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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
European Forestry Commission

JOINT FAO/ECE WORKING PARTY ON FOREST ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS

Twenty-third session, 14-16 May 2001

Forest Resource Assessment 2000

(Item 3 of the Provisional Agenda)

Note by the secretariat

This document summarises recent developments and plans for the forest resource assessment work, in the temperate and boreal zones and for the global assessment. The Working Party is invited to review this work and provide guidance for future direction of work

1. Since the Working Party's last session, the secretariat has attached priority to completing the Temperate and Boreal Forest Resource Assessment 2000, a contribution to the Global Forest Resource Assessment. In particular:

- *Forest Resources of Europe, CIS, North America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan* was completed in paper form, along the lines agreed at the Working Party's session and issued in May 2000. It was also made available for consultation and downloading on the web;
- The team of specialists met in Finland in 2000 and reviewed the experience and started planning for the next stages;
- The data for the TBFRA countries were transmitted to Rome, and issued as part of the global FRA, first on the FAO Forestry Department website and then in paper form;
- The TBFRA data set was issued on a CD-ROM in April 2001;
- The core team for the European long term outlook study (EFSOS) will use the TBFRA data, using it as the basis for the work on the outlook for the European roundwood supply;
- The TBFRA team will meet again in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada in June 2001.

2. The note attached, prepared for the bureaux meeting, to be held just before the Working Party session, summarises the developments and main issues. The Working Party will be briefed orally on latest developments and plans for the global work.

3. The Working Party is invited to:

- Review the experience of the FRA 2000, both TBFRA and the global FRA, to which it is a contribution, identifying strong points and weak points of the output and the process, and their usefulness to the chief target group, policy makers at the national and international level;
- Take note of the contribution of TBFRA to supplying information on the indicators of sustainable forest management, and of the work of the Ministerial Conference to improve these indicators in the light of experience, notably through TBFRA;
- Provide guidance to the team of specialists on the requirements and strategic direction of future work on TBFRA and FRA. Aspects of interest concern methods of data collection, periodicity, scope, parameters to add or delete, sources of resources etc.

Annex 1

ECE Timber Committee FAO European Forestry Commission

Bureaux Meeting

UN-ECE/FAO TBFRA Programme: recent accomplishments and follow-up work

Introduction

1. The UN-ECE/FAO Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment (TBFRA) is one of the key elements of the Integrated Programme of Work of the UN/ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission. It is intended to be a source of policy relevant but objective data.
2. The most recent accomplishment, the Main TBFRA-2000 Report "*Forest Resources of Europe, CIS, North America, Australia, Japan and New Zealand*", was issued by the mid-2000. This publication was the culmination of an intensive investment of time and resources by the secretariat, national correspondents and partners. The work has been widely welcomed, and it is already used as an authoritative source of information on all aspects of forest resources. The TBFRA-2000 process and its results contributed to the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2000, and to the pan-European Process on the Protection of Forests (MCPFE), to which it has reported on the majority of quantitative indicators of sustainable forest management (SFM).
3. After the accomplishment of the Main Report, and after the follow-up work is finished, the UN-ECE/FAO TBFRA Programme is at a "cross-roads", when decisions have to be taken on the next actions/steps in this important and challenging area. Future TBFRA planning and development will depend on a number of factors, including the availability of resources and "mode of co-operation" with partners, and above all, on the co-ordination with the FAO Global FRA Programme, and within the MCPFE activities on C&I for SFM. It is getting extremely important already now to choose the right direction of the further TBFRA development. Taking into account that there are quite a number of different views on the subject, the TBFRA planning should be done especially carefully, so as to preserve the values of this programme.

Main TBFRA-2000 report and database

4. The TBFRA-2000 report was elaborated and published under the auspices of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics. It is available in paper format and on CD-Rom (together with the electronic database), as well on Internet, at the Timber Committee web-site <<<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber>>>.
5. The report contains the main TBFRA-2000 results and findings, which are based on the validated national replies to a detailed enquiry from the TBFRA correspondents of 55 temperate/boreal industrialised countries. It includes statistical and descriptive information together with analyses undertaken by high level experts in the following specific thematic areas: "Area of Forest and Other Wooded Land (OWL)", "Ownership and Management Status", "Wood Supply and Carbon Sequestration", "Biological Diversity and Environmental Protection", "Forest Condition and Damage", "Protective and Socio-Economic Functions".

6. These topics constitute the key Chapters of the report. The report also includes the “Introduction and Executive Summary”, as well as the section with the analysis of the “Reliability and Comparability” of the data. More than 80 main tables with the validated national statistics on more than 700 parameters on forest resources are included in the publication. This immense information set makes a unique contribution to the user community.

