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Economic Commission for Europe Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry

Eighty-first session

San Marino, 20-23 November 2023

Item 4 (d) (i) of the provisional agenda

**Joint Committee/Commission matters: Reporting on the
implementation of the 2021-2025 Integrated Programme of
Work and related decisions: Report of the Joint Working
Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management**

Food and Agriculture Organization European Forestry Commission

Forty-second session

San Marino, 20-23 November 2023 session

Options for the review process of the Integrated Programme of Work

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At its last session (November 2021), the joint session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (at its seventy-ninth session) and the European Forestry Commission of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (at its forty-first session) adopted its Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) for the period 2022–2025 (Annex II of Document ECE/TIM/2021/2–FO:EFC/2021/2). Should the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) decide to continue their joint work, a joint Integrated Programme of Work for the period 2026-2029 would be needed.

At its 44th session (June 2023), the joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management discussed the proposed options for the review process of the IPoW and indicated its preference for one (or two) secretariat-organized hybrid workshops for member States and stakeholders. The Joint Working Party also requested the secretariat to transmit this preference to the joint session of Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) and European Forestry Commission (EFC) (ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2023/2).

The Committee and the Commission are invited to decide on the preferred option for the review process of the Integrated Programme of Work



1. Background

1. The joint session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry of the Economic Commission for Europe (at its seventy-ninth session) and the European Forestry Commission of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (at its forty-first session) adopted the integrated programme of work (IPoW) of the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section (Joint Section) for the period 2022 – 2025 (Annex II of Document ECE/TIM/2021/2–FO:EFC/2021/2).
2. A review of the IPoW has to be undertaken every four years. The outcome of the review process during 2024-2025 will determine priorities for the Integrated Programme of Work up to 2029.
3. The Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management (Joint Working Party), as a subsidiary body of the Committee, contributes to the implementation of the IPoW through its Teams of Specialists as well as technical advice.
4. It is in this context that the Joint Working Party invites member States to provide guidance on how to best conduct the review process of the Integrated Programme of Work.
5. The objective of the review process is to assess the scope, structure and content of the programme; methods; partnerships; outputs; objectives; distribution of work under COFFI and EFC and will consist of **(a) the evaluation of the 2022-2025 IPoW**, taking into consideration the results of its implementation and past experience; and **(b) the development of a proposal for the IPoW for 2026-2029**.
6. Based on the guidance received, the secretariat will prepare a tentative timeline for a roadmap of the review of the Integrated Programme of Work for the consideration by the Joint Session of COFFI and EFC in November 2023.
7. The draft IPoW 2026-2029 would be prepared in the first half of 2024 in order to give member States enough time to discuss it in 2024 and 2025. The Programme of Work 2026-2029 is expected to be submitted for endorsement to the joint session of COFFI and the EFC in autumn 2025.
8. Should the ECE and FAO decide to continue their joint work, a joint Integrated Programme of Work for the period 2026-2029 would be needed.

2. Options for the review process conduct of the Integrated Programme of Work

9. The review of the IPoW, no matter which process is retained, will cover the Programme of work, the Terms of Reference of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management, the composition and Terms of Reference of the ECE/FAO Teams of Specialists and the Guidelines for ECE/FAO Teams of Specialists. The secretariat proposes the following three options for conducting the review of the current Integrated Programme of Work to be organized in 2024:
 - (a) Secretariat-organized hybrid workshop(s);
 - (b) External evaluation and draft IPoW prepared by secretariat;
 - (c) Review by secretariat.

A. Secretariat-organized hybrid workshop

10. The first option is a secretariat-organized workshop with member States - in a two-day English-only hybrid format, similar to the review process conducted in 2020¹.
11. **Process:**

¹ <https://unece.org/info/events/event/349206>.

(a) Participants will be invited to (a) evaluate the 2022-2025 IPoW during the first part of the workshop;

(b) Based on the outcome of the first part, participants will be invited to develop a proposal for the IPoW for 2026-2029 will in the second part of the workshop.

12. **Participation:** The workshop will be open for officially nominated representatives from member States only and will be held in Geneva with an option of online participation to review the first draft and taking into consideration initial comments received from member States.

13. **Timing:** The first workshop could be held back-to-back with the Joint Working Party session in 2024 in order to allow for a maximum number of in-person delegations. If necessary, a second such workshop could be organized back-to-back with the next COFFI session in November 2024.

14. **Financial implications:** None.

B. External evaluation and draft Integrated Programme of Work prepared by secretariat

15. The second option is a thorough external evaluation conducted by a third-party independent evaluator.

16. **Process and timing:**

(a) The independent evaluator will thoroughly (a) evaluate the 2022-2025 IPoW regarding its relevance, coherence, efficiency and sustainability in the context of the needs of member States and the shifting global policy agenda. This could include but would not be limited to using a questionnaire to member States and observers, which could be followed up by interviews with stakeholders. The independent evaluator will provide a report on the findings of the review;

(b) The secretariat develops a proposal for the IPoW for 2026-2029 based on the conclusions and recommendations by the external evaluator, that would be presented and discussed during the Joint Working Party 2025.

17. **Financial implications:** This option has financial implications of around 20,000 USD which member States would need to pledge funds for an the Executive Committee (EXCOM) approved project to finance this external evaluation.

C. Review by the secretariat

18. The third option is a self-evaluation process conducted by the secretariat.

19. **Process and timing:**

(a) The secretariat will review the 2022-2025 IPoW in the context of the needs of member States and the shifting global policy agenda and the resources available in the secretariat. This could include but would not be limited to using a questionnaire to member States and observers, which could be followed up by interviews with stakeholders;

(b) Based on the outcome of (a), the secretariat will develop a proposal for the IPoW for 2026-2029 that would be presented and discussed during the Joint Working Party 2025.

20. **Financial implications:** This option has financial implications for the secretariat and no budget implications for member States.
