

Report on 8th meeting of ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Products Statistics

As of 27 April 2021

13 April 2021 – 13:00-15:00 (Geneva time) virtual meeting via Teams

Meeting page is <https://unece.org/forests/events/eighth-meeting-ecefao-team-specialists-forest-products-statistics>

Leader: Branko Glavonjic

Deputy Leader: Graça Louro

1) Welcome and agenda, introductions

The Team was welcomed to the virtual meeting. There were 35 participants with 20 countries represented as well as six non-governmental organizations and two inter-governmental organizations (the list of participants is available for participants). The draft agenda was approved. New participants introduced themselves.

2) Issues on Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire 2020 (JQ)

The Team was informed about the decision of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Forest Sector Statistics (IWG) to revert to the previous definition of veneer (to exclude veneer for plywood) for this year's questionnaire. The secretariat explained that the experiment had not worked for all members of the IWG.

Holger Weimar asked about information on the amount of plywood produced with veneer or blockboard (a veneer / wood mix). If anybody has information about this please share it with him (holger.weimar@thuenen.de).

The ECE-EU questionnaire (species trade) was modified this year to drop the "ex" (partial) HS codes and to remove item 1.2.C.Other (which did not provide species information). This is the only place this item exists. Some additional checks were put into the questionnaire comparing ECE-EU with JQ2 for items that should be identical (1.2.C/NC, 6.C/NC).

Other minor changes were discussed and are shown in the presentation available on the meeting website.

3) Harmonised System 2027 (HS) status and plans

The secretariat presented the IWG draft list of changes to the Harmonised System 2027. This is a global trade classification administered by the World Customs Organization that is revised every five years.

Some participants pointed out that efforts to determine end-use of products (chips, particle board) would be time consuming and likely ineffectual, particularly for particle board. Physical characteristics of products were essential in making this distinction and it was not always clear that this could be made. Others urged the work on chips to continue.

A colleague commented that the impact of log export ban would mostly likely result in higher chip exports from the region of eastern Europe.

This list will be circulated to members of the Team and Working Party for further comments during the second half of 2021 as announced at the Working Party. A more complete list will be determined at the IWG meeting in January 2022 and a joint proposal made to the World Customs Organization later that year.

FAO requested (after the meeting) Team members to suggest any non-wood forest products that would be of interest to include in the HS revision.

CEPI (Confederation of European Paper Industry) said they were providing proposals to DG Taxud by August 2021 and agreed to provide information on this to the Team and secretariat to gather support.

There was a further discussion on the March 2021 decision by the UN Statistical Commission to proceed with a full revision of the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC). This will take place over the next several years. FAO had previously (October 2019) proposed adding a breakdown of manufacture of furniture (group 310) into wooden and other furniture. The ToS asked how EU's NACE compared with ISIC and also how assignment of facilities were made. NACE is identical to ISIC down to the 3-digit level. The assignment of facilities is done on the basis of greatest value-added.¹

4) Review of JQ 2019

The secretariat presented information on the replies to the JFSQ, highlighting that most replies were received and processed by the end of June. Processing of updates (18 in 2020) took more time. FAOSTAT continues to be main dissemination outlet.

The Team asked for data on use of FAOSTAT by country. The secretariat is circulating this to the Team.

The most significant problems in processing continue to be:

- Lack of clarity in blanks where it was not clear if data were known to be zero or not available. Not available data should be indicated with "...".
- Items with shared "ex" HS codes, although greatly reduced from previous versions of the JQ, continue to be unclear. Correspondents

¹ See paragraph 57 and 116 and following of ISIC Rev. 4 manual at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/Econ/Download/In%20Text/ISIC_Rev_4_publication_English.pdf

were requested to clarify what was done with the trade data for these items (item 3.2 and 4, 8.1.C and NC, 8.3.2 and 8.3.3).

- Aggregate items not matching total of subitems. The “bottom up” structure of FAO and ECE databases means the aggregates will be automatically summed up from the subitems so the secretariat makes sure the subitems equal the aggregate.

5) Timber Forecast Questionnaire deadline 2021 (TFQ)

The Team discussed the change in use of TFQ data with integration into the *Forest Products Annual Market Review*. This made the questionnaire deadline more critical as several weeks were needed for the publication to be printed. After some discussion an initial target date of mid-September was agreed.

6) New methods of working

Several delegates at the March 2021 Working Party meeting encouraged the various Teams of Specialists to advance work by using virtual meeting technologies and working in smaller groups.

The Team supported the idea of smaller group discussions focused on single topics. Countries could also share techniques (example of estimating non-marketed roundwood). The secretariat proposed sending a survey to gather interest in topics from previous meetings and ask members to indicate their interest in participating in that topic. These smaller discussions would be limited to those who expressed interest. In response to questions these groups would need to report recommendations to the Team and their meetings would not be considered official. The secretariat would support them to the extent possible.

The idea of smaller general discussions within the Team (similar to Sustainable Forest Management Team) was not supported. A question and answer session on the JFSQ in May for all correspondents was seen as useful.

7) Additional topics

The next general meeting is planned for September 2021 as an on-line event.

EPF (European Panel Federation) discussed the status of its proposal to revise the CN 2022 to include MDF density and non-coniferous plywood by species (birch, poplar, eucalyptus).

The secretariat informed the Team that the March 2021 meeting of the ECE/FAO Working Party had generally supported the merger of the Team with the Wood Energy Team. Terms of reference were being prepared for

endorsement at the November joint session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) and the European Forestry Commission (EFC).

The nomination procedure to join the Team was clarified as it had so far been less formal than in other Teams of Specialists.

- Every four years the secretariat, as part of new programme of work, will write to the delegate representing country at the COFFI/EFC to nominate members of each Team of Specialists. These will normally take effect at the next meeting of the Team following the start of the programme. The next one will cover 2022-2025.
- Government representatives can nominate members at any time. These will normally be immediately accepted.
- The secretariat or non-government groups or individuals can suggest members. These will be reviewed by the Team leadership and subject to confirmation by the Team at the next official meeting.