

Report of the 2nd Meeting of the ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics

Meeting Date and Location

Tuesday 30 May 2023 [10.00 - 17.15]
H Building, Room H-208
United Nations Office at Geneva
Geneva, Switzerland

Team Leader: Mr. Francisco Aguilar

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

Team Secretary: Mr. Daniel Griswold

UNECE Secretariat: Mr. Florian Steierer, Ms. Subashini Narasimhan, Mr. Boris
Stamenov, and Mr. Haowei Wang

1) Welcome, introductions.

Twenty-seven participants, including 10 women, and including representatives of fourteen countries, three non-governmental organizations, as well as experts, briefly presented themselves.

2) Adoption of agenda

The team adopted the agenda without changes.

3) Ad Hoc Task Groups

a. Ad Hoc Task Group on Removals

The Coordinators of the Ad Hoc Task Group on Removals, Mr. Michal Synek and Ms. Graça Louro, presented the report of activities since the first meeting of the Team of Specialists, under its mandate to “Review of statistics regarding removals to share information, identify gaps and inconsistencies in definitions and methodologies”.

As part of the report, the results of the Questionnaire on Removals Statistics implemented by the ad hoc task group were presented. Twenty-five countries submitted replies to the Questionnaire, and a preliminary presentation of findings was presented.

During the ensuing discussion, the team noted that national profiles based on the findings could be useful, and noted that the continued work of the task group may help facilitate comparability of removals statistics across countries.

The Team discussed the findings and acknowledged that additional information may be gathered to address questions raised during the presentation, within the scope of the current mandate of the Ad Hoc Task Group.

Furthermore, the Team requested the Ad Hoc Task Group on Removals Statistics to summarize the findings of the Questionnaire on Removals Statistics for possible presentation to member States during the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry or the UNECE/FAO Joint Working Party on Forest Sector Statistics.

b. Ad Hoc Task Group on Wood Energy Statistics

The Coordinators of the Ad Hoc Task Group on Wood Energy Statistics, Ms. Consuelo Brandeis and Mr. Sebastian Glasenapp, presented the report of activities since the first meeting of the Team of Specialists, under its mandate to “Review of methods of data collection to better respond to policy questions on wood energy supply-chain”.

Activities included a survey of Team members, with 28 replies, which identified four priority policy issues to explore under the task group’s mandate. These include sustainability, climate change mitigation, energy security and cascading use. The coordinators further reported the findings of an assessment of available statistical information on wood energy for these four policy areas.

The Team discussed the findings and acknowledged that additional information may be gathered to address questions raised during the presentation, within the scope of the current mandate of the Ad Hoc Task Group.

Furthermore, the Team requested the Ad Hoc Task Group on Wood Energy Statistics to summarize the findings of the evaluation of wood energy statistics for possible presentation to member States during the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry or the UNECE/FAO Joint Working Party on Forest Sector Statistics.

c. Ad Hoc Task Group Work Modality

The members of the Team of Specialists agreed that the Ad Hoc Task Group working modality has worked well and congratulated the two ad hoc task groups on their work to date.

4) Presentation of ECE/FAO activities

a. Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JFSQ)

The Secretariat presented the JFSQ 2021 work and covered the rate of replies. Common problems and processing issues were identified as well as actions taken by the secretariat to help address these issues. The Secretariat also presented plans for the 2022 cycle.

b. Timber Forecast Questionnaire (TFQ)

The Secretariat presented the TFQ work and rate of replies, and again noted that 2022 forecasts were published only for reporting countries, as was also the case in 2021.

The Secretariat noted that it will send the Timber Forecast Questionnaire by 31 August 2023, and that the deadline for replies will be 2 October 2023.

c. Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE)

Mr. Sebastian Glasenapp presented the preliminary results from the 2021 JWEE data, noting that the current response rate is quite low, and encouraging countries to submit a reply if they have not already done so.

5) Intersecretariat Working Group on Forest Sector Statistics (IWG)

a. Revisions to the JFSQ

The Secretariat briefed the team members on the results of the IWG 2022 discussions. This included updates to the JFSQ for 2022 data, which are linked to new codes in the HS2022 Harmonized System of tariff nomenclature of the World Customs Organization, which entered into force in 2022.

Specifically, the IWG included 10 new product codes into the JQ1 and JQ2 questionnaires. These are product codes 3.2.1, 8.1.1, 8.1.1.C, 8.1.1.NC, 8.1.1.NC.T, 15, 15.1, 15.2, and 16, as indicated in red in the following images:

Product Code	Product	HS2022	HS2017
3	WOOD CHIPS, PARTICLES AND RESIDUES	4401.21/22 4401.41 ex4401.49	4401.21/22 ex4401.40
3.1	WOOD CHIPS AND PARTICLES	4401.21/22	4401.21/22
3.2	WOOD RESIDUES (INCLUDING WOOD FOR AGGLOMERATES)	4401.41 ex4401.49++	ex4401.40++
3.2.1	of which: Sawdust	4401.41	ex4401.40++
4	RECOVERED POST-CONSUMER WOOD	ex4401.49++	ex4401.40++
++ Please use your judgement or, as a default, assign half of 4401.49 to item 3.2 and half to item 4 (note different quantity units)			

