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European Forestry Commission

Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management

Forty-second session

Geneva, 22-24 March 2021

Item 5 (b) of the Provisional Agenda

Guidance on Work Areas

Work Area 2: Policy dialogue and advice

Note by the secretariat

Summary

In accordance with its mandate, the Working Party is expected to provide guidance on Work Area 2: Policy Dialogue and Advice. This document provides information about activities in this Work Area since the Working Party's last scheduled session in March 2020, as well as plans for 2021, drawing the Working Party's attention to any specific issues where guidance is needed. The 2020 meeting of the Working Party was postponed for one year, as a result of the COVID 19 restrictions on meetings in place at that time. For specific information on activities and topics covered between the March 2019 Working Party meeting and the scheduled but postponed meeting of March 2020, please refer to ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2020/4.

An initial list of activities in Work Area 2 for the year 2022 will be made available in document ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2021/inf.2 and discussed under Agenda Item 7.

I. Forest Policy

A. Implementation by the Secretariat

1. The seventy-eighth session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 4 to 6 November 2020. The session discussed Forest Landscape Restoration and reviewed the draft Strategy for Landscape Restoration and Greening the Infrastructure of the Caucasus and Central Asia. COFFI also took note of global and regional policy developments relevant for forests and the forest sector in the region, such as building back better with forests in response to COVID-19, forests and circular economy as well as market trends of forest products markets. COFFI also reviewed the draft IPoW 2022-2025 and provided inputs and recommendations.

Sustainable Forest Management

2. The secretariat prepared the following five policy briefs on Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Criteria and Indicators:
 - a. Policy Tools for Sustainable Forest Management;
 - b. National Forest Inventory – Tool for Decision Making;
 - c. Criteria and indicators and decision making (Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting);
 - d. Information Systems: Important Tool for Better Forest Policy and Management;
 - e. Criteria and indicators and forest-related communication.
3. These policy briefs were developed as a follow-up to the capacity building project on Criteria and Indicators for SFM in the five target countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The policy briefs will support decision makers and practitioners in implementing their sets of Criteria and Indicators for SFM. While the policy briefs were specifically prepared for the target countries of the project, they have value for other countries.

Green jobs in the forest sector

4. The Joint Section issued the study on the “Forest sector workforce in the UNECE. Overview of the social and economic trends with impact on the forest sector” (ECE/TIM/DP/76). The study analyses working conditions and occupational health and safety in the forest sector and looks at structural changes driven by economic and social developments. A webinar “*Who are the forest workers of today? Who will they be in the future?*” was organised on 14 October 2020 to promote the launch of the study. The study will be presented at the FAO World Forestry Congress (postponed to 2021).
5. The Joint Section issued the UNECE/FAO/Forest Europe “Guidelines on the promotion of green jobs in forestry” (ECE/TIM/DP/77) which was followed by a joint news release. The Guidelines will also be presented at the FAO World Forestry Congress.
6. The Joint Section, in partnership with ILO and FAO Headquarters, is developing a study on “Transformations in the future of work and their implications on occupational safety and health in forestry”. The study will be finalized by the end of 2021.
7. The Joint Section also contributed to the development of the FAO poster on “Supporting forests, people, growth and sustainability: A dynamic opportunity for rural youth” for the FAO World Forestry Congress.
8. The Joint Section wrote a chapter on employment and gender equality in the forest sector for the FAO/UNECE Outlook Studies (forthcoming).

The role of the forest sector in a circular bio-economy

9. In line with the mandate of the COFFI and EFC to pursue “related activities containing research and stock taking elements as well as proposals for guidance tools and recommendations for member States” (ECE/TIM/2019/2 FO:EFC/2019/2), on forests and the circular economy, the Joint Section worked on a study about the circular bio-economy concepts and how they relate to the forest-based sector. The study features different circularity concepts and analyses how they can be applied to the forest-based industries. The study focuses on key forest-based value chains: (1) woodworking industry, focusing on sawn wood, bioenergy and construction (2) furniture industry, (3) paper and pulp industry, (4) cellulose-based fibres, and (5) cellulose-based plastics.
10. In line with the same mandate, the Joint Section has worked on an overview of wood waste regulations. This work aims to (1) map existing classifications of wood waste streams developed by governments and various international organisations (2) develop a standard classification for the UNECE region which could serve for data collection, and (3) develop a possible practical classification tool which could facilitate the trade of waste streams in the region. Detailed results of this work will be presented during a JWP session dedicated to this topic.
11. The Joint Section contributed to a paper “In-depth review of Measuring the Circular Economy¹” prepared by Statistics Finland (lead), National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, Statistics Canada, National Administrative Department of Statistics of Colombia, Statistics Netherlands, European Environment Agency, Eurostat, UNECE, UNSD, UNEP and OECD.
12. The Joint Section promoted circularity concepts in the forest sector, via a keynote speech, during the 2020 Virtual International Conference of the Forest Products Society, USA on 27 – 31 July 2020.
13. The Joint Section addressed regulations promoting sustainable use of biomass in a presentation on “Policy development with impact on biomass sector in the European Union” during the virtual BIO4ECO Conference on 17-18 September.
14. The Joint Section created a webpage circular economy concepts in the forests sector (<https://unece.org/forests/circularity>).
15. The joint Section, in close cooperation with the chair of COFFI, prepared a briefing note for the 109th session of the ECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) on “COFFI Activities Relevant to Circular Economy”. ECE EXCOM decided to hold the sixty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Europe on 20-21 April 2021 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. EXCOM encourages the membership of UNECE to explore how they can contribute to the high-level theme of the sixty-ninth session, “Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the UNECE region”, and in particular to consider possible national commitments to strengthen circularity and sustainable practices at the country and transboundary level (EXCOM/CONCLU/110).