7. The joint session of the UN/ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission (October 2001) confirmed the conclusions of the Bureaux (May 2000) that the TBFRA value went beyond the publication of results, or a simple and direct use of data. The TBFRA process itself plays a stimulating role, it has helped to improve national and international partnerships, it has motivated the forest resources inventory/assessment work and development of the data collection systems at the national level. In particular, the value of the internationally agreed set of terms and definitions, as well as the contribution to the international forest policy dialogue, were underlined. The Bureaux and Joint Session stressed the importance of the public relations and publicity work after the accomplishment of the project.

8. After the accomplishment of the project, the secretariat has launched all the available instruments for public relations and dissemination of the TBFRA information. A number of press releases were issued, and the information on the project was published in many professional journals and periodicals. The start of this work was reported to the Joint TC/EFC Session in October, and this work still continues.

9. The list of the recorded feedback and highlights on the TBFRA publication is quite long. It worth just to mention such mass-media tools and forums, as “Financial Times”, “Holz-Zentralblatt”, “TTJ Timber & Wood Products”, UN-Wire, UN Regional Commissions, EUROSTAT, IUFRO, WWF and EFI publications, XXI IUFRO World Forestry Congress, national professional magazines, like “AFZ-DerWald” (Germany) or “Prace Instytutu Technologii Drewna” (Poland), requests and responses from many individual researchers and other TBFRA information users. The TBFRA information figured prominently in the top-level climate negotiations at The Hague in November 2000, and other forums, events and workshops. The TBFRA publication is on the high request, and the stock of its hard copies is running out despite of the quite high price of the publication (about USD 150).

10. The TBFRA electronic database was designed and developed to help in preparing the main TBFRA report, and to facilitate the dissemination of the information. It allows fast and easy use of both the data in the report and the raw data themselves. The database and the main report were published in April this year on CD-Rom. The electronic database (ACCESS) services ensure the analysis of the raw data, reproduction of each of the tables in the printed report, checking the internal consistency of the country data.

11. It also allows use of graphic tools such as charts and maps, use of accompanying footnotes and remarks together with the numeric data, import of data to other platforms such as Word or Excel for further possible processing. The database is accessible through an interface that assists the user in exploiting it without any particular knowledge of ACCESS. Experienced users may, however wish to enjoy larger freedom in working with the data, so they can leave this interface and switch to ACCESS.

12. Internal synergies are also being developed between TBFRA and other parts of the ECE/FAO programme, notably the outlook study work (EFSOS, see TIM/EFC/WP.2/20012). In particular, TBFRA data will be the basis for the analysis of the outlook for European roundwood supply, and the help of TBFRA correspondents will be requested to provide some extra information to enable the data to be used more effectively in the structure of the EFISCEN model.

13. The TBFRA contribution to the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest In Europe (MCPFE) was noted by the Joint TC/EFC session specifically. The delegations of practically all major forestry countries at the session expressed their satisfaction with the TBFRA implementation, which “provided a significant improvement of the knowledge on the world forest resources”. The countries also provided very useful “health warnings” on the future FRA developments, noting in particular the danger of over-burdening national correspondents with the excessively ambitious enquiry, non-justified inclusion of new parameters, changes in definitions, etc. The session recognised that the nature of TBFRA work varied over time on a cyclical basis.

Team of Specialists on TBFRA

14. The next meeting of the Team of Specialists (ToS) on the Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment will be held in June 2001 (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada) in conjunction with the session of the Canadian Forest Inventory Committee. The role of the ToS as regards the preparation and implementation of the forest resources assessments was emphasised by the parent bodies.

15. The Team should review the TBFRA follow-up work, consider the current (and possible) use and forest policy implications of the TBFRA findings, analyse the lessons learned, and discuss the preparation for the next round of Assessment. Two special topics “*Forest Resources and Forest Inventory in Canada*” and “*Forest Resources and their assessment in the Russian Federation*” are on the agenda of the meeting.

16. Although the core TBFRA methodological approach (*national correspondents network & replies to the detailed enquiry*) has been preserved untouched for a long period, the latest advances in information technology (*internet, flexible and user-friendly software, possibilities of the high-level database development and DB management, CD-Rom presentation of results, etc*), has made this methodology quite a flexible tool for the collection of information of comparable at the international level. The recent developments should urge the Team of Specialists to reconsider (adjust to the present-day demands) the procedures of the TBFRA, including the modalities of the preparation for the next round of the assessment.