Product Code	Product	HS2022	HS2017
8	WOOD-BASED PANELS	44.10 44.11 4412.31/33/34/39/41/42/49/51/52/59/91/92/99	44.10 44.11 4412.31/33/34/39/94/99
8.1	PLYWOOD	4412.31/33/34/39/41/42/49/51/52/59/91/92/99	4412.31/33/34/39/94/99
8.1.C	Coniferous	4412.39/49/59/99	4412.39 ex4412.94 ex4412.99
8.1.NC	Non-Coniferous	4412.31/33/34/41/42/51/52/91/92	4412.31/33/34 ex4412.94 ex4412.99
8.1.NC.T	of which: Tropical	4412.31/41/51/91	4412.31 ex4412.94 ex4412.99
8.1.1	of which: Laminated Veneer Lumber (LVL)	4412.41/42/49	ex4412.99
8.1.1.C	Coniferous	4412.49	ex4412.99
8.1.1.NC	Non-Coniferous	4412.41/42	ex4412.99
8.1.1.NC.T	of which: Tropical	4412.41	ex4412.99
15	GLULAM AND CROSS-LAMINATED TIMBER (CLT or X-LAM) ²	4418.81/82	ex4418.60
15.1	GLULAM	4418.81	ex4418.60
15.2	CROSS-LAMINATED TIMBER (CLT or X-LAM)	4418.82	ex4418.60
16	I BEAMS (I-JOISTS) ²	4418.83	ex4418.60

² Glulam, CLT and I Beams are classified as secondary wood products but for ease of reporting are included in JQ1 and JQ2

The Team discussed the inclusion of Laminated Veneer Lumber (LVL) as an “of which” category under Plywood, and recommended that it should not be an “of which” category. This could be solved by including categories for “Blockboard, laminboard and battenboard” and “Other” under plywood. However, Team members indicated that they currently would prefer not to include LVL as a subheading under Plywood at all. An alternative would be to move it under an aggregate category for “Engineered Wood Products” together with Glulam and Cross-Laminated Timber, despite the fact that this could represent a break-in-series for Plywood trade statistics based on HS correspondence codes. This approach could also include I-Beams under an aggregate category for “Engineered Wood Products,” even though this would require reporting I-Beams in m3. However, some team members expressed a strong preference to maintain I-Beam reporting in metric tonnes. It was proposed that the Secretariat may consult with members of the Team about the best approach ahead of the next meeting of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group.

The Secretariat also highlighted the inclusion of new HS codes for “of S-P-F” (Spruce – Pine – Fir) (4407.13) and “of Hem-Fir” (4407.14) may lead to a decrease in species-specific customs data for pine (4407.11) and fir/spruce (4407.12), as it may result in reporting trade under aggregate codes 4407.13 and 4407.14 for simplicity. This, may in turn impact data reported on the ECE-EU questionnaire of the JFSQ.

b. Definition and Classification Review

i. Wood waste update in CN

The Secretariat presented current challenges with misclassification between JFSQ items 3.2 and 4, and the introduction of item 3.2.1 to reduce overlap. It asked the team for guidance on whether it would be worthwhile to include more detailed codes in the Combined Nomenclature covering wood waste, to further reduce overlap between item 3.2 and item 4. This would make it possible to gather trade data that could be used to develop a proposed code to include in the HS2032 revision. The team supported this proposal.

ii. HS 44.11/12/18 definitions and today's industry

The Secretariat presented current definitions under HS44.11 (Fibreboard of wood or other ligneous materials, whether or not bonded with resins or other organic substances), 44.12 (Plywood, veneered panels and similar laminated wood) and 44.18 (Builders' joinery and carpentry of wood, including cellular wood panels, assembled flooring panels, shingles and shakes) and asked the Team for guidance on whether these definitions could be updated to better reflect today's industry.

The Team agreed this topic deserves more attention and expressed interest in organizing dedicated webinars with industry to discuss these items in more detail.

iii. Footnote on non-coniferous, non-tropical species

The Secretariat presented the JFSQ footnote on non-coniferous, non-tropical species:

"Please include the non-coniferous non-tropical species exported by tropical countries or imported from tropical countries" for the items:

- 1.2.NC.T Tropical Non-Coniferous Industrial Roundwood
- 6.NC.T Tropical Non-Coniferous Sawnwood

The Secretariat, on behalf of the IWG, then asked the Team for guidance on whether this footnote should be applied to tropical non-coniferous codes under items 7 (Veneer Sheets) and 8 (Wood Based Panels).

The Team suggested that the footnote should be worded: "correspondents are requested to check bilateral trade and include non-coniferous non-tropical species exported by tropical countries or imported from tropical countries if the wood is credibly sourced from the tropical country" as a best practice guidance to correspondents, rather than a definitional requirement. As a "requested check", national correspondents would be in a position to determine whether or not to report flows as tropical, after considering potential issues such as re-exports. In this case, the Team agreed the revised footnote could be applied to tropical non-coniferous codes under items 7 and 8 as well.

iv. LVL HS Definition

The Secretariat presented the definition of Laminated Veneer Lumber in the HS2022 explanatory notes, compared to the JFSQ definition, noting a question about whether LVL is design to support structural loads. The Secretariat asked the Team for guidance on whether the definition should be revised.

The Team agreed this topic deserves more attention and