation as well as on loss of biodiversity, leading to high profile conflicts between different parts of society. At the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992, the so-called “Forest Principles” were approved. However, this outcome was a disappointment to many who wanted more ambitious and formal commitments, at the same level as the three “Rio conventions” on climate change, biodiversity and desertification. An intergovernmental process in the UN framework was set up, which has now become the UN Forum on Forests (United Nations), as well as private, market-based systems to certify that wood was from sustainably managed forests. There was a wide-ranging and intense discussion about what type of forest management was fully sustainable, what should be the relative importance of the environmental, social and economic functions of the forest, and how to achieve that balance – as well as how to measure progress towards sustainability. Agencies which were focused on “other” areas (i.e. not centred on forest issues), notably environment, biodiversity and climate change, developed policies and made commitments which directly affected forests, increasing significantly the complexity of policy making for the forest sector.

At the regional level, there were two processes which moved to define sustainable forest management and draw up sets of criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management: the Montréal Process, covering temperate and boreal forest outside Europe, but including three members of ECE (Canada, Russia and USA), and the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest in Europe (later renamed Forest Europe). The Ministerial Conferences made a number of high level commitments on sustainable forest management.

The Committee and the Commission cooperated with Forest Europe and the Montréal Process in many ways. The forest resource assessment process, which had been at the core of ECE/FAO activities since the 1950s, was adapted to make it compatible with the agreed sets of criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management. In 2000, the main forest inventory output prepared by ECE/FAO (ECE/FAO, 2000) widened its scope to include, in addition to the traditional wood and land-related parameters, new, policy relevant topics, including: carbon flows, biodiversity and environmental protection, forest condition and socio-economic functions. In this way it mirrored both the Montréal process and the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) sets of criteria and

indicators. At the European level, successive editions of *The State of Europe's Forests*, from 2003 to 2011, prepared jointly by ECE/FAO and the Forest Europe Liaison Units, were structured explicitly according to the pan-European indicator set, and were presented to the ministerial conferences. This cooperation improved data quality, harmonised data sets and reduced the reporting burden on countries, as well as raising the visibility of the work.

Over the 1990s, the scope of the core outputs of the programme steadily expanded to include all normative aspects of sustainable forest management in the region, and to address the complex interactions with other sectors. ECE/FAO cooperated with the International Energy Agency and other partners to carry out the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry, which has structured and stabilised how the many sources and uses of wood derived energy are recorded. The outlook studies, both for Europe (ECE/FAO, 2011) and for North America (ECE/FAO, 2012) addressed issues of climate change, renewable energy and the trade-offs between biodiversity conservation and wood supply. A recent study (ECE/FAO, 2015) used regular ECE/FAO data and analysis to monitor to what extent the countries of the ECE region are moving towards the four Global Objectives on Forests agreed by the UN Forum on Forests.



*Forestry machine SyncroFalk 4 t, Austria 2013 (Wolfgang Simlinger, Austrian Federal Forests)*



## The forest sector and the green economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

In 2015, ECE and FAO published the study on 'Forests in the ECE region', a snapshot on the forests of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the region, identifying main trends and challenges. While sustainable forest management is becoming a widely known concept and practice, concerns remain. In the region, there are local or regional occurrences of forest degradation from a variety of causes including fire, illegal logging, insects and storms, but also fragmentation around urban areas, mining, radiation, land mines and other damage from war and conflict.



*Afforestation, Tyrol Austria 2016 (Wolfgang Simlinger, Austrian Federal Forests)*

While there has probably been increased access to forests for recreation, as more people in urban areas use forests, forest fragmentation and degradation of forest health may be reducing the social benefits available in some areas. Safety and health of forest workers are also a cause for concern.

The area of protected forests has increased and supply of environmental benefits is increasingly considered in management strategies. Conservation credit exchanges and payment for ecosystem services are discussed a lot, but are still rare in practice. There is continuing pressure on forest habitats. Forest fragmentation, degradation and the conversion of primary forests to secondary or plantation forests will also reduce the supply of environmental benefits, particularly with regard to the conservation of native biodiversity. The area of forests protected for biodiversity has increased continually during the last 20 years period in the whole

region, to about 12% in 2015. In some countries the international commitments on biodiversity, notably the Aichi targets, are being approached.

