

Report of ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics

Thursday-Friday, 28-29 April 2022, via Teams
(2-4:30 p.m. CET on 28th and 1-3:30 p.m. on 29th)

This is the first meeting of the Team of Specialists (ToS) under the Programme of Work 2022-2025. This ToS has been merged from the previous Programme's ToS on Forest Products Statistics and ToS on Wood Energy.

Leader: Mr. Francisco Aguilar

Deputy Leaders: Mr. Branko Glavonjic, Ms. Ewa Leszczyszyn, Ms. Graça Louro and Mr. Holger Weimar

1) Welcome, introductions

Thirty-seven participants including representatives of seventeen countries, three industry organizations and Eurostat, as well as experts, briefly presented themselves.

2) Leadership election

The team elected Mr. Francisco Aguilar as the Team Leader and elected the following Deputy Leaders: Mr. Branko Glavonjic, Ms. Ewa Leszczyszyn, Ms. Graça Louro, and Mr. Holger Weimar.

3) Adoption of agenda

The team adopted the agenda without changes.

4) Methods of Work

The leaders of the previous ToS presented their activities during the past four years.

The secretariat briefly reviewed the mandate of the new ToS.¹

The secretariat then proposed to continue with one annual Team meeting with topics for statistics on forest products and wood energy. The Secretariat proposed that “*ad hoc* subteams” can be created on topics of interest, not necessarily with secretariat support, not necessarily with the entire team.

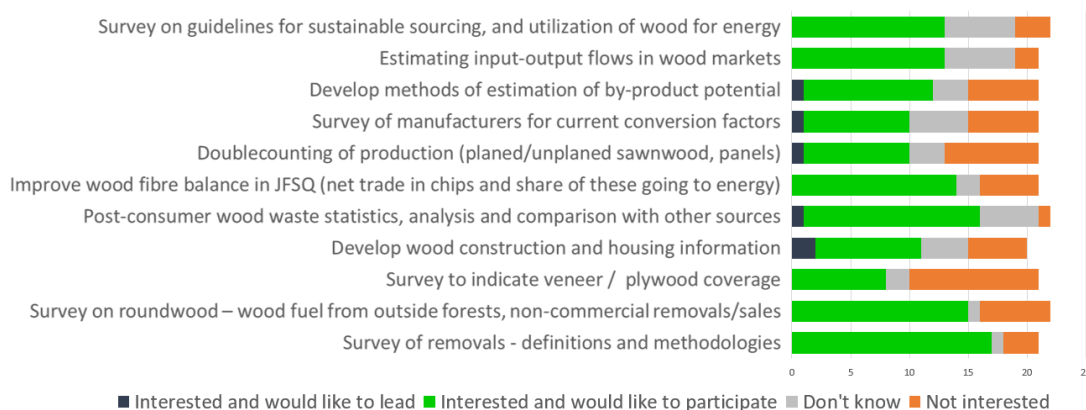
The ToS discussed the possible setup of “*ad hoc* task groups” and was favourable of that there should be two groups that should work on tasks within defined scopes. There was a discussion of possible tasks.

There was a discussion that *ad hoc* task groups should communicate with the ToS to ensure all ToS members are abreast of technical discussions and informed of progress periodically.

¹ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Mandate_Terms%20of%20Reference%20of%20the%20ECE_FAO%20Teams%20of%20Specialists%20-%20ToS%20on%20Forest%20Products%20and%20Wood%20Energy%20Statistics.pdf

The Secretariat shared the results of an online survey of ToS members on topics of interest that could possibly be addressed by *ad hoc* task groups (see graph of survey results).

Survey results of *ad hoc* tasks:



There was agreement to form two *ad hoc* task groups initially, with one focusing on a topic related to wood energy statistics and another focusing on a topic related to forest products statistics.

Support for the following tasks was expressed in particular:

- Develop wood construction and housing statistics
- Post-consumer wood waste and by-products statistics
- Survey of manufacturers for current conversion factors
- Survey of removals
- Survey on guidelines for sustainable sourcing and utilization of wood for energy

There was support for the idea that tasks should clearly focus on statistics and not policy advice.

