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Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry****Food and Agriculture Organization
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Rome, 22 to 25 November 2021

Item 3(a) of the provisional agenda

**Joint Committee/Commission matters: Progress in the global
and regional forest resources assessment processes****Forty-first session**

Rome, 22 to 25 November 2021

**Progress in the global and regional forest resources
assessment processes - integrated ECE/FAO/Forest Europe
data collection on forests and forest management****Note by the Secretariat***Summary*

Delegates will be informed about the progress in the Global Forest Resources Assessment process, including the current status of the FAO's work on improved reporting on primary forests (with a focus on boreal forest countries). In addition, delegates will be given an update on the initial regional findings included in the FAO global remote sensing survey.

Delegates will also be informed about the proposal for strengthening collaboration on the joint ECE, FAO and Forest Europe 2020 data collection on the pan-European indicators, which is planned to be carried out simultaneously with the global reporting. This document provides the outline of this proposal.

The Commission and the Committee will be invited to discuss and to provide guidance to the regional reporting work.



I. Introduction

1. After the endorsement of the Forest Europe Criteria and Indicators on SFM, data collection for the pan-European and global reporting on forests and forest management was collected through two separate processes.
2. The primary reason for this separation was the difference in the timing for data collection. While the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) reporting was conducted by FAO regularly every 5 years, the pan-European reporting was linked with the Forest Europe ministerial conferences, organized on an irregular basis (most often 4 years).
3. Both reporting processes are entirely independent in terms of their mandates and management; however, their implementation is carried out with the involvement of the same organizations (ECE, FAO and Forest Europe).
4. As a result, the participating countries in the pan-European region reported twice for the same reference years, which posed additional burden on national correspondents, reviewers and secretariats of international organizations. Moreover, data often was inconsistent and confusing (two separate sets) in terms of its use and dissemination.
5. The three secretariats (Liaison Unit of Forest Europe, the FRA Team and the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section), in cooperation with experts and national correspondents, worked to harmonize the systems to the extent possible (definitions, classifications, reference years, reporting processes); however, until recently they were not in a position to address the major drawback – uncoordinated reporting means.
6. During the preparations of FRA 2020, Forest Europe, UNECE and FAO initiated closer collaboration on data collection and dissemination. Following the endorsement of the governing bodies, the data collection for pan-European reporting 2020 was carried out in parallel to FRA 2020. Collected data was stored in the same database as the global one and is shared through the online data platform¹ managed by FAO. This provides a solid basis for the further integration of interfaces for data collection and dissemination between these two processes in 2025 reporting.

II. Opportunity

7. The convergence of the next cycles of the pan-European and global reporting, the results of which are expected to be published in 2025, provides a convenient opportunity to further integrate the data collection processes.
8. Building on the experience gained from past cooperation, the potential of the network of secretariats, experts and national correspondents and the capacity of the ECE, FAO and FOREST EUROPE, it is possible to further develop an advanced integrated joint data collection process and system.
9. The system should satisfy the needs of all participating partners and be based on rules and distributions of roles and responsibilities to be agreed by heads of respective secretariats.

III. Proposal

10. The next pan-European voluntary national data collection on forests and forest management will be carried out in full coordination with the data collection process for the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment 2025, including the continuation of the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire (CFRQ).
11. The integrated data collection will be done jointly by ECE, FAO and FOREST EUROPE, through the Liaison Unit Bonn with the support of the EFI Forest Europe Team, the FRA Team and the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.

¹ <https://fra-data.fao.org/FE/panEuropean/home/>

12. The data will be collected through the interactive platform developed and hosted by FAO, which will include the two voluntary modules – the main reporting module (same for all countries) and an additional component for the remaining pan-European indicators (for Forest Europe countries).

13. ECE, FAO and Forest Europe will work together on the development of reporting formats, terms, definitions, classifications and guidelines for the 2025 reporting.

14. ECE, FAO and Forest Europe will work jointly to provide support to national correspondents and on the organization of technical meetings, due care will be taken to coordinate them and avoid overlaps, including the:

- (a) meetings of the ECE/FAO ToS on Monitoring SFM;
- (b) Expert Consultation on FRA 2025;
- (c) Forest Europe Advisory Group;
- (d) Regional workshop(s) for national correspondents.

15. National data will be collected through the same (for both processes) national correspondents, assisted in their work by experts designated by ECE, FAO and Forest Europe.

16. The tentative schedule for the 2025 integrated data collection includes:

- (a) Reporting and review: Feb 2023 – Dec 2023
- (b) Validation: Jan 2024
- (c) Data analysis: Feb – Sept 2024
- (d) Preparations of reports: Oct 2024-April 2025
- (e) Public release of the joint interactive database: Q3/Q4 2025

17. Pan European data collected will be made available to ECE, FAO and Forest Europe for their use and the production of their own or joint outputs; the complete regional dataset will be released together with the global database.

18. Data collected will be disseminated through the FAO FRA data platform, made available through the FAO, Forest Europe and ECE websites. The names of ECE, FAO and Forest Europe will always have to be displayed on any website, communication means or publication presenting the data.

19. The detailed description of roles and responsibilities will be agreed by heads of respective secretariats. The agreement will be valid for the 2025 regional data collection process; any continuation would require a new agreement.

IV. Conclusion

20. This enhanced coordination of data collection will result in a significant reduction of national reporting burden, the optimization of secretariats' resources, an improved completeness of data, and the enhanced credibility and visibility of the data.

V. Points for consideration

21. The Commission and the Committee may wish to request FAO and ECE to continue to work with Forest Europe at the ECE/FAO/Forest Europe data collection on forests and forest management and coordinate it with the global reporting to the extent possible.

22. The Commission and the Committee may wish to encourage countries to:

- (a) Collaborate with ECE, FAO and partner institutions to achieve synergies in data collection, analysis and management, and to reduce duplication of efforts.

(b) Support the implementation of the ECE/FAO/Forest Europe data collection on forests and forest management.
