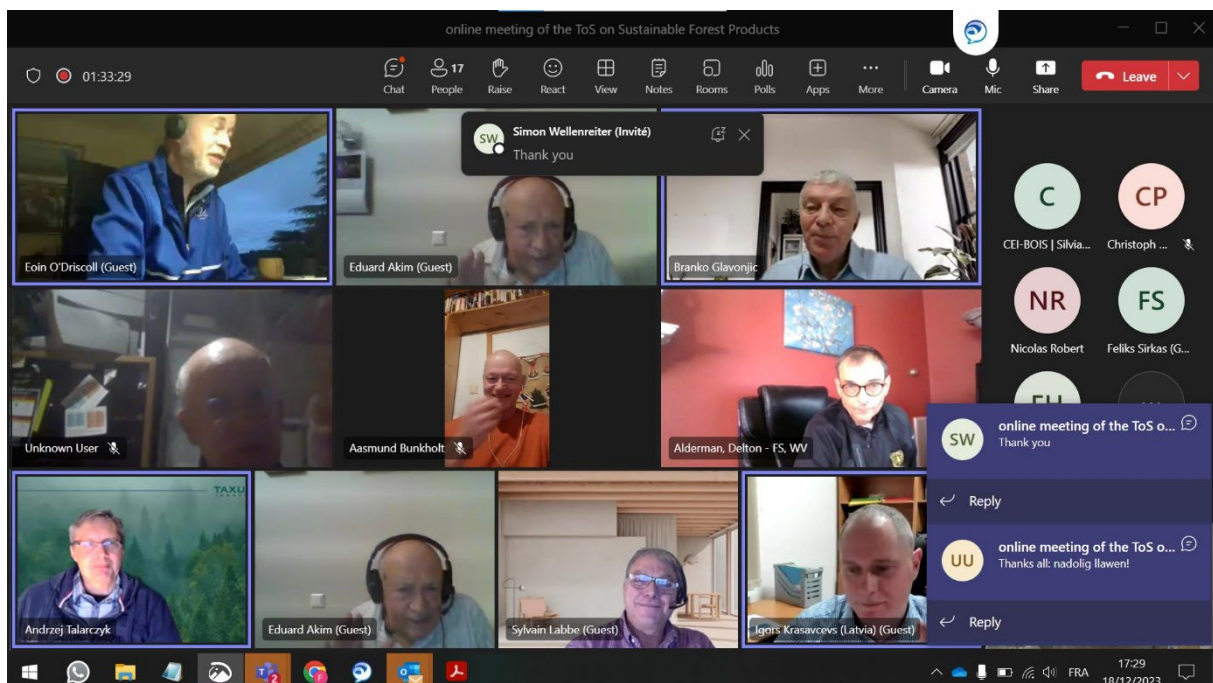


UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Sustainable Forest Products

*Team meeting, 4-5:30 pm CET, 18th December 2023
online*

draft Report (as of 09 February 2024)



Eoin O’Driscoll, Team Leader of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists (ToS) on Sustainable Forest Products welcomed the 26 members of the team present (see Annex II) and opened the meeting. The group adopted the draft agenda (see Annex I) without further amendments (Item 1) and each participant provided a short introduction (Item 2).

The secretariat briefly presented the [Forest Products Annual Market Review \(FPAMR\) 2022-2023](#) which was published prior to FOERSTA2023 the Joint Session of the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission. The secretariat also highlighted the newly developed **Data Briefs** on sawn softwood, pulp and paper and wood energy. All of these documents are available on the website of the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section ([link](#)).

The secretariat briefly updated the ToS on the progress made in implementing the recommendation from the **self-evaluation of the FPAMR** which involved external evaluators looking into the work of the secretariat. The secretariat mentioned the recommendations from the previous evaluation, such as exploring new formats for publishing to reduce the workload. The introduction of data briefs and the consideration of electronic publications with responsive designs for handheld devices were discussed as potential improvements. The related documents and progress reports are available on the website of the UNECE ([link](#)).