As also highlighted in the European Forest Sector Outlook Study of 2011, forest ecosystems sequester carbon from the atmosphere and store it over long periods in the forest ecosystem and, after harvest, in forest products. In addition, the use of products and energy from sustainably managed forests to substitute for non-renewable materials and energy sources help mitigate climate change. There is potential to develop all these approaches but there are trade-offs between these strategic objectives and other forest management objectives.

The forest sector's contribution to GDP in the ECE region has fallen in absolute terms, and its share in the region's economy has declined from 1.2% in 2000 to 0.8% in 2011. Employment in the forest sector has fallen as well, notably because of higher labour productivity. The recession which started in 2008 also increased unemployment and economic hardship in forest dependent communities and regions, with many regions and communities not fully recovered to pre-recession levels.

The Committee and the Commission face an important challenge of having to address and balance the different challenges of forests in the region in a balanced manner, taking into account their multi-functionality and trade-offs.



*Bioenergy Capacity Building Workshop, Hungary 2016 (ECE/FAO)*

In line with the multi-functionality of forests and their challenges, in recent years, the focus has shifted to the so-called “green economy”, which generally includes the following characteristics (according to the UNEP definition<sup>14</sup>): improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. Typically, the green economy is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. There are many complementarities with the concepts of sustainable development and sustainable forest management, already addressed

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<sup>14</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, Green Economy Initiative, 2011

by the ECE/FAO Integrated Programme of Work. Considering that the forest sector already had many “green economy” characteristics and the potential to take a lead in this area, the Committee and Commission set in motion a participatory process to draw up the Rovaniemi Action Plan on the Forest Sector in a Green Economy (ECE/FAO, 2014). The Action Plan, which is voluntary, was approved by a joint session of the Committee and the Commission in 2013, and provides a framework for action, by countries, international organisations, the private sector and civil society. It contains more than a hundred “possible actions” organised under five “pillars”: sustainable production and consumption of forest products, the low carbon forest sector, decent green jobs in the forest sector, long term provision of forest ecosystem services, and finally policy development and monitoring of the forest sector in relation to a green economy.



*Workshop: Criteria and indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, Kyrgyzstan 2017 (ECE/FAO)*

## **The Committee and the Commission face the next 70 years**

During their first 70 years of activity, the Committee and the Commission have contributed to post war reconstruction, to the expansion of the forest sector, to meeting the major challenges of the sector and to promoting and monitoring sustainable forest management. Their approach has been pragmatic, flexible and consensual, based on improved information, exchange of experience, and open, fact-based dialogue between public bodies, the private sector and civil society. Expertise from many fields has made major contributions. There has also been strong continuity of structures, methods and outputs, even though this has occasionally hampered rapid adaptation to changing conditions. Partnerships have

been central, starting with the founding partnership between ECE and FAO. The joint activities of the Committee and the Commission, now formalised in the Integrated Programme of Work and the work of the joint section have been able to draw on the strengths of both the parent organisations. The Committee and the Commission have established or maintained many other partnerships, for instance with the International Labour Organization (ILO), EU institutions, the Montréal Process and Forest Europe, as well as a wide range of private sector partners, civil society groups and scientific organisations like the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), the European Forest Institute (EFI) and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA).

Thanks to their analytical activities, and their open discussions, the Committee and the Commission have been quick to identify and react to emerging issues, from the growth of wood based panels in the 1950s to the challenges of forest damage, renewed wood energy demand, need for biodiversity conservation, the emergence of certification, innovation in the forest industry, to the new concepts of climate change and the green economy in the second decade of the twenty-first century. This open and pragmatic approach to emerging issues has been central to the successes of the Committee and the Commission.