The ToS agreed to form two *ad hoc* task groups:

1. **Review of statistics regarding removals to share information, identify gaps and inconsistencies in definitions and methodologies**, coordinated by Mr. Michal Synek and Ms. Graça Louro.

The agreed tasks for this group are:

- 1) Create questionnaire to understand differences in removal statistics between countries. What is counted, what is excluded?
 - 2) Compare methodologies on how data is collected.
2. **Review of methods of data collection to better respond to policy questions on wood energy supply-chain**, coordinated by Ms. Consuelo Brandeis and Mr. Sebastian Glasenapp.

The first meeting of the group will define the task in more detail.

The task group coordinators will convene the first meetings of the task groups in consultation with the Team Leader and Secretariat.

The ToS discussed the governance and agreed that the *ad hoc* task groups:

- Are created by decision of, and are wholly part of, the Team of Specialists. For the avoidance of doubt, ad hoc task groups are not independent bodies.
- Are task-based and dissolve upon completion of the approved task or by decision of the Team of Specialists at any time.
- Have a Task Coordinator to coordinate the implementation of the approved task by the members of the ad hoc task group.
- Are self-coordinated and the ECE/FAO Secretariat and Team Leader are a member and must be informed of all and invited to join all activities of the ad hoc task group.
- May not enter into contracts, agreements or commitments of any nature, including those of an informal and/or verbal nature, with any individual, organization or authority.
- With the agreement of the Team Leader, may request the Secretariat to invite external experts to meetings of the *ad hoc* task group.
- May not issue public statements in any form.
- May not engage in any form of communication with any individuals, organizations and/or authorities external to the ToS unless explicitly approved by the Team Leader in writing, in consultation with the Secretariat, and strictly required for the implementation of the approved task. The Team Leader and Secretariat should be copied on all written communication and invited to participate in meetings and calls.

Furthermore, the ToS agreed that:

- *Ad hoc* task groups, including the Task Coordinator and all members, do not and may not claim to represent the ToS nor the ECE/FAO Secretariat in any capacity or form.
- The work and outputs of *ad hoc* task group will be within - and fully aligned with - the mandate of the ToS and its objectives.
- Any and all members of the ToS and representatives of the ECE and FAO Secretariat may participate in the activities of *ad hoc* task groups.

5) Review of ECE/FAO activities.

a. **Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JFSQ)**

The Secretariat presented the JFSQ 2020 work and covered the rate of replies, Common problems and processing issues were identified, and presented plans for the 2021 cycle

b. **Timber Forecast Questionnaire (TFQ)**

- i. The Secretariat noted that forecasts are being published only for reporting countries and asked the team for its feedback on this approach. There were no objections raised.
- ii. The Secretariat noted that there is no confirmed plan for the Market Discussion during COFFI, so there is no confirmed deadline for the Timber Forecast Questionnaire. The Secretariat noted that end

September or mid-October is a likely deadline. This will be discussed further at the Joint Working Party.

- c. **Engineered Wood Products (EWP).** The secretariat presented that the EWP has been issued twice as a trial questionnaire with limited results. These products are included in the HS trade classification starting in 2022, so there is an expectation that better data will be available starting for the 2022 reporting year.

The consensus of the team was to seek to include EWPs as an integral part of the JFSQ in 2022, perhaps limited to the UNECE region, and not to issue the EWP as a stand-alone questionnaire on a trial basis.

- d. **Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE)**
 - i. Mr. Sebastian Glasenapp presented the preliminary results from the 2019 JWEE data, noting that the response rate has decreased, and that the quality of replies is variable.
 - ii. The Secretariat clarified that it is not easy to correct historical data given the database structure.
 - iii. The Secretariat presented plans for the 2021 round and highlighted the intention to organize a capacity building event, preferably in person. The Secretariat invited Team members to consider hosting such an event.
- e. The Secretariat encouraged team members to use and help publicize the INForest website (<https://forest-data.unece.org/>) with their networks.

6) **Harmonised System trade classification**

- a. The Secretariat presented the changes in 2022, as the 2022 revision of the HS is now in force. These changes will be incorporated in the JFSQ 2022.
- b. The Secretariat presented the list of proposals for HS 2027 from the 35th meeting of the IWG, reflecting input from team members. These were supported by the Team. Particular support was expressed for laminated flooring and Oak barrels.
- c. Ms. Iana Arkhipova (FAO) presented on the preparation of the package of proposals for HS 2027 to World Customs Organization, including the planned milestones and dates.

