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2013 Strategic Review of the ECE/FAO Joint Programme of Work

Results of the Survey on the ECE/FAO Integrated Programme of Work

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At their joint session held from 10 to 15 October 2011 in Antalya Turkey, the ECE Timber Committee (TC) and the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC) adopted the approach, methodology and timeline for the 2013 Strategic Review of the ECE/FAO integrated Programme of Work and authorized the secretariat to implement related actions as contained in document ECE/TIM/2011/9-FO:EFC/2011/9. This methodology included a stakeholder survey the results of which are presented in the present document.

I. Background

1. The Timber Committee (TC) and the European Forestry Commission (EFC) Joint Bureaux developed a set of fifty questions as contained in the annex to document ECE/TIM/2011/9-FO:EFC/2011/9. On the basis of previous experience, one comprehensive questionnaire with a majority of open questions was produced. The intention was to give all those interested an opportunity to participate actively in the review process¹.

2. The questionnaire was made available online on a website designed for electronic surveys in early 2012. The announcement of the survey was shared with all relevant stakeholders, using different mailing lists, including the secretariat's database on Heads of Delegation to the Committee and the Commission and the list of the Missions to the UN in Geneva. Answers were collected until the end of April 2012 and the present document presents the results of the survey.

II. Results analysis

A. Who were the respondents?

3. Ninety-six answers were registered, of which only 64 were considered as "valid" (i.e. at least one question was answered). Only 48 respondents went through the whole questionnaire, which suggests that the whole procedure might have been cumbersome. Sixteen of the 64 valid answers were anonymous.

4. The geographic distribution of the answers was unbalanced, with low participation from the CIS countries and the EECCA region:

- 11 answers from North America;
- 27 answers from European countries including 16 from EU member States;
- 1 answer from the EECCA region from Russia;
- 4 answers from outside the ECE region.

5. Nearly half of the respondents (44%) whose function was indicated were specialists (experts, researchers and officers). The other half was split between intermediate managers and senior officers (27%) and higher level representatives: directors, presidents and professors (27%).

6. Among the respondents for whom the affiliation was given, government or public bodies, as well as universities and research centres, were well represented. Each of these two categories generated 35% of the answers. While intergovernmental organizations also strongly contributed (20%), the private sector (8%) and NGOs (2%) were clearly underrepresented.

¹ During the past review, two surveys were issued. One questionnaire was directed to users and focused on the programme of work outputs, while the other was specifically designed for heads of delegation to provide a comprehensive assessment of the process and proposals for the new strategic plan. These surveys consisted of closed questions, giving the respondent the possibility to only rate items from a scale of one to five. This did not allow for specific comments or suggestions to be provided. Moreover, having two different questionnaires created confusion and overlaps.

7. Fifty-six respondents rated their knowledge of the Committee and the Commission's work, on average, as 3.28, on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). However, in spite of this average rating, respondents often chose the "not sure" option for questions, indicating that their knowledge might not be as comprehensive as they assessed it to be in the first place.

8. The majority of respondents had, nevertheless, been involved in the Programme of Work as delegate, member of a team of specialists or a meeting participant. It is interesting to note that a third of the respondents had been involved as an author of an ECE/FAO publication or consultant. The survey did not attract many answers beyond this group of close partners.

B. Assessment of the 2008-2013 Integrated Programme of Work

9. Respondents qualified as best the following results from the current Programme of Work² in this sequence:

- 1) Forest Product Annual Market Reviews;
- 2) European Forest Sector Outlook Studies;
- 3) Work on a Green Economy;
- 4) State of Europe's Forests;
- 5) Work on Wood Energy.

10. More than half of the respondents judged that the level of achievement was good or very good. Yet, around 40% were not sure what to answer. Half of the respondents identified shortfalls in the current Programme of Work. The main areas mentioned in this regards were:

- Lack of financial resources and priority setting;
- Limited capacity building activities and participation of the EECCA countries;
- Lack of linkage with the national level;
- Adaptation to climate change not sufficiently addressed.

C. Towards a new Programme of Work 2014-2017

11. When asked about the objectives and focus for the next Programme of Work, the respondents named quite a long list of possible topics. Tools for policy making were clearly rated as the most important area of work (25% of the answers). They are followed by a group of other issues such as data and monitoring, improving Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), climate change and carbon storage, the green economy and wood energy. Wood product promotion and new forest products were also mentioned.