What of the next 70 years? This is approximately the time needed for one forest generation, so decisions made today will influence the forests of 2087. The Committee and the Commission will continue to serve the governments, and in so doing improve the quality of life of the peoples of the region, by developing sustainable policies for forest and the forest sector, by providing the best possible information and analysis, as well as by providing a forum for exchange of experiences and cooperation. It is not possible to make forecasts for the ECE region in 2087, as human society changes faster than forests, and even the climate – a factor taken for granted in 1947 – will probably be profoundly modified. However it is safe to say that an open and pragmatic, flexible and evidence-based approach, addressing the complexity of sustainable forest management, based on partnerships and a cross-sectoral approach, will serve the Committee and Commission, and the forest sector of the region, well in the future, as they have in the past.







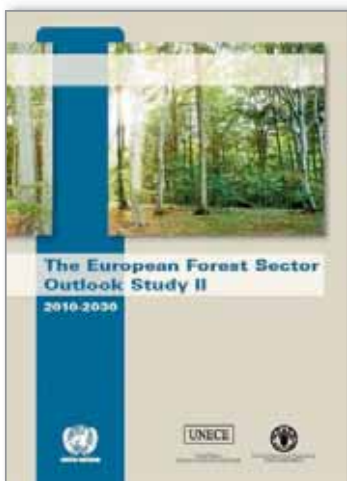
## Selected publications and activities of the ECE/FAO collaboration

### *OUTLOOK STUDIES: following the long term trends, and drawing conclusions for policy*

From the early 1950s to the present day, forest sector outlook studies have been central to ECE/FAO activities. They have identified and analysed structural changes in the sector and explored policy responses to merging issues. Over the decades, the issues have changed, but the studies have all been comprehensive in their scope, and as quantitative as possible in their analysis. They have had a major influence both on the Committee and the Commission's areas of interest.

The main features of each study are very briefly summarised here (the entire series is now available on the website, at <http://www.unece.org/forests/publications/outlook.html>). The first five studies were referred to as "European Timber Trends Studies" (abbreviated to ETTS) and then as European Forest Sector Outlook studies (EFSOS), recognising that the scope was wider than just "timber".

There have also been studies for North America and Russia.



The first study (ECE/FAO, 1953), covering the period 1913-1960, addressed the transition from post-war reconstruction to a period of economic growth and rising demand. It was based on unprecedented data gathering on European forests, especially their potential for harvest, as well as detailed analysis of how timber was used for construction, furniture, railways and mines etc. and the factors determining future growth. It called for (and quantified) a "dynamic forest policy".

The second study (ECE/FAO, 1964), covering the period 1950-1975, demonstrated that events had in fact surpassed the "optimistic" forecasts of the earlier study and prepared new forecasts which addressed in particular the need for rational use of wood and the potential for supply from developing countries.

ETTS III (ECE/FAO, 1976), covering the period 1950-2000, was the first to use formal models for demand, and paid special attention to countries' estimates of their own

forests' potential. It also analysed in more detail the contributions of wood residues, recovered paper and trade with other regions, making a judgement on likely supply from North America, USSR and the tropical regions. In view of expected shortages of small sized wood, it advocated more intensive forest management and improved use of residues and recovered paper.

The fourth timber trends study (ECE/FAO, 1986), covering the period to 2000 and beyond, introduced the so-called "non-wood benefits of the forest", attempting forecasts (not quantified) for these benefits, as well as analysing their influence on wood supply. It also analysed the consequences of forest damage, including that attributed to air pollution, and constructed an outlook for the use of wood for energy, which had previously been assumed to decline to insignificance. It presented a more balanced and flexible future.

ETTS V (ECE/FAO, 1996), covering the period 1990-2020, introduced a number of methodological improvements, notably a range of scenarios. It stressed the importance of "self-regulating mechanisms" in bringing balance to the sector, and projected steady growth in demand and increased harvests, within the limits of sustainable wood supply.

The first "European Forest Sector Outlook Study" (EFSOS) (ECE/FAO, 2005), addressed the outlook after the recovery from the recession due to the transition in many countries from centrally planned economies. It stressed again the importance of recycling and residue use as well as the growing demand for renewable energy from wood, increased forest area, and higher harvests, but still well below the sustainable levels. It also drew attention to the need for a cross-sectoral policy approach, rather than a focus on the forest sector alone.

