

## Meeting Report

### 3rd Meeting of the Team of Specialists on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics

20-21 May 2024

H-Building, Room H-207/208/209  
Palais des Nations

Geneva, Switzerland

Team Leader: Mr. Francisco Aguilar  
Deputy Leaders: Mr. Branko Glavonjic, Ms. Ewa Leszczyszyn, Ms. Graça Louro and Mr. Holger Weimar  
Team Secretary: Daniel Griswold, UNECE

#### **Agenda Item 1: Welcome, introductions.**

Twenty-five participants, including seven women, and including representatives of 13 countries, three non-governmental organizations, two international organizations, and two private sector entities attended the meeting.

Participants briefly introduced themselves to open the meeting. The Secretariat gave an introductory presentation recalling the mandate and activities of the Team.

#### **Agenda Item 2: Adoption of agenda**

The Team of Specialists (hereforth "ToS" or "Team") adopted the agenda and added one topic (biocommerce) to agenda item 6. The Team agreed to discuss agenda item 8 after agenda item 4.

#### **Agenda Item 3: Presentation of ECE/FAO activities**

##### *Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JFSQ)*

The Secretariat informed that 44 member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) replied to the JFSQ for 2022 data, an increase of 2 from the previous year, and presented revisions to the JFSQ for 2023 data agreed by the Intersecretariat Working Group on Forest Sector Statistics (IWG), as well as common problems and processing issues. In the ensuing discussion, the inclusion of HS code 4402.20 (of shell or nut) within the JFSQ-HS 2022 correspondence table was questioned, and the Team asked the IWG to consider the matter. The Secretariat invited Team members to propose wording to help increase the clarity of the JFSQ footnote for tropical roundwood and tropical sawnwood: "*correspondents are requested to check bilateral trade and include non-coniferous non-tropical species exported by tropical countries or imported from tropical countries or areas if the wood is credibly sourced from the tropical country or area.*"

The Secretariat informed that the deadline for the JFSQ for 2023 data replies is 10 June 2024. The Secretariat informed that, due to the UN liquidity crisis, ECE does not have resources

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available to check and validate national replies to the JFSQ for 2023 data and noted that this is an exceptional situation that is not expected to be repeated in 2025.

### *Timber Forecast Questionnaire (TFQ)*

The Secretariat reported that 28 member States replied to the TFQ in 2023, an increase of 7 from 2022, and informed that in 2024 the TFQ will be shared with national correspondents by 30 August 2024, and that the deadline for national replies is 1 October 2024.

### *Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE)*

Mr. Sebastian Glasenapp informed the Team about the completion of the JWEE data collection and processing. In total 26 member states participated in the JWEE reporting for the reporting year 2021, which represents a stable participation compared to 2019. Key findings include that the share of member states reporting data on post-consumer recovered wood increased compared to 2019, and that the consumption of wood pellets and briquettes continues to grow in 15 member states that provided data since 2011. Team members were also informed about the development of JWEE metrics in 12 member states that have submitted data for the 2009-2021 period. The information presented could be a starting point for the preparation of a manuscript (*ad hoc* task).

### *Statistical systems*

The Secretariat presented plans for the new ECE Central Data Platform for Forest Sector Statistics, which is currently under development.

The Team discussed potential enhancements to the platform over time and strongly supported the creation of a multi-donor project for the digitalization of forest sector statistics, including long-term support to sustain and further develop the platform, including expanding the datasets and features available. The Team recognizes the opportunities that investments in digitalization will create for the more efficient gathering and analyses of statistics.

## **Agenda Item 4: Intersecretariat Working Group on Forest Sector Statistics (IWG)**

### *Definition and Classification Review*

Representatives of the IWG presented a summary of questions by the IWG about definitions and classifications under HS 44.11/12/18, Fibreboard, Plywood and Engineered Wood Products, and whether they are aligned with today's industry.

Laminate flooring was highlighted, as trade is valued in the billions and most trade is reported as hardboard. The Team supported the desirability of identifying solutions to misclassification of laminate flooring, but no specific way forward was identified. The Team encouraged the IWG to monitor for potential solutions, as resources are available.

