

Distr.
General
TIM/EFC/WP.2/2004/5
18 February 2004
Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
Timber Committee

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
European Forestry Commission

JOINT FAO/ECE WORKING PARTY ON FOREST ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS
Twenty-sixth session

to be held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva
15 – 17 March 2004, starting at 10.00 hrs on Monday, 15 March

Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda
Guidance of work area 3: forest sector outlook studies

This document presents activities in the forest sector outlook studies work area in 2003-2004 and plans for the future, and requests the Working Party's comments and guidance. The Working Party's attention is drawn to the fact that further information and most recent texts of all discussion papers and drafts are available on the EFSOS pages of the website (<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/efsos/welcome.htm>).

Introduction

1. This document presents activities in the work area in 2003/2004 and plans for the future, and requests the Working Party's comments and guidance. More information, including in particular the most recent texts of all discussion papers and drafts are available on the EFSOS pages of the website (<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/efsos/welcome.htm>), so these are not presented or summarised here.

Activities in 2003/2004, and plans for 2004

2. After the Working Party review in February 2003, the EFSOS team of specialists met in April 2003 and reviewed progress, notably identifying some major policy relevant conclusions. The focus of work then shifted from data validation and analysis and modelling to preparing the main report and presenting EFSOS conclusions to the wider community, notably policy makers. The Discussion Papers are nearly complete. An incomplete draft main report was presented for comment to the Timber Committee, and a few comments were received.

3. ECE and FAO are jointly working on the draft main report which it is hoped will be made available to the Working Party in advance of the session.

4. The secretariat considers that when the draft main report is complete, and all eight Discussion Papers published, there is a need for two immediate actions:

- A workshop of outlook study experts to finalise the study, in particular its conclusions for policy;
- A second workshop, after the study is completed and report distributed to present it to the policy community (notably representatives to MCPFE), stressing the cross-sectoral dimension of the analysis, so that the work done by EFSOS experts, some of which uses new concepts and ideas, is properly understood and used.

5. Funding for these two workshops has been generously made available by the Swiss government. The second will be prepared in close cooperation with the Warsaw Liaison Unit of MCPFE.

6. Finally, the EFSOS results will be the basis of an in-session seminar at the joint session of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission from 4-8 October 2004 (note revised date).

7. With the completion of the above planned events, the present EFSOS cycle may be considered complete. The successive phases of the cycle have been:

- Network building and data collection
- Agreement on methods and approaches
- Joint analysis and preparation of projections, relying heavily on networks and partners, at a national and regional level.
- Preparation of a regional synthesis, based to the extent possible on quantitative analysis and addressing the major policy issues of the day in a comprehensive and relevant way
- Dissemination and review of the analysis and recommendations prepared, possibly leading to changes in policy, if considered necessary.

The future of outlook studies work

8. Since the 1950s, ECE/FAO has allocated resources on a permanent basis to outlook studies (formerly “timber trends studies”), although the intensity of the effort varied over time, according to the phase of the cycle (preparation, analysis, drafting, review etc.). There has been a staff member with permanent responsibility for this work, and an informal semi-permanent network of experts and national correspondents to back up the work and indeed carry it out. For most of this period, outlook study work in other regions was very limited.

9. Since the mid 1990s FAO has assigned high priority to regional outlook studies to be undertaken at regular intervals, moving from one region to another, concentrating on one or two regions at a time, and closely focused on policy issues. The main thrust is to provide an indication of broad trends taking into account the emerging driving forces and to outline possible direction of developments emphasizing on the opportunities and challenges.

10. In Europe, the present EFSOS cycle may be considered complete by the end of 2004. In view of resource constraints facing ECE and FAO there are strong compulsions to closely review the programme priorities and approaches. The decisions about priorities and strategic directions for the ECE/FAO integrated programme as a whole are being considered in the context of the Strategic Review discussed under item 6 of the provisional agenda. In this context it is important that the Working Party provides guidance and suggestions as regards the future conduct of the outlook studies and more importantly on follow up activities emanating from the outlook studies.

11. *The Working Party is invited to comment on the future of the outlook studies work. In particular it may wish to address the following questions:*

- *To what extent are the outlook studies relevant and actually used in decision-making at different levels? What kind of follow up is required to enable wider dissemination of the findings especially to enable the different stakeholders to take advantage of the findings?*
- *If the outlook studies are considered important and useful, what should be the focus of these studies and how we should undertake them. Specifically the Working Party may advise on (a) redefining the scope of the outlook studies, and (b) the approach to their implementation especially in the context of undertaking them at longer intervals than what was hitherto followed.*
- *What mechanism should be in place to monitor and assess important trends in the sector on a regular basis (especially between two successive outlook studies) and to make the information available to decision-makers and other stakeholders?*