² The order could be influenced by the fact that numerous respondents were participating as author in the publications.

12. The overall objective of the current Programme of Work which is “strengthening the forest sector” did not get much support. Respondents also called for more communication on the outputs and more synergies with other forest-related organisations and sectors.

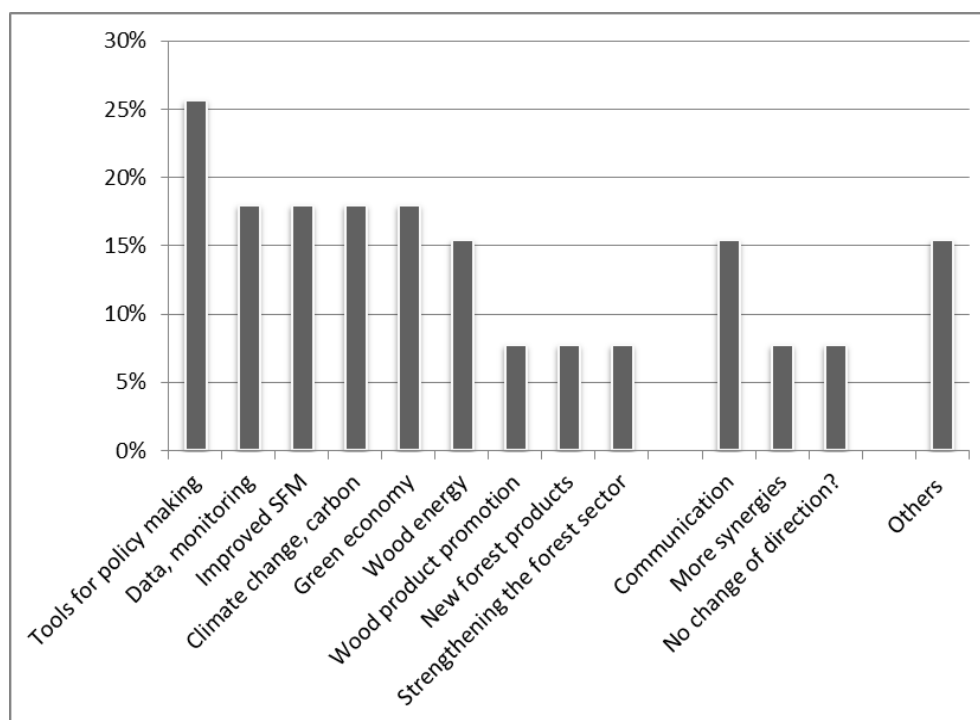


Figure: Suggested Objectives/Focus for the next Programme of Work

13. A question addressed how the Programme of Work could better serve the interests of the member States. An analysis of the answers shows that respondents expected the ECE/FAO Section to provide appropriate information to support policy making (in the form of policy briefs for example) but also relevant information to be used for communication and outreach to other sectors and society in general. Improved participation from member States and other stakeholders, flexibility in addressing emerging issues and cooperation were also expected.

14. Forty-eight respondents used the opportunity offered by the survey to rate a list of possible topics for the next Programme of Work from 1 (low priority) to 5 (high priority). On average, their first priority would be “forest resources” (best score: 4.30), followed by a group of topics consisting of “forests and wood energy”, “forest product markets”, “forests and green economy”, “forest and climate change” and “forest policies” (average between 3.60 and 4.00). “Forests and storm damage/fire”, “forest communication”, and “forest social and cultural” are in the last group (average around 3.00).