A representative of FAO informed the Team that the creation of new classification codes does not seem feasible to improve tracking of wood chip production, trade and consumption by raw material inputs, and end use of wood chips and particles. The proposal for a new CN code for wood chips based on bark contents was recently rejected. Therefore, national correspondents will have to continue to rely on their own expertise in providing JFSQ data

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on wood chips, residues and recovered postconsumer wood. The topic could be closed for now but can be revisited after several years.

### **Agenda Item 8: Peer Exchange**

As a case study for exchange, Team member presented the German national approach on removals data collection. It was shown that official statistics underestimate fellings considerably. The German approach of re-calculation of removals and fellings considers all domestic users of roundwood, and takes also imports, exports and stock changes into account. Results of the calculations are used for JFSQ removals reporting from 1995 to the current reporting year.

Another Team member presented the French national approach to data collection for the JWEE. The data is sourced from a questionnaire on the sale of wood energy, professional associations (pellets, briquettes, charcoal), and an estimation of household wood consumption based on population census, housing surveys, and a specific study on the origin of household wood. The results of this last study indicate that this portion represents about one-third of the total wood harvest in France.

### **Agenda Item 5: Ad Hoc Task Groups**

The Secretariat provided a brief background on the mandate of the Ad Hoc Task Groups and introduced the objectives of agenda item 5 to serve as an opportunity to brainstorm next steps for the Ad Hoc Task Groups.

#### *Ad Hoc Task Group on Wood Removals*

The coordinators of the Ad Hoc Task Group on Wood Removals presented an update on the work done to date, including the proposed template for country profiles of removals statistics.

The Team members then formed breakout groups to discuss feedback on the proposed template as well as recommendations for the final deliverable of the Ad Hoc Task Group, which were presented and discussed in plenary. The Team offered recommendations to the drafted country profile template to ensure the collection of quality data which were all welcomed by the coordinators.

The expected output is a summary of the responses to the country template detailing member state information on data regarding removals, to ultimately identify inconsistencies, gaps and opportunities for data improvements.

#### *Ad Hoc Task Group on Wood Energy Statistics*

The coordinators of the Ad Hoc Task Group on Wood Energy presented an update on the work done to date, including the proposed outline for a manuscript on wood energy metrics relevant to policy issues.

The Team members then formed breakout groups to discuss feedback on the proposed manuscript's outline, how to deal with JWEE data limitations (e. g. missing data), as well as recommendations for the final deliverable of the Ad Hoc Task Group, which were presented and discussed in plenary.

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Coordinators welcomed all observations and encouraged Team members to share any knowledge of other initiatives seeking similar information. Coordinators encouraged participation in the writing of a report stemming from the outline presented at the meeting, with several members agreeing to take part in the effort.

The expected output from this Ad Hoc task will be a written report on opportunities for enhancing data collection within the JWEE to help answer public policy questions, including the identification of relevant metrics.

The Team supported Mr. Michal Synek and Ms. Graça Louro to continue as coordinators of the Ad Hoc Task Group on Wood Removals Statistics, and Ms. Consuelo Brandeis and Mr. Sebastian Glasenapp to continue as coordinators of the Ad Hoc Task Group on Wood Energy Statistics.

### **Agenda Item 6: Emerging Topics and Update**

Team members were invited to present emerging topics and updates relevant to the Team, for a brainstorming discussion on topics that may be of interest to the Team in its activities going forward. The Team agreed that the scope of discussion was to brainstorm, and that the Team Leadership would consult after the Team meeting to determine the feasibility of possible next steps to pursue any proposed activities.

One Team member presented on the possibility of Tracking Wood Market Share as a Building Material. There was discussion and interest among the Team, with a recommendation that a first step may be an assessment of available information, including from other sectors, to determine if there truly is a data gap and whether there might be a role for the Team.

The representative of FAO presented an update on the methodology for statistical flags on FAOSTAT.

A Team member presented on linkages of the JFSQ to the System of Environmental and Economic Account and Forest Accounts under Eurostat.