EFSOS II (ECE/FAO, 2011) focused on seven major challenges for the period to 2030, using several linked models to construct five scenarios, a reference scenario (assuming no major policy change) and four policy scenarios, addressing the consequences of policy changes aimed at maximising biomass carbon, giving priority to biodiversity, promoting wood energy or fostering innovation and competitiveness.

### ***JOINT FOREST SECTOR QUESTIONNAIRE: reducing reporting burden, improving data quality***

A common problem for international statistics arises when organisations with overlapping mandates request the same, or very similar, data from countries, leading to extra work for national correspondents, and often differences between

international data bases. Yet cooperation between organisations presents challenges: harmonisation of definitions and measurement units, coordination of timing and networks, data handling, management of revisions. Underlying these challenges is the question of trust between organisations, as processes can only be streamlined if organisations trust each other to be efficient and transparent, avoiding the temptation to duplicate requests or cut their partners out of certain actions. Credit (as well as blame) must be fairly shared, at all stages.

ECE and FAO cooperated informally from the 1940s to the 1990s on statistics of production and trade of forest products, with ECE taking responsibility for its region and FAO dealing with the rest of the world. However, new players appeared, notably the EU Statistical Office (Eurostat), which was responsible for its member countries, and the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO), which has a global, but not universal, membership, and a rather different mandate and focus. Many countries were members of three or four of the organisations and started to complain about the reporting burden.

As a response to this legitimate concern, the four secretariats (FAO, ECE/FAO, Eurostat, ITTO) formed the Intersecretariat Working Group, which created a cooperative system. The main elements are a common set of definitions, a set of enquiry forms (of which two collect data for all organisations from all countries, and the others address issues of interest to specific organisations or regions), and a coordinated process for data collection, sharing, revision and publication. One organisation is responsible for all contacts with each country (even those parts which are used by other organisations), and corrections/revisions – which occur constantly – are shared between all the organisations to keep the databases consistent.

This system has been applied since the 1990s, and is maintained by detailed, annual consultations between the four secretariats. A similar approach has been developed for forest resources, with the Collaborative Forest Resource Questionnaire, used for the first time for the 2015 Forest Resources Assessment.

### ***FOREST WORKING TECHNIQUES AND THE TRAINING OF FOREST WORKERS: the contribution of the “Joint Committee” and its successors***

Already in 1947, the International Timber Conference had recognised the importance of the work force, and called attention to the importance of security of employment, competitive wage rates, adequate living conditions, technical training facilities and better safety measures (Unasylva, 1947). In 1954, as part of the move

towards a “dynamic forest policy”, the Joint Committee on Forest Working Techniques and Training of Forest Workers was founded under the joint auspices of ECE, FAO and ILO.

At that time, some forest working techniques had changed little over centuries, with wood felling and harvesting mostly by human and animal power. Longer distance transport was mostly by rail or water. The 1950s saw the development of motor-manual harvesting based on the chainsaw and the farm tractor. Later, specially designed equipment, including skidders and multi-function harvesting machines came into use. A large part of the Joint Committee’s efforts in its early years was devoted to helping countries raise productivity and efficiency in wood harvesting.

The Joint Committee worked through study groups, which met regularly and prepared numerous technical reports. The Joint Committee also organised numerous ad hoc seminars and symposia, which gave guidance to countries and made recommendations on what research and development work was needed. In 1978, a more streamlined structure, based on teams of specialists and seminars, was put in place. Activities were divided into three areas: silvicultural operations and general management; wood harvesting and transport; and vocational training, applied ergonomics, safety and health of forest workers. The main emphasis over the first thirty years was on aspects related to wood supply: harvesting, thinning, transport, handling, debarking, cable-cranes for harvesting in mountainous regions, conversion of timber, forest machinery, forest working techniques and technical tables.

Over the following twenty years, the scope broadened, to cover such aspects as: multiple forestry use; information systems; forest damage; forest fires; close to nature forestry; road construction; environmental impact of forest operations; employment of contractors; protective equipment; safety; extension activities for owners of small wood lots; the role of women, and participation in forestry. Workshops were held for the special needs of countries with economies in transition (Peck, et al., 2004).