Cross sectoral work on forest and wood issues within the ECE Nexus’ work

16. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an ambitious and comprehensive plan of action with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To advance the Agenda, the ECE has adopted a “nexus” approach in its work, focusing on high-impact nexus areas where multiple SDGs converge.
17. The Joint Section drafted parts related to the forest sector and to the circular economy in the ECE nexus publication on “Natural Resource Nexuses in the ECE region”. The work on the publication, the executive summary and the infographics have been finalised and will be presented to the ECE Commission Session in May 2021.

¹ Available at : https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2020/October/02_In-depth_review_Circular_Economy_approved.pdf

B. Meetings/Events (excluding capacity-building²)

Forest Landscape Restoration

18. The secretariat organized a panel discussion on forest landscape restoration during COFFI on 4 November 2020. The event enabled discussion on restoration ambitions for ECE member States, funding opportunities and possible support from international organizations (UNECE, FAO, European Commission, IUCN).
19. The secretariat organized two webinars related to ECCA30 focusing on the following topics:
 - a. Financing forest landscape restoration in Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (16 July 2020);
 - b. Forest monitoring and restoration in the Caucasus and Central Asia (9 December 2020);
20. Strategy for Landscape Restoration and Greening the Infrastructure of the Caucasus and Central Asia
21. Organization of informal consultations to prepare the draft of the Strategy and presenting it at the 78th session of COFFI enabled preparation of the first draft of the Strategy and its presentation on the 4 November 2020.

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

22. The Secretariat presented the Trees in Cities Challenges initiative to the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the ECE region, which took place in Geneva, Switzerland, and virtually, on 19 March 2020. The Secretariat will organise a peer-learning round table on Boreal forests during for the upcoming Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2021 that is scheduled to be held online on 15 March 2021.

National Forest Policy Dialogue

23. The secretariat organizes a National Forest Policy Dialogue in Kazakhstan on 4 March 2020. The dialogue enabled revision by the wide range of stakeholders of the draft for the Master Plan for the Forest Sector Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030 and action plan for its implementation.
24. National Forest Policy Dialogues for Uzbekistan and Armenia are under consideration for 2021.

United Nations Forum on Forests Process

25. The Joint Section participated virtually in the 15th session of United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF15) (May-June 2020 virtual meeting) and made a statement about the implementation of UN Strategic Plan on Forests within the scope of WIPoW.
26. UNFF16, to be held from 26 to 30 April 2021 in New York, will be a technical session (it is thematically linked to the UNFF17 (policy session) in 2022). During the preparation for the 16th Session, the UNFF Secretariat invited the Joint Section to share information about regional contributions to achieving the biennium 2021-2022 thematic priorities, which are Global Forest Goals 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 and their associated targets. In response to this invitation, the Joint Section prepared the report on the relevant activities completed through the Joint Integrated Programme of Work.
27. The Joint Section participated in the UNFF Expert Group Meeting on the Impact of COVID-19 on Sustainable Forest Management which took part virtually in 19-21 January 2021. The Joint section provided support to the meeting through the presentation of the regional study to assess the Impact of COVID-19 on wood

² Capacity building related events are reported ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2020/6.

processing industries in Western Balkans. More information about the studies can be found in the secretariat report on Work Area 1 (ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2021/4).

C. Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests

28. The inaugural meeting of the Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests took place online on 21 October 2020. The Team discussed its outreach and communication strategy, potential outputs, and elected the leadership.
29. The annual report of the Team is in the Annex to this document.

D. Key questions for guidance and discussion

30. The Working Party is invited to provide guidance and advice to the secretariat on how it could
 - a. support the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda and accelerated action and delivery within the scope of WIPoW and;
 - b. contribute to the implementation of the UNFF Strategic Plan.