A Team member then raised a question about the use of remote sensing in removals statistics, highlighting a study conducted using remote sensing that reached erroneous conclusions, yet received high attention from public and policymakers. The Team agreed that remote sensing is one method of data collection that can complement but not replace other data collection methods, Team members stressed the importance to sensitize users to the limitations of remote sensing data. The Team expressed interest in further exploring this topic.

A Team member gave a brief presentation about the need to improve data and taxonomy for bio-based materials and products, especially those from forest-based sources, given their increasing economic importance and links to policy objectives, including circular economy. The Team supported exploring potential collaboration with other relevant bodies, such as: the European Commission (including Eurostat), IEA, IRENA on this topic. Meanwhile, members are invited to share sources and contact details (to: stats.timber@un.org) for any anecdotal knowledge on this subject which they are already aware of. In due course, the European Commission's DG GROW may contact the ToS Secretariat to disseminate a note identifying the issue more clearly and with a view to possible future work in this field in which the ToS might play a valuable role, including through its networks.

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**Agenda Item 7: ToS Priorities for 2024-2025**

The Team was invited to provide feedback on the priorities for the Team, including but not limited to the work of the Ad Hoc Task Groups.

The Team split into breakout groups to discuss whether there are emerging JFSQ, JWEE or TFQ use-or user-needs that the Team should work to address, and why are they important. Another question was to discuss priorities for the Team to improve forest products and wood energy statistics.

In the ensuing plenary report back and discussion, the following topics and ideas were raised:

1. The Team supported that the current Ad Hoc Task Groups complete their final deliverables by 2025.
2. At the national level and UNECE regional level, the Team proposed that it would be worthwhile to map the various data collection instruments and methods related to forest products and wood energy statistics, identifying the focal points and responsible institutions, to better understand linkages, needs, opportunities for synergies and the potential repercussions of changes to any given instrument or method.
3. Team members had mixed views on a proposal to track removals of damaged wood, potentially in the JFSQ under a category such as "total removals C/NC of which damaged". A question was raised regarding the need for this information.
4. Team members supported the need for a modern central data platform as a tool to improve the data exchange among IWG members to reduce divergence in datasets during data checking and validation by different members of the IWG.
5. Team members proposed that countries may be invited to voluntarily revise historical JWEE data if better or more complete data is now available and suggested that it may also be possible to draw on a sample of revisions to inform estimates for other countries.
6. The Team supported increased communications with Eurostat and the EC Joint Research Centre regarding energy questionnaires.
7. The Team highlighted the importance of raising the visibility of the work of the Team and engaging as many experts as possible including from other sectors and the private sector.
8. The Team strongly supported the importance of completing the Central Data Platform for Forest Sector Statistics in the short term. Furthermore, the Team supported the need to significantly improve data visualization and to explore trends, noting that this can help to cross check data. The Team noted that Team members may help to develop data checking algorithms.
9. The Team supported the need to develop data briefs or short thematic reports to communicate data and key messages, highlighting that all organizations are invited to use the data collected through instruments including the JFSQ, TFQ and JWEE to develop such briefs and support communication and outreach.
10. The Team supported close cooperation with Eurostat and raised a question about the potential implications if JFSQ reporting becomes mandatory for EU member States.
11. The Team supported exploring potential use of forest products and wood energy data in the evaluation of carbon storage in wood products and potentially even carbon credits.
12. The Team highlighted the need to continue following new products that may be relevant to include in the JFSQ, JWEE or other instruments in the future, noting for example products related to bioeconomy and potentially even wood-based products

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such as chemicals and textiles, to have a comprehensive view. The Team also highlighted that post-consumer waste may continue to play an increasingly important role in industry.

13. The Team raised the possibility of measuring the use of wood in construction at the national level.

**Agenda Item 9: Next meeting, topics, timing and location**

Team members were invited to propose locations and dates for the 2025 meeting of the Team. Team members supported that a 1.5- or 2-day meeting is much preferable to a 1-day meeting.

**Agenda Item 10: Election of Team Leader and Deputies**

The Team elected Mr. Francisco Aguilar as Team Leader for the period 2024-2025. It elected Mr. Branko Glavonjic, Ms. Ewa Leszczyszyn, Ms. Graça Louro and Mr. Holger Weimar as Deputy leaders over the same period.