In the context of structural changes in the parent bodies, the Joint Committee was converted into a Network, with a more flexible structure. Now the work is carried on by the Team of Specialists on Green Jobs – the ECE/FAO/ILO Expert Network, which works on defining, describing and promoting green jobs and has contributed to reinforcing cooperation between forestry training centres.

## **FOREST RESOURCES ASSESSMENTS: from timber supply to multi-aspect analysis of temperate and boreal forests**

Good knowledge of the resource is at the base of forest management, forest policy and international forest cooperation. One of the first things done by the Joint



Section at the foundation of the Committee and the Commission was to bring together the best possible information on growing stock, wartime cutting, and long term potential<sup>15</sup> to assess the state of European forests after the end of hostilities. The first world forest inventory (although data for many countries were completely missing) was published by FAO in 1947. The data for Europe were collected by the ECE/FAO team in Geneva. This work was one of the foundations for the first timber trends study in 1953.

The 1947 inventory was followed by the publication of world inventories for 1953, 1958, and 1963, to all of which the Geneva team contributed. As data quality in the ECE region improved and the focus of global and regional information needs diverged, the ECE/FAO team produced the following publications:

- Forest Resources in the European Region 1970,
- Forest Resources of the ECE Region 1980 (Europe, the USSR, North America) (published in 1985),
- Forest Resources of the Temperate Zones 1990,
- ECE/FAO Forest Resources of Europe, CIS, North America, Australia, Japan and New Zealand” (TBFRA-2000).

In the recent period, ECE/FAO has contributed to work at the global and regional levels, coordinating data collection and analysis with a wide variety of partners. At the global level, led by FAO, after the ground breaking world forest inventories of the post war period, there have been forest resource assessments in 1980, 1988, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015.<sup>16</sup> At the regional level, ECE/FAO has worked with the Liaison Units of the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of

<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, ETTS I provided data on growing stock, increment and cut, but not on forest area. This has since been remedied.

<sup>16</sup> See: <http://www.fao.org/forest-resources-assessment/past-assessments/en/>.



Forests in Europe, now Forest Europe, in surveys of the state of Europe's forests in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015, which were submitted to the ministerial conferences in Vienna, Warsaw, Oslo and Madrid.

Over the 70 years, there have been profound changes:

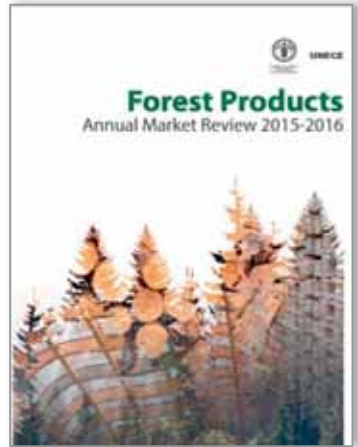
- Data quality has improved, as more countries have carried out objective, sample-based forest inventories, and the methods to adapt national information to standard international definitions are developed and made more precise and explicit.
- The scope of the data sought has expanded widely in accordance with the needs of policy makers. Originally there was a strong focus on sustainability of wood supply, but increasingly information on environmental, socio-economic and biodiversity aspects have been included.
- From around 2000, enquiries have been explicitly structured around the pan-European set of indicators of sustainable forest management, which has reduced the reporting burden, and improved data quality in several areas by signalling clearly which aspects are of policy importance.

Despite the visible improvement, there are still significant discrepancies in the completeness of national reports; the increase of national capacity to collect data remains as one of the priorities for the future. New challenges, at present under consideration, include the assessment of the sustainability of forest management and monitoring progress towards a green economy.

### ***THE MARKET REVIEW: from allocation of scarce supply to communication and market intelligence***

From the very beginning, the review of timber markets has been at the centre of the Committee's work. Yet the nature of this activity has changed fundamentally over the years in response to changes in markets and the international environment. In the immediate post- WWII years, most European economies were still on a war basis, with a strong element of central direction by governments, and this was reflected in the way the Committee worked. Delegations arrived with quantified market forecasts, notably for imports and exports of sawn softwood and these were collated by the secretariat, so that the Committee could see the location and extent of "shortages". The delegations could then negotiate solutions, for instance by modifying trade flows, or increasing production by mobilising finance or labour.