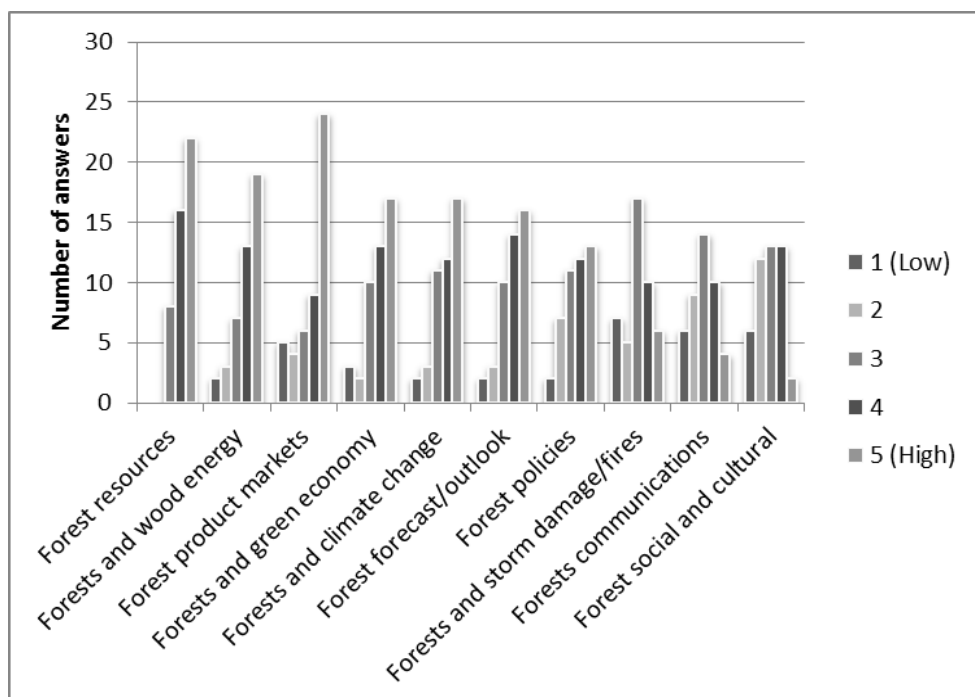


Figure: Results of assessment of possible topics for the next Programme of work

15. For two thirds of the respondents, the scope and structure of the current Programme of Work were appropriate. Their comments show, nevertheless, that they are in favour of setting clearer priorities in the Programme and of introducing some flexibility in its implementation, which could be combined with a more frequent assessment and review procedure.

16. The scope, structure and functioning of the parent bodies (Committee and Commission) and of the Working Party for Forest Statistics, Economics and Management (WPFSEM) were also assessed.

17. The Committee appears to be the right arena for forest product's discussions and it was suggested that forest ecosystem services could also be addressed in the framework of a green economy. Others suggested, on the contrary, that the Committee should focus more on its main core areas such as forest information and the product market review. A more active participation of member States in the Committee's work is desirable as well as a stronger involvement by the private forest sector and other sectors.

18. It was proposed that the Committee and the Commission work more jointly. The joint session of Committee and the Commission should be held every two years (rather than every four years) and cooperation with other forest-related organizations in the ECE region should be further developed. In some comments, respondents regretted that the Commission is not more visible and suggested to raise its profile, including within FAO. Regarding the mandate of the Commission, comments were contradictory. Some calling for a more policy focus, other judging that the combination of the Committee, the Commission and Forest Europe was not an efficient set up for discussing policies and cooperation.

19. Respondents were also asked if they consider the cooperation between the Commission and the Committee with other international bodies adequate. More than 57% answered "Yes" and two (5%) "No", the rest (38%) being "Not sure". The rather positive assessment was reflected in the comments. Nonetheless, some would like to see cooperation reinforced with the North American Forestry Commission and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Others consider that the European forest dialogue is too fragmented and leads to competition between organizations. They called for a stricter definition of missions, mandates and roles, and clear priorities.

20. Respondents saw an important role for the WPFSEM in the coordination of the Teams of Specialists (ToS) and suggested to reinforce the link between the WPFSEM and the ToS in the intersessional periods. It was emphasized that the WPFSEM is still in a trial period until 2013. Due to the broader scope, it appeared that the new setting made it more difficult for some delegations to contribute effectively to the last meeting.

D. What future for the Working Party for the Management of Mountainous Watersheds?

21. A special section of the questionnaire was designed to address the issue of the Working Party for the Management of Mountain Watersheds (WPMMW), which mandate is currently under review. More than two thirds of the respondents declared that they were not familiar with this Working Party or they were not sure on how to answer.

22. The thematic areas on which the WPMMW should focus were rated on the basis of topics that were suggested in the questionnaire. The highest score (weighted average) goes to “forests and water” and the lowest to “mountain watershed” which seems to imply that future work should be reoriented.