7) **Intersecretariat Working Group on Forest Sector Statistics (IWG) meetings.**

The secretariat briefed the team members on the results of the IWG discussions. This included changes to 2021 JFSQ and meetings held by FAO and ECE with the UN COMTRADE group in spring 2021 about improving conversion factors in COMTRADE and having better unit values checks.

Ms. Ashley Steel (FAO) presented on proposed revisions to the FAOSTAT flag system, and how this links to the structure of the JQ to flags. In particular, she highlighted two proposals under consideration to flag aggregate data. The first was summarized as the “67% rule,” whereby aggregates of official data and estimates would be flagged as “official” if 67% or more of the underlying data is official and would be flagged as “estimate” if less than 67% of the underlying data is official. The second would flag aggregate data as an “aggregate.” The team questioned why the proposed threshold in the first approach was set at 67% and whether there was any substantive justification for this approach. **The team expressed a clear preference for the second approach (to flag data as “aggregate”) and encouraged that this be recommended to the ECE/FAO Joint Working Party.**

The Secretariat then presented on plans for the JQ2022. **Members were asked to suggest items to add or drop from the questionnaires.**² Suggestions can also be provided at the Working Party in June 2022 and would then be considered by the IWG. The secretariat presented a proposal to differentiate veneer by purpose (of which to be used in plywood) and this was supported by the Team. A recommendation was to clarify that this should refer to, e.g., veneer that is “directly used in plywood production.”

8) **Statistical systems**

The secretariat presented and discussed differences between the JFSQ and COMTRADE. Several team members highlighted the presence of problematic and inconsistent information in COMTRADE. The Team agreed that data supplied through the JFSQ by national correspondents is important to collect and should be preferred over COMTRADE data.

9) **Updates**

Ms. Ashley Steel (FAO) presented on FAO’s work to update its wood fuel model. This is expected to result in revisions of estimated wood fuel consumption (and thus removals) that, for many countries globally, are significantly higher than projections made using the previous (2005) FAO model. This is expected to mostly affect non-ECE countries.

The Secretariat asked the team if there would be interest in organizing an event on the revision of the EU Renewable Energy Directive, and there was significant support for this idea.

Mr. Rajmund Laczko of Eurostat presented the new Eurostat biomass questionnaire that is completed by energy statisticians. He clarified that the questionnaire only covers solid biomass. The Team acknowledged that this would be a good opportunity to share contacts who may help improve responses to the JWEE.

Mr. Michal Synek presented the Czech national data platform, which is developed using the INForest source code and provides access to national data as well as a link to INForest data. The Team welcomed the sharing of source code by INForest to support this effort and congratulated Mr. Synek and Czech representatives for this important accomplishment.

While there was not time to present during the Team meeting, Mr. Jukka Torvelainen advised that Finnish Statistical Yearbook of Forestry 2021 was released in November 2021. The most recent statistics in the book deal mainly with 2020. Bilingual (Finnish, English) pdf is available in:
<https://jukuri.luke.fi/handle/10024/551346>

² Principles for items on the JQ include the following: (a) a clear definition, including HS codes; (b) potential to collect data; (c) interest shown in having data; (d) avoidance of duplication; (e) continuity of data series over time; and (f) changes are long lasting. Source: ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2007/3, para 14.

10) Next meeting, topics, timing and location

The Secretariat tentatively proposed that the next meeting of the team be held in March 2023 in Geneva, back-to-back with the Joint Working Party. The Team supported this and proposed that the meeting include 1 full day for the Team meeting as well as another half day meeting for the *ad hoc* task groups (1.5 days total).

The 2023 ToS annual meeting is expected to take place in-person with no hybrid (online/in-person) system of participation.

11) Other business

The Team warmly acknowledged and thanked Mr. Alex McCusker for his many years of outstanding contributions and exemplary support to forest products statistics.

The ToS wished Mr. McCusker the very best in all his future endeavours.