After this period of centrally planned reconstruction, sawnwood markets recovered the characteristics of most commodity markets, with well understood structures of quality and relative price, where the overall balance between supply and demand played a crucial role. The Committee's annual sessions in mid-October played a crucial role in setting the tone for the market, by an exchange of information and analysis in a neutral and objective setting. The representatives of exporter- and importer- professional associations played a critical role, and the agreed forecast tables and "market statement" which emerged from the Committee session were eagerly awaited by professionals all over the world, as the only up-to-date market information available at the time (nowadays market information is more widely available, as timber loses some of its "commodity" characteristics, and markets are more specialised).



During the following decades, there were a number of fundamental changes in the markets: information availability and speed improved as did the transport infrastructure, and new products appeared, while the markets for pulp and paper grew strongly. The intermediaries, which had been necessary before to structure markets and provide finance became less important: end users negotiated directly with producers, fragmenting the markets as sawnwood became less of a commodity product. The Committee market discussion became less important as a market signal, but remained an important meeting place, notably between traders and government officials and as a means to articulate and communicate important messages. The importance of the USSR as an exporter also attracted western experts and traders to one of the few forums where it was possible to discuss directly with Soviet officials. The focus of the sessions and of the Forest Products Annual Market Review, moved towards generating a synthesis of all the markets, and to communicating the latest developments to an audience which had less market expertise than in the past.

At present, the Committee's market review activities are carried out under the guidance of a team of specialists, and comprise three elements, all based on the regular data collection through the Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JFSQ):

- The Forest Products Annual Market Review, published in August, provides information on current trends for traditional products, as well as for wood energy, value-added products as well as special topics. It is the work of many experts who contribute analysis and review, as well as statistics.<sup>17</sup>
- The Committee forecasts for the present and forthcoming year are based on estimates prepared by governments and collated by the secretariat. In addition, detailed national reports are submitted to the Committee session. A market statement is drafted during the session and endorsed by the Committee.
- At the market discussion segment of the Committee session, experts from the private sector and civil society alongside official delegates comment and discuss on the most important market trends and issues, identifying emerging developments which may be of interest to the Committee.



### ***ROVANIEMI ACTION PLAN: participatory, voluntary, open, comprehensive***

Towards the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, there was intense interest in the concept of a “green economy” and what these concepts could contribute. The green economy concept clearly demands a holistic approach. However, in sectoral bodies, like the Committee and the Commission, whose focus is on forests and the forest sector, the questions arise: what does the green economy imply for the forest sector? And how can the forest sector best contribute to an emerging green economy?

The Committee and the Commission set up a participatory and inclusive approach to answering these questions, within their existing mandates. From a series of consultations, both on-line and face-to-face, an action plan emerged, which identified the broad strategic lines of action for the forest sector, taking account of existing guidelines and definitions, and proposed a wide variety of possible actions to be undertaken by actors in the forest sector - whether private or public, national or international. The action plan was submitted to the joint session of the

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<sup>17</sup> The 2016 edition acknowledged contributions from 95 individuals.

Committee and the Commission in December 2013, which approved it, renaming it the Rovaniemi Action Plan (after the location of the joint session (ECE/FAO, 2014).

The Action Plan formulates a vision for the forest sector in a green economy and eight principles. The possible actions, of which there are 128, are organised in five “pillars”:

- Sustainable production and consumption of forest products
- A low carbon forest sector
- Decent green jobs in the forest sector
- Long term provision of forest ecosystem services
- Policy development and monitoring of the sector in relation to a green economy.

Possible actions may be implemented by individuals, the private sector, civil society, local, regional or national governments and international organisations. Everything in the Action Plan is voluntary, although ECE/FAO is mandated to follow progress in implementation.





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## ***Some facts about the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry***

The ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industries (COFFI) is a principal subsidiary body of the ECE (Economic Commission for Europe) based in Geneva. It constitutes a forum for cooperation and consultation between member countries on forests, the forest industry and forest product matters. All countries of Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the United States of America, Canada and Israel are members of the ECE and participate in its work.