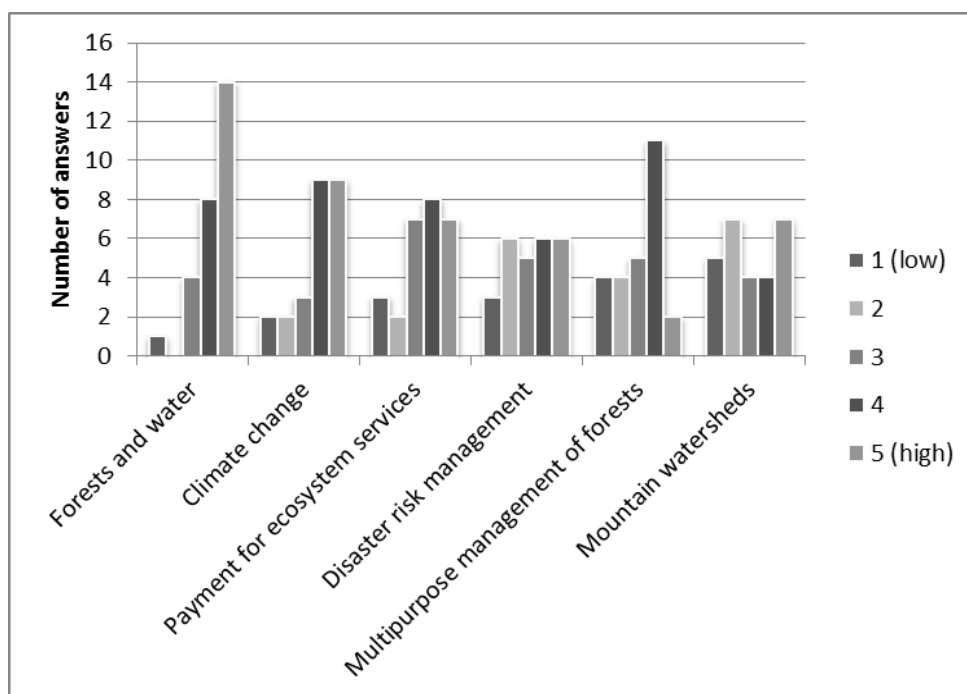


Figure: Results of assessment of possible topics for the WPMMW

23. In decreasing order of importance, the other suggested areas were: climate change, payment for ecosystem services, disaster risk management and multipurpose management of forests. Some answers indicated that this could lead to overlaps within the ECE/FAO Programme of Work.

24. Half of the respondents assessed positively the option of the Working Party being an umbrella forum under which thematic working groups on the above mentioned topics could be established. The question of the resources which would be necessary to service these working groups was raised.

E. Assessment of the Teams of Specialists

25. The seven Teams of Specialists (ToS) were assessed in two ways in this survey. The respondents were asked:

- To tell which ToS they were familiar with;
- To rate the ToS' work and their contribution to the Programme of Work.

26. Almost nine out of ten (88%) of the respondents who answered these questions are familiar with the forest sector outlook ToS's work. This is by far the best result. The work of the sustainable forest products' ToS and the ToS on monitoring sustainable forest management are also well recognized. The Forest Communicators Network obtained 40% of positive answers. Much lower scores were given to the Joint ECE/FAO/ILO expert network to implement sustainable forest management (24%), the forest policy team in EECCA (21%) and the forest fire team (12%).

27. The assessment, on a scale from 1 to 5, of their work and their contribution to the Programme of Work confirms that there are two groups of ToS:

- Those for which the average are above 4: forest sector outlook, monitoring sustainable forest management and sustainable forest products;
- Those which obtained a lower number of answers and lower averages: the joint ECE/FAO/ILO expert network to implement sustainable forest management, the forest communicators network, the forest fires team and the forest policy in EECCA team.

