

Intersecretariat Working Group (IWG) on Forest Sector Statistics

DRAFT REPORT on meeting of 19 June 1995

Presence

1. Present were Messrs Calo, Andresen and Schoening (EUROSTAT), Wardle and Padovani (FAO), Du Breuil de Pontrian (DG VI), Bonnis (OECD), Johnson (ITTO) and Prins, Korotkov, Pepke and Najera (ECE/FAO).

Review of activities

2. The IWG exchanged information on activities since its last meeting, notably progress on the joint FAO/ECE/EUROSTAT questionnaire (see below) and other activities, including the study to be financed by EFICS on the methodology of existing forest resource inventories and the quality and comparability of their results, and the activities of ITTO and OECD, who had not been able to attend the earlier meetings.

3. It reaffirmed the importance of the principles articulated at its earlier meeting of preventing, by regular exchange of information and cooperation, any duplication of activities, so that the same information should never be requested twice by different international organisations and so that the same data should be available for the same transaction in all international sources.

4. Mr. Johnson informed the IWG of ITTO activities, and how the data were collected for its annual review of tropical timber markets. With the pending adoption of the 1994 ITTA, the scope of this review will be expanded to cover all timber markets. The IWG noted that many or most of the data requested by ITTO were the same as or very similar to those requested in the joint FAO/ECE/EUROSTAT questionnaire, with the exception of production and trade categories for tropical veneer and plywood. The members of the IWG confirmed their willingness to continue to make available to ITTO the data collected, even before the publication was finalised. FAO/ECE would continue to use ITTO data in the tropical part of its market review. It appeared that there was potential to adapt the existing joint questionnaire to suit ITTO's needs: if ITTO agreed, at the political level, to embark on coordination of data collection, through a joint FAO/ECE/EUROSTAT/ITTO questionnaire, the other organisations represented at the IWG noted that they stood ready to cooperate in such a venture. The IWG took note of the technical problems encountered by ITTO, notably the definition of what constituted "tropical" timber (species type or country of origin?), but noted that these problems were not confined to ITTO, but affected all forest sector data.

5. The IWG was informed that there was no part of OECD with overall responsibility for forest sector statistics, as they were included in the programmes of the directorates of Agriculture, Environment and statistics. It noted that in the preparatory work on farm forestry policies, OECD had used to the extent possible, available international data, and drawn respondents' attention to the importance of maintaining comparability between the data supplied to different international organisations. It requested Mr. Bonnis to inform the IWG of the information needs of his work policies in this area, in order that necessary steps could be taken to improve the situation as far as possible. However, the IWG regretted that there had been no cooperation with the forest statistics services FAO, FAO/ECE or EUROSTAT when the OECD Environment Directorate had drawn up the forest part of the enquiry into the state of the environment, which had repeated many of the question asked in the Forest Resource Assessment 1990, and requested on a two-yearly basis information which was usually collected at much longer intervals. It urged the OECD Environment Directorate to participate in future meetings of the IWG and to consult before circulating enquiries which might duplicate those already circulated by other organisations. It suggested that OECD participate in the work of the FAO/ECE team of specialists on forest resource assessment, one of whose activities is to encourage cooperation between international efforts in this field and adapt the enquiry methods to the new demands being made on forest resource assessments.

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6. The IWG was also informed of the close cooperation being instituted between FAO; FAO/ECE, Silva mediterranea and DG VI in the field of forest fires. (see TIM/EFC/WP.2/R.146)

Joint questionnaire

7. The IWG reviewed in detail the joint questionnaire in the light of comments received at the Luxembourg AEROSTAT meeting, including the following:

- make numbers for each heading;
- need to set a feasible deadline without jeopardising the timetable of the preparation of the Annual review. (IN 1995, the great majority of significant forest countries had reported to Geneva by June with data for 1994.
- improve standardisation between different tables.
- consider the possibilities of making special headings for MDF (without medium board) and OSB, while maintaining the existing product group headings to preserve continuity.
- the need to adhere to HS/SITC in the (major) trade tables;
- the problem of "production" of residues, which was certainly not clear in the present version:
- the possible use of EDP (returnable diskettes) to accelerate and improve procedures

Future activities of the IWG

8. It was agreed that the present format, of regular informal meetings (in principle one person per organisation, twice a year) should be maintained. One meeting a year should be in Geneva, and the other as considered appropriate. Where possible, the meetings should be scheduled in conjunction with another relevant meeting. For instance the meeting in summer 1996 should be held in conjunction with the EUROSTAT working group meeting in May/June. The host should circulate a draft agenda beforehand. There should be early notice of meetings. In general the meetings should not be too technical but deal with policy coordination.

9. A topic which would be of great interest would be the coordination of the many activities on forest resource assessment being carried out by a number of organisations. A possible venue for this meeting would be Rome in late 1995, just as plans are being drawn up for the forest resource assessment 2000. Messrs Wardle and Prins would explore this possibility with appropriate people in Rome.

INTERSECRETARIAT WORKING GROUP ON FOREST STATISTICS

Palais des Nations, 19 June 1995

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