17. The network of national correspondents, expertise of the TBFRA team of specialists (which guarantees a scientifically-based advice), the experience of the UN-ECE/FAO secretariat, the inter-governmental nature of the co-operation within the TBFRA project, and many other advantages give an opportunity to elaborate an optimal and well-balanced framework for the future TBFRA implementation.

18. The common global platform /framework (guidelines, and set of terms and definitions) should be elaborated and agreed at the earliest possible stage in the close ECE (Geneva) and FAO (Rome) co-operation, and this co-operation is vital for the success of the next round of the assessment. There should be a strong UN/ECE and FAO commitment to maintain unchanged (to the extent possible) the existing set of the TBFRA terms and definitions. If any changes were appear necessary, they should be agreed as soon as possible, and this should be the subject of the next meeting of the ToS on TBFRA.

19. The ToS will discuss in detail all the points raised at the last two sessions of the Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics (May 1999 and 2001), following the guidance and recommendations of the joint session of the UN/ECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission (October 2000).

TBFRA-2000 Use and Policy Implication Survey

20. The TBFRA follow-up work should take into account the needs of current and future international forestry related processes. The policy implications of the TBFRA-2000 should be considered at the next sessions of the ECE Timber Committee (2001) and the FAO European Forestry Commission (2002). Responding to these demands, the secretariat has launched the "TBFRA-2000 Use and Policy Implications Survey" and elaborated the detailed questionnaire, which was sent out to wide range of current and potential users of the TBFRA information. This survey is being conducted in order to:

- Evaluate clients'/customers' attitudes toward TBFRA products, and how the results of the Assessment respond to their needs;
- Find out what components of the Main Report (and TBFRA Programme as a whole) are most useful, and what are less useful;
- Find out what elements of the Assessment should be improved, and in what directions;
- Assess the use of the Forest Resources Information, as well as its implication on different aspects of policy, including national levels and the international policy dialogue;
- Assess the intensity of use of specific elements of the Assessment, and finding out specific cases of TBFRA use, application and implication;
- Determine what kinds of services the UN/ECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission should be provided with in the Forest Resources Assessment area in the future, etc.

21. The ultimate objective of the Survey is to improve results of future temperate and boreal forest resources assessments, so that TBFRA outputs and services would meet needs of users better. This survey is also a part of the self-evaluation work which being done by the Timber Section as requested by the General Assembly.

22. A number of very thoughtful and informative replies have already arrived from respondents to the questionnaire, and are now being now analysed. The preliminary results of the survey will be discussed at the ToS meeting in June (Victoria), and the final report will be presented to the Timber Committee session in September 2001 (Geneva).

Future developments in the TBFRA area

23. In the immediate future, the TBFRA work will be the continuation of the data dissemination (CD-ROM) and further analysis of the information. The publication of the country profile on the forestry sector of the Russian Federation (ECE/TIM/SP/18), which includes up-dated information, more recent than that published in TBFRA, and the preparation of the TBFRA accompanying paper on "Structural, compositional and functional aspects of forest biodiversity in Europe" (*Dr. Janna Puumalainen, EU/JRC*), are the first TBFRA follow-up outputs. This work should be continued, mainly in such areas as forest condition and forest biodiversity.

24. The decisions which have to be taken on the next steps within the Global FRA Programme are of crucial importance. In particular, the questions are be answered whether to repeat the same structure of the enquiry in the future (at what periodicity?), or to explore new areas, the relative weight to be given to different types of information and data collection/validation methods, etc. The proposals evaluating the options have to be prepared in close collaboration with Global FRA team for the consideration of the parent bodies.

25. For its part, the TBFRA team of specialists which has helped and guided the TBFRA-2000 work from the beginning, should continue discussing options, also at its forthcoming meeting in June in Canada: the advice of these experts, many of whom are also national correspondents should be taken into account in all decisions on future strategic directions.

26. A thorough and efficient evaluation of the whole FRA process (global, temperate/boreal, tropical) should be carried out before starting the next round of the assessment. The extended Bureaux meeting on the strategic review of the integrated work programme, (Geneva, February 2001) considered the TBFRA work area an essential element of the programme. It especially emphasised the important role that TBFRA plays in harmonising definitions and agreeing methods. The continuity of terms and definitions is important for comparability over time, and to avoid further adjustment of national data systems to conform to international definitions.

27. Care should be taken not to overburden future forest resources assessment work by adding too many new parameters. Early decision on new parameters (if any) and revised definitions (if absolutely necessary) of existing parameters are essential to make it possible for national forestry institutions to provide data for the next TBFRA and other relevant processes.