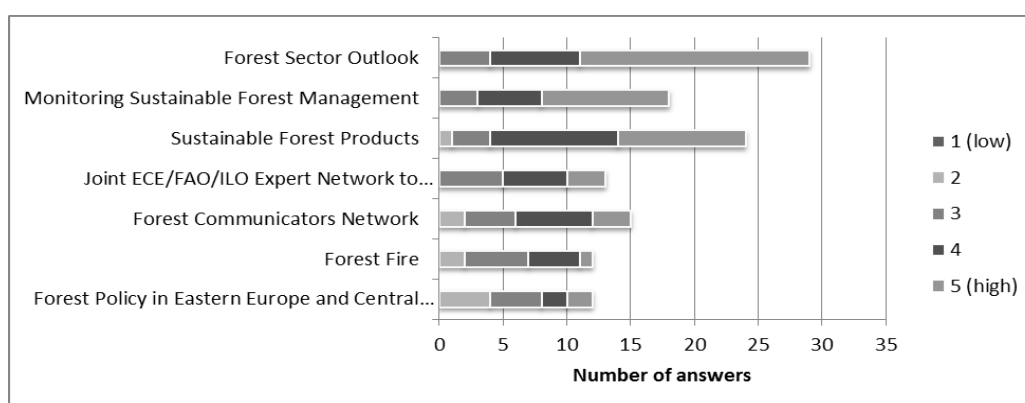


Figure: Results of the ToS assessment

28. The assessment was accompanied by suggestions for improvement which can be summarized as follows:

- Clearer mandates and limited life span;
- Defined role and responsibilities;
- Common working methods and stronger reporting lines;
- Coordination among ToSs (through an annual ToS leader meetings for example);
- ToSs should not work independently from parent bodies and other ToS.

F. Assessment of Outputs

Seminars

29. For 70% of the respondents, the seminars that are organized in the framework of the Programme of Work are useful to their country or organization. They are qualified as well targeted, professionally organized with quality background papers. The outcomes of the meetings could be more specific and the participation of other sectors should be facilitated. Some suggested that means for remote participation such as web based seminars, especially for North American participants and speakers should be considered.

30. Two thirds considered that these seminars successfully tackle the major policy issues. Some comments recommended to explore possibilities for joint meetings with other organizations and to focus on priority areas where comparative advantages are established. The topics that were proposed for the future are collected in the following list:

- Forest investments/financing;
- Adaptation to climate change;
- Competitiveness and efficiency of the forest sector;
- Green economy, sustainable consumption and production;
- Innovation, new forest products;
- Wood energy and related conflict of uses (biodiversity, etc.).

Communication activities (website, press releases ...)

31. These activities were assessed as generally good. Some pages of the website should be updated and its structure should be improved to help users find the information they are looking for, but the facilities for statistics are well appreciated. Some respondents would like more communication by e-mail (including the newsletter).

Publications

32. To the question “which UNECE/FAO publications do you know or use?”, the most frequent answers were:

- 1) Forest Product Annual Market Reviews;
- 2) European Forest Sector Outlook Studies;
- 3) State of Europe’s Forest.

33. A significant number of respondents answered that they use all or most of them. The paper on Forest Products Conversion Factors is also often mentioned.

34. The three flagship publications were assessed separately and obtained good scores with regard to their quality.

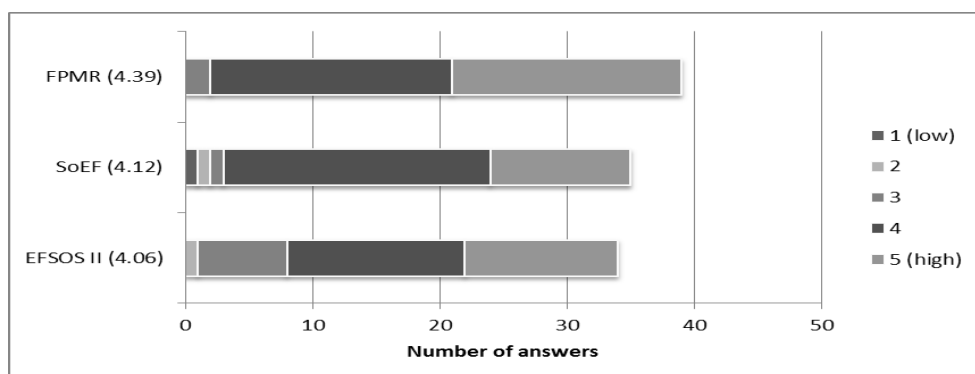


Figure: Assessment of the main publications (average)

35. The discussion papers were rated as satisfactory in 7 out of 10 answers.

36. In practical terms, the ECE/FAO publications were a source of information, data and references for the respondents. These were used in different contexts:

- Policy making;
- Communication;
- Teaching;
- Research activities.

