

UNECE/FAO Wood Waste Classification – concept note

Background

The question of sustainable wood supply is becoming increasingly important in the light of a growing demand for wood and cellulose-based products. Increasing availability of woody biomass by recovering wood from processing and end-of-life products is a recognized means of providing additional volumes of wood resources and enhancing environmental efficiency of wood-based value chains.

From the perspective of the circular economy, the principles of sustainable forest management in the forest biological cycle as well as material efficiency and cascading use in the technological cycle help ensure sustainable sourcing and use of the wood in the system. Increased recovery of wood waste from industrial production and urban collection appears to be of key importance to further contribute to prolonging the technological cycle and provide a link to the biological cycle when organic residues, ashes and CO₂ can be used as nutrients for new trees.

Recovered waste streams are most commonly used in biodegradation (composting), recycling (particleboards production), bioenergy production and, less often, are reused as they are in the industry. Management of these waste streams differs among countries. It often depends on national regulations and waste classifications, which can sometimes be applied to trade with neighboring counties.

Today, there is no commonly applied international classification of wood waste streams. This seems to be a gap in efficient absorbing of wood residues back into industry processes and forest ecosystems at a larger scale. An international classification would not only allow a better monitoring and quantification of wood waste streams but potentially unfold new outlets for them.

In this context, The UNECE/FAO wood waste classification project aims to:

- 1) Map existing classifications developed by governments and various organizations so far
- 2) Develop a standard classification for the UNECE region which could become a basis for data collection and possible a practical tool for trade in the region.

Planned activities

- 1) Mapping existing international, regional and national wood waste classifications and creating a catalogue with each classification (56 national and additional from other sources) – desk research, survey, e.g.
 - a. European Panel Federation
 - b. European Waste Management Hierarchy
 - c. European Furniture Federation

- d. ITC
 - e. ISO
 - f. OECD
 - g. UNIDO
 - h. European Commission
 - i. SEEA
 - j. Customs classification
 - k. FAO, UNECE, Eurostat databases classifications
 - l. ISIC
 - m. European Waste Codes
 - n. Basel convention
 - o. Other
- 2) Identification of criteria used for these classifications and structuring information accordingly, e.g. by:
 - a. wood waste sources and destinations
 - b. wood waste categories at specific value chain level
 - c. waste per contamination level
 - d. other criteria
 - 3) Organization of a workshop or two (e.g. May 2021 & September 2021) to discuss existing classifications and finalize the logical structure of a possible UNECE/FAO classification.

Possible stakeholders

- 1) Bio-Reg platform
- 2) European Panel Federation
- 3) European Waste Management Hierarchy
- 4) European Furniture Federation
- 5) ITC
- 6) ISO
- 7) OECD
- 8) UNIDO
- 9) European Commission (EUROSTAT and DGs as relevant)

Possible work spill over for the future

- 1) Based on the classification, building a data collection survey
- 2) Overview of wood waste flows in the ECE region
- 3) Via a survey: evaluation of economic feasibility of waste collecting centers and waste trade