II. Forest Sector Outlook

A. Implementation by the Joint Section

31. Following the last report as contained in ECE/TIM.WP.2/2020/4, the Joint Section and the group of authors worked intensively to finalize the first draft of the Forest Sector Outlook Study (FSOS).
32. This first draft, containing four chapters (introduction, global trends, structural changes and climate change) was reviewed by the Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook in September 2020. With the feedback provided, the Joint Section decided to add an additional chapter on cross-cutting issues, such as biodiversity and the COVID-19 pandemic, which had only been partly or not been covered in the first draft. Furthermore, the comments of the Team of Specialists members were taken into account when drafting the conclusion chapter.
33. As of February 2020, the FSOS is in its final state of editing.
34. Together with the Federal Forestry Agency, the Joint Section organized a virtual capacity building workshop on forest sector outlook modelling for Russian participants on 17-18 November 2020. 15 speakers from different UNECE member States shared their modelling experiences and provided insights on how they use the results for strategic planning with a specific focus on climate change. This workshop with simultaneous online interpretation into English and Russian had been requested by the Federal Forestry Agency and was well attended by representatives from different Russian organizations as well as Russian experts. The link to the event can be found here: <https://unece.org/forests/events/capacity-building-forest-sector-outlook-modelling-and-its-practical-use>.

B. Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook

35. In August 2020, the Joint Section circulated the first draft of the FSOS to the Team of Specialists (ToS) on Forest Sector Outlook for review by its members. Many members provided useful comments and edits. On 17 September 2020, the Joint Section organized a virtual meeting of the ToS together with the authors of the study. Further oral feedback was provided, and various aspects were discussed; amongst others how to cover the COVID-19 pandemic in the study. As part of the official agenda, a new leadership team was elected. The meeting agenda and report can be found here:

<https://unece.org/forests/events/meeting-ecefao-team-specialists-forest-sector-outlook> .

C. Key questions for guidance and discussion

36. The Working Party is invited to:
- (a) Inform the Joint Section about current or planned activities in member States regarding forest sector outlook studies;
 - (b) Consider actively supporting the dissemination of the FSOS;
 - (c) Reflect how forest sector outlook related work can continue in the upcoming years.

Annex A: Report by the Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook

1. Name:
Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook Team website: https://unece.org/forests/team-specialists-forest-sector-outlook
2. Period covered:
April 2020 – March 2021
3. Leader/Deputies and Secretary:
Leader: Dr. Jeffrey Prestemon Deputies: Dr. Ragnar Jonsson ; Dr. Andrzej Talarczyk; Dr. Nicklas Forsell. Secretary: Ms. Birgit Lia Fain.
4. Members:
45 (as of 26 November 2020)
5. Countries:
16 countries: (as of 26 November 2020) Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America
6. Meetings held:
Meeting of the Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook (17 September 2020, virtual meeting) (https://unece.org/forests/events/meeting-ecefao-team-specialists-forest-sector-outlook)
7. Outputs and impacts achieved during last year:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 1-4 of the current Outlook completed and reviewed by the full Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook (September 2020); • Contract issued and fulfilled by Christopher Prins to draft two final chapters (5 and 6) of the current Outlook Study; • Chapters 5-6 of the current Outlook completed and reviewed (October 2020); • Text concerning the potential effects of COVID-19 on the UNECE Region, the world's forest sector and on the results of the current Outlook has been drafted and reviewed (November 2020); • Draft 2020 (2021) of the Forest Sector Outlook Study (FSOS) has been completed (January 2021).
8. Outputs and impacts expected for coming year:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020 (2021) version of the Forest Sector Outlook Study published (spring 2021); • Outlook distributed to all ECE member States; • Data sources produced when carrying out the Outlook analyses have been published and made open source on the ECE-FAO website; • Final version of a Background Methodology Report document, which describes the global forest sector modeling underpinning projections reported in chapters 3 and 4, published on the ECE-FAO website; • Results of the Outlook presented to scientific, professional, and layperson meetings in the ECE region (and potentially elsewhere).

9. Issues for the attention of the Working Party:

- Request possible venues for presentations of the 2020 (2021) FSOS;
- Request guidance on specific issues and activities in the coming term for the newly merged FSOS-FP ToS;
- ToS asks for support in assisting dissemination of the current Outlook upon its completion;
- ToS asks for support and recommendations on approaches for capacity building, leveraging the results and conclusions in stimulating follow-on analyses at country and subregional scales;

Generally, on the future of the ToS under the next integrated programme of work:

The Forest Sector Outlook Team of Specialists consists of members with experience and expertise in assessing, at multiple spatial and temporal scales, the prospective futures of the UNECE and the global forest sector. Presently, the work of the ToS is focused on the science delivery components of the current Outlook Study, and these communication and capacity building activities will likely continue into 2022 and beyond. FSOS ToS members and the Joint Working Party would benefit by maintaining periodic FSOS ToS meetings in which emerging issues of potential importance can be explored and communicated.