G. Capacity building activities

37. A majority of the respondents thought that the capacity building activities, which are currently constrained by financial limitations, should be reinforced (“yes” 55%, “not sure” 38%, “no” 7%). These activities should be developed in cooperation with FAO headquarters and focus on:

- Policy implementation, institutions;
- Statistics, data quality and reporting;
- Marketing of forest products and ecosystem services.

38. While some respondents suggested that the capacity building activities should cover all ECE subregions, others proposed to develop them in all or part of the Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asia subregions.

H. Level of participation and contribution to the Programme of Work

39. The respondents assessed their own level of participation as quite satisfactory (average: 3.46). The first reason given for limited participation is by far the lack of funds to cover travel expenses, followed by a lack of time and in some cases a lack of interest. Language could be also a challenge for some individuals.

I. Role of the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section in the European forestry scene

40. Twenty-five respondents expressed their view on this matter. The Section is seen as a trusted source of information and this information should be used to develop policy

advice tools. Respondents also mentioned that the Joint Programme could play an important role to coordinate and facilitate the dialogue around the forest sector on the European scene.

41. It was also noted that the complex situation on the European scene should not make delegates lose sight of the importance of North American forests in the ECE Region.

III. Conclusions

A. On the respondents

42. Despite the publicity made around the enquiry, the number of respondents is rather small and each of them skipped a number of questions. This is partly due to the length of the questionnaire, which seemed to have discouraged many and could explain the fact that 32 people just entered their details and then abandoned the exercise. The geographic coverage is unbalanced with only one answer from the Russian Federation and the number of answers from the private sector or the NGOs is definitely low. There was no contribution from countries with economies in transition.

43. Most of the respondents were involved in one way or another in the ECE/FAO Programme of Work, but the results showed that they were often “not sure”. The survey did not attract many contributions outside the circle of close partners. These elements should be taken into account for developing future assessment questionnaires.

B. On the 2008-2013 Programme of Work

44. The current Programme of Work and its implementation are satisfactory. Seminars and publications were, in most cases, successful. The functioning of ToS may nevertheless be improved and their results and contribution to the Programme of Work are of varying quality. Some shortfalls were also identified, among them: lack of financial resources and priority setting; limited capacity building activities and participation of the EECCA countries; lack of linkage with the national level; and adaptation to climate change not being sufficiently addressed.

C. On the future Programme of Work 2014-2017³

45. The survey reveals the priority areas of the respondents for the next Programme of Work, to be as follows:

- Forest resources;
- Wood energy;
- Forest product markets;
- Green economy;
- Forest forecast/outlook;
- Climate change and, in particular, adaptation.

³ It should be noted that suggestions come from respondents to the questionnaire mainly from Western and Eastern Europe and North America. This efforts should be made to gather proposals from the rest of the region.

46. Most of the respondents expect that the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Programme make the best use of the data and information collected in these areas by developing tools for policy making and capacity building activities, keeping in mind that there is a need to collect more information from the low and medium income countries of the ECE region.

47. On the other hand, the following topics found less support:

- Forest communication;
- Storms and fires;
- Social and cultural.

48. Some principles were also given by respondents for the implementation of the Programme of Work by the secretariat:

- Cooperation and partnerships with other organizations;
- Contribution to communication on forests and wood products;
- Outreach to other sectors.

49. Answers and comments on priorities were sometimes contradictory, especially on the issues of communication and on the place that policy advice activities should take in the next Programme of Work.

50. The need for a clearer operational structure, including roles and responsibilities, has been identified for the ToS. The consequences of the ToS assessment, which varies greatly from ToS to ToS, should be used to determine the future involvement of these groups in the Programme of Work.

51. The role and functioning of the parent bodies are not well understood, even for those who assessed themselves as being familiar with the Programme of Work.

52. The ECE/FAO joint secretariat which services the Committee and the Commission and implements the integrated Programme of Work is seen as an important and trusted source of information and tools for policy making, teaching and research. Some would like to see the Forestry and Timber Programme play a more active role on coordinating forest-related activities in the ECE region, while others would prefer it to focus on core activities.