28. Sufficient resources and national commitments to support the TBFRA programme through financial, manpower and other possible support are essential. The need to strengthen co-ordination with partners, to continue to contribute to the global level FRA while meeting regional requirements, and to foresee future needs should be emphasised once again.

Co-operation with the pan-European process on C&I for SFM

29. Now, when the date of the next Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe is defined (summer 2003), the level of the TBFRA involvement in the pan-European process is sharply increasing. The first MCPFE workshop on the Improvement of Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, which took place in Liechtenstein in March 2001, was an excellent illustration of such an involvement.

30. The TBFRA-2000 was the focus of the discussion at the workshop plenary sessions and in the working groups, and it was considered as the major instrument for the future work in this area. The Assessment had responded to needs of the pan-European process, especially with regard to collecting data on indicators. The TBFRA process proved to be also useful in revealing the sensitive points of the C&I for SFM like, for example "*protected forest areas*", "*naturalness of forests*", "*carbon accounting*". These areas should be placed more in focus when preparing for next TBFRA round(s).

31. The Advisory Group on the improvement of the current set of criteria and indicators relays on the TBFRA co-operation in its future work. The leader of the TBFRA ToS, Professor M. Koehl is the Chairman of the Advisory Group, and the C&I issue is already on the agenda of the forthcoming ToS meeting. It was clear already at the stage of the first MCPFE workshop, that the TBFRA terms and definitions would constitute the main part of the methodology, and they would accompany the new set of the pan-European C&I for SFM. The second MCPFE workshop on the Improvement of pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management will be held in September 2001 (Copenhagen, Denmark).

Discussion and conclusions

32. The demands for the TBFRA data/information, and consequently for the contents of the assessment as a whole (including its scope, coverage, structure) have changed significantly during the last decade. These days, the TBFRA role goes far beyond its regional contribution to the Global FRA on a few traditional inventory parameters (e.g. forest areas, changes in the forest areas, growing stock). The long list of indicators of the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) refers to many environmental, protective, climate-related, recreational, cultural, socio-economic, etc functions and services provided by forests. A discussion of the question as to how to link gender issue to the broader sustainable development issues within the TBFRA process, was recommended at the recent session of the UN-ECE/FAO/ILO Steering Committee (Lisbon, April 2001).

33. The TBFRA role in providing the information on all these aspects places this project in a special position with regard to its relationships with the Global FRA, the pan-European Ministerial Conference, the international forest policy dialogue (UNFF), UN/ECE countries and organisations, as well as with many other local, regional, sub-regional and national institutions, and individual clients (ecologists, researchers in many areas, managers, market professionals, forest practitioners, etc).

34. There is in fact an urgent need for co-ordination of planning of collection of information on forests between organisations to minimise the reporting burden on countries, harmonise definitions and data while respecting the differing mandates and user groups of the different partners. Experience with the Intersecretariat Working Group activities with regard to the Joint Forest sector Questionnaire have demonstrated that detailed planning, not only of terms and definitions but also of data sharing and validation routines, channels of communication, etc. is a pre-requisite for successful cooperation. The IWG work has also shown that it is possible to obtain very satisfactory results (for organisations and countries) when there is mutual trust and detailed distribution of labour. This aspect should be borne in mind also in planning the next stages of the FRA work.

35. The proper planning of the preparation for the next round of the assessment should be done soon after the ToS meeting, and based on its recommendations. All the elements of an "implementation plan" should be supported by sufficient resources (consultancy work, travel funds, printing / publication expenditures, publicity work, etc); if the available resources are not sufficient, options for project implementation should be discussed, including fund-raising possibilities with governments and partner organisations. The "reduced" versions of the TBFRA scope should also be considered in the final lacking of sufficient resources;

36. A number of countries suggested at the Joint TC/EFC session the periodicity of 10 years for a full TBFRA implementation, with updates of major parameters about every 5 years. Finland and Sweden (in particular) confirmed their willingness to contribute into the future TBFRA process by providing financial, manpower and other possible support.

37. The extended Bureaux (March 2001), reaffirmed that TBFRA was and should remain one of the high-level priorities, and be at the centre of ECE/FAO activities, contributing to the global programme of forest resource assessments, even if the "cyclic" intensity of the TBFRA had to be taken into consideration. The above and other relevant questions should be the subject of discussion at a new Global FRA Expert Consultation ("getting started"), which should be prepared in close co-operation between UN/ECE (Geneva) and FAO (Rome).