With proposed annual meetings going forward, the Outlook ToS would offer a forum for the identification and exploration of urgent issues in need of formal analysis, perhaps in the format of UNECE working papers or special presentations. For example, issues demanding new work and attention include the disturbance and carbon impacts of climate change, the effects of new and prospective policies associated with strategies of enhanced forest biodiversity protection in Europe, and the ongoing and long-run impacts of the pandemic on the forest sector. Finally, the ToS has a unique set of competencies that can be brought to bear on efforts to better understand the economic and climate futures of the boreal forest biome, in collaboration with the ToS on Boreal Forests.

10. Other comments:

- ToS recognizes the outstanding service and leadership of Secretary Lia Fain throughout the entire Outlook process and welcomes her back to the team upon her return from leave in 2020;
- ToS recognizes the excellent assistance and leadership of Interim Secretary Tristan Herrmann during Secretary Fain's leave;
- ToS thanks one Vice Leader (Ragnar Jonsson) and welcomes two new Vice Leaders (Dr. Andrzej Talarczyk, Dr. Nicklas Forsell) for their ongoing service to the team;
- ToS appreciates and recognizes the excellent input and insights provided by many ToS members in various stages of the writing and review process of the Outlook;
- ToS acknowledges the elevation of Jeffrey Prestemon to the Chair position in the Team in 2020.

Date: 17 February 2021

Annex B. Report by the Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests

1. Name:
Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests Team website: https://unece.org/forests/teams-specialists
2. Period covered:
April 2020 – March 2021
3. Leader/Deputies and Secretary:
Leader: Mr. Darren Sleep (Canada) Deputy: Mr. Vladimir Dmitriev (Russian Federation) Secretary: Ms. Leonie Meier, UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section
4. Members:
17
5. Countries:
8 countries: Austria, Canada, Finland, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, Russian Federation, and the United States of America.
6. Meetings held:
The first meeting of the ToS took place on 21 October 2021 via online platform Kudo, with interpretation in Russian and English.
7. Outputs and impacts achieved during last year:
<p>The ToS on Boreal Forests held its first meeting on 21 October 2020, with English to Russian interpretation. The members came to consensus on the role of the ToS and the scope of work that it would undertake. A draft work plan was developed and shared with the Team to solidify the nature of work that would be undertaken in 2021. The work plan was further refined and ultimately adopted at second meeting of the ToS on Feb 3, 2021.</p> <p>The first meeting was initially scheduled for March 2020 but was postponed due to the pandemic. The period before the first meeting was used for preparing the boreal countries' fact sheets. These fact sheets provide data on challenges related to boreal forests and policy responses, disturbances, relevant phytosanitary issues, markets and other issues. The analysis of fact sheets helped ToS members to agree on priorities for the ToS work.</p>

8. Outputs and impacts expected for coming year:
<p>The ToS has a number of outputs identified for this year that are anticipated to have significant impact on the science/policy dialogue in boreal countries. Notably:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ToS will carry out a peer review function of the first IBFRA Insight Process. The review will be related to the policy implications of paper, and will serve as the foundation of the development of a UNECE Policy Impacts Note; • The ToS will participate in the UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2021 by organizing a panel discussion on the contribution of boreal forests to the achievement of the SDGs; • The ToS will hold a webinar with the boreal experts in IUFRO to exchange information on the work of the ToS and identify any synergies between the two groups; • The ToS will develop communications pieces describing the boreal forests; • The ToS will participate in the development and delivery of a panel session on boreal policy at the upcoming IBFRA conference on 16-20 August 2021. <p>The impacts of all of these activities are expected to be:</p> <p>Increased awareness of the boreal forest; its role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 13 (climate change mitigation and adaptation) and SDG 15 (life on land); strengthening cooperation of the ToS and other organizations working on boreal issues (IUFRO, IBFRA etc.); improved communication on the issues pertinent to boreal forests.</p>
9. Issues for the attention of the Working Party: (if significant issues, how do we stimulate WP discussion
<p>The Joint Working Party is invited to familiarize itself with the ongoing work of the new Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests and consider extending its mandate in the new IPOW 2022-2025.</p>
10. Other comments: (e.g. collaboration with other ToS, justification for not holding a meeting, etc.)
<p>The ToS has suggested sharing the minutes from our meeting with other ToS groups to keep them informed of our work plan and progress. The ToS has also discussed the possibility of increase information and objective sharing between other ToS groups.</p>

Date: 11 February 2021