COFFI shares an Integrated Programme of Work (see above) with EFC, which is revised and adopted every four years. The COFFI programme of work is adopted on a biannual basis and has the main objective of strengthening sustainable management of forests in the ECE region. In line with the IPoW, the programme provides a platform for policy dialogue on forest-related issues and facilitates the exchange of national experiences and best practices. It supports the development and application of analytical tools to allow for evidence-based policymaking and monitors progress on achieving sustainable forest management using key forest-sector indicators. Moreover, it supports the collection, validation and disseminates of information as well as the results of research and analysis in a series of different publications.

At present, COFFI supports the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy taking into account the role of the forest sector in the mitigation of and the adaptation to climate change. The five pillars of the Action Plan consist of A: Sustainable production and consumption of forest products, B: The low carbon forest sector, C: Decent green jobs in the forest sector, D: Long term provision of Forest Ecosystem Services, and E: Policy development and monitoring of the forest sector in relation to a green economy. In line with the programme of work 2018-19, COFFI further supports the implementation in the ECE region of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (2017-2030) and the related Global Forest Goals approved by the General Assembly in April 2017. It also supports the development of cross-sectoral and cross-institutional policies promoting sustainable forest management and enhanced forest governance in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Committee carries out its work in partnership with FAO, and in cooperation with the European Forest Institute, Forest Europe and other relevant regional organizations and processes.

More information about the Committee's work may be obtained by contacting:

ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section  
Forests, Land and Housing Division  
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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
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[www.unece.org/forests](http://www.unece.org/forests)



## ***Some facts about the European Forestry Commission (EFC)***

The European Forestry Commission (EFC) was created in 1947 and it is one of six Regional Forestry Commissions established by FAO to provide a policy and technical forum for countries to discuss and address forest issues on a regional basis.

The purpose of EFC is to advise on the formulation of forest policy and to review and coordinate its implementation at the regional level; to exchange information and, generally through special Subsidiary Bodies, to advise on suitable practices and action with regard to technical and economic problems, and to make appropriate recommendations in relation to the foregoing. It meets every two years and English, French and Spanish are the official languages of the Commission.

The EFC has a number of associated subsidiary bodies, including the Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds, the Working Party on Mediterranean forestry issues (*Silva Mediterranea*) and shares with ECE the ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management.

FAO encourages wide participation of government officials from forestry and other sectors as well as representatives of international, regional and subregional organizations that deal with forest-related issues in the region, including NGOs, and the private sector. Accordingly, EFC is open to all Members and Associate Members whose territories are situated wholly or in part in the European Region or who are responsible for the international relations of any non-self-governing territory in that Region. Membership comprises such eligible Member Nations as have notified the Director-General of their desire to be considered as Members.

EFC is one of the technical commissions serving to the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) and the EFC Secretary is based in Geneva. EFC work is regulated by Rules of Procedures, which were adopted by the FAO Conference in 1961 and amended at the Eighteenth Session of the Commission in 1977.



More information about the Commission's work may be obtained by contacting:

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*ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section at the Palais de Nations, Geneva 2017*

*Pictured left to right (front row): Birgit Lia Altmann, Alex McCusker, Paola Deda, Roman Michalak, Maike Carstensen; (back row): Florian Steierer, Alicja Kacprzak, Karen Taylor, Matthew Fonseca, Theresa Loeffler, Ekrem Yazici.*

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**70 years working together  
in the service of forests and people**

The ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission emerged from the International Timber Conference held in 1947 as the key elements of the United Nations tasked with working on matters related to the forest sector in Europe.

During their first 70 years of joint activity, the Committee and the Commission have contributed to post war reconstruction, to the expansion of the forest sector, to meeting the major challenges of the sector and to promoting and monitoring sustainable forest management.

This paper chronicles the history of the Committee and the Commission's work, in the context of the 2017 celebrations of the 70th anniversary of ECE and to mark the 70th anniversary of the fruitful cooperation of ECE and FAO on forests in the region.

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ISBN 978-92-1-117142-6