The ensuing discussion by the ToS considered how to best mitigate potential resource constraints and challenges in **publishing information of the FPAMR in 2024**. Mr. Wall suggested that the secretariat, together with the ToS (namely those who are or would be potential authors of various chapters and sub-chapters), could anticipate such constraints and start seeking for possible solutions. This could be initiated by a detailed discussion on what resources ToS members have individually and collectively to produce a market assessment.

The ToS leader then provided an overview of the recent **Market Discussion during the FORESTA2023**, expressing gratitude to the secretariat for the organization and speakers for their availability. The secretariat discussed the three-hour market discussion session, highlighting positive feedback. All the presentations can be found on the website of the meeting ([link](#)).

The secretariat mentioned that delegates to FOERSTA2023 emphasized the importance of the forest sector’s role in addressing global challenges, such as climate change and the circular economy. There was a focus on the need for reliable and timely data, especially in the context of market dynamics and trends. The ToS leader highlighted the challenges related to data collection and analysis, emphasizing the importance of modernizing these processes to improve efficiency and reduce errors. The discussion touched upon the potential use of automated text generation to streamline the publication of information and the Secretariat was invited to organize a short webinar where members could present their applications.

The ToS also stressed the importance of attracting high-level participants for the 2024 session. The conversation touched on the importance of excellent speakers, remote

presentations, and the impact of in-person-only meetings on attendance. The secretariat further explained that the **Market Discussions during the 2024 UNECE COFFI session may be much shorter** since the main focus of the session will be on the Integrated Program of Work. In the face of this possibility, the ToS stressed that a three-hour meeting is already a compromise and not enough time to discuss adequately all or even main market segments and encouraged the secretariat to increase the segment to at least a full day. The secretariat also mentioned the challenges of organizing an in-person-only meeting and the ToS expressed support for a three-hour Market Discussion in future COFFI sessions.

The secretariat introduced the issue on **low-carbon construction with wood** by briefly presenting the "Draft policy guidelines and principles on advancing low-carbon construction in cities" ([link](#)) as they were presented during FORESTA2023. The team expressed its appreciation and will provide its input in the finalization of the document. The ToS then discussed the use of wood as a key structural material in low-carbon construction to reduce carbon emissions in the built environment and agreed that the current policy attention for decarbonizing the built environment (including embodied emissions) is a great opportunity for the forest and forest products sectors. The secretariat briefly presented its past activities in organizing or contributing to various events and webinars related to wood and construction, highlighting the growing interest in promoting wood as a building material. Silvia Melegari from CEI-BOIS mentioned the **project "Pop Wood"** ([link](#)). This initiative aims to promote the use of wood with wood construction as one of key markets.

The ToS highlighted the need to **connect the issue of low-carbon construction with affordable housing** which potentially will allow the Joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section to link better with the UNECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management ([link](#)). The ToS leader draw attention to the need to further **integrate wood into the broader context of building materials for sustainable construction**. The ToS discussed the challenges of promoting wood, with the secretariat stressing the importance of framing the message in terms of low-carbon and environmental benefits.

Mr. Pfemeter (ToS Austria) warns against being too optimistic about the CO₂ reduction effect of building with wood compared to other materials. Sectors such as the concrete, steel and plastics industries are conducting intensive research into reducing the process-related CO₂ footprint of their products and services (Arc furnace, H₂, CCU und CCS) while at the same time producing with renewable energies (fossil fuel consumption an process related emissions are the reason for their bad THG-performance). The conversion of the wood industry's production processes to renewable energies, in particular bioenergy from residues from the production process, is therefore the basis for maintaining the competitiveness of the industry. With BIOCCS, the industry has the unique opportunity and unique selling point to operate not only CO₂-neutrally, but also CO₂-negatively (and generate additional income). There are also beginning initiatives to electrify production (heat pumps in low-temperature processes for example wood drying) and provide gaseous and liquid biofuels for other sectors (sustainable aviation fuels, green gas).

European Union Regulation on Deforestation-free products (EUDR): The secretariat emphasized its importance due to its potential impact on trade within and into and out of the EU. The regulation is set to come into force by the end of December 2024.

Energy Transition in Forest and Wood Processing Industry: Mr. Pfemeter introduced the topic and highlighted that the forest-based industries could replace all the fossil-based energy sources with biomass.

Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS): Mr. Pfemeter further suggested the team could focus on bioenergy and carbon capture and storage, with the aim to reduce emissions and transition towards renewable energy sources in the industry. BECCS could be fully compatible with wood used for low carbon construction, since it will allow for storing the entire amount of the harvested wood for a long period and not only the carbon contained in the products used in construction.

High-Density Biofuels: Prof. Akim explained that development of high-density solid biofuels, particularly briquettes, could potentially be used in various industries for securing a carbon-neutral supply of energy.

Reuse of Building Materials and Circular Economy: Mr. Bunkholt highlighted the increasing trend in Norway where public procurement requires a certain percentage of the raw material used to be derived from reused materials. One of the focuses is on extending the lifespan of existing buildings (e.g. opting for a vertical extension of the existing usable space and reducing CO₂ emissions).

New Type of Office Paper: Prof. Eduard Akim presented a new type of office paper produced with Totally Chlorine-Free process for bleaching, emphasizing its eco-friendly characteristics and potential applications.

The secretariat organized a quick in-meeting poll about the priorities by colleagues the result of which are contained in ANNEX III. The secretariat summarized the poll results, highlighting the priority of the EUDR and the importance of addressing policy guidelines on construction and the reuse of building materials. Mr. Labbé briefly mentioned another potential issue related to regulations on biodiversity that might impact the market in the future.

The secretariat outlined the next steps, including using the meeting recording to prepare a summary, planning a longer team meeting in the first quarter of the 2025 to discuss the EUDR, low-carbon construction, and other topics, and exploring the possibility of organizing a webinar or a meeting in Brussels, ideally in the first quarter of 2024.

The meeting concluded with The ToS leader O'Driscoll thanking the participants for their contributions, wishing everyone a happy Christmas, and expressing gratitude for their positive engagement.

Annex I:

Agenda

- Item 1. Adoption of the agenda
- Item 2. Tour de table
- Item 3. Updates by the secretariat, followed by discussion and guidance by the ToS:
 - a) Forest Products Annual Market Review and Data Briefs 2023
 - Status and issues
 - Self-evaluation of the FPAMR
 - b) Market discussion 2023
 - Review of market discussion at FORESTA2023 in San Marino
 - c) Work on low-carbon carbon construction
 - Draft policy brief
 - Past and future events
- Item 4. Update on building links with the UNECE Housing and Land Use Secretariat; (Eoin O’Driscoll).
- Item 5. Planning 2024 - future ToS meeting(s) and topics for discussion (when and how – rough planning):
 - a) Data and place of next meeting
 - b) Automated text generation for analytical work
 - c) EUDR
 - d) Energy Transition in the forest- and wood processing Industry
 - e) Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) - what role for the wood industry to achieve negative emissions targets
 - f) High density solid biofuels
 - g) Reuse of building materials, including wood
 - h) Using wood for vertical extension of existing building stock
 - i) Office paper with a reduced carbon footprint and a transition from Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF) to Totally Chlorine Free (TCF) bleach – industrial production experience (short intro by Prof. Akim).
- Item 6. Any other business
- Item 7. Closing of the meeting

Annex II:

List of Participants:

Mr. Orifjon Abidov

Mr. Eduard Akim

Mr. Delton Alderman

Mr. Aasmund Bunkholt

Mr. Ivan Eastin

Ms. Katie Fernholz

Mr. Branko Glavonjic

Ms. Annika Hyytiä

Mr. Nikolai Ivanov

Mr. Igors Krasavcevs

Mr. Sylvain Labbe

Mr. Dieter Lechner

Ms. Linda Matole

Ms. Silvia Melegari

Mr. Igor Novoselov

Mr. Eoin O'Driscoll

Mr. Christoph Pfemeter

Mr. Nicolas Robert

Mr. Feliks Sirkas

Mr. Florian Steierer

Mr. Reima Sutinen

Mr. Andrzej Talarczyk

Mr. Jeremy Wall

Mr. Holger Weimar

Mr. Simon Wellenreiter

Annex III:

Result of the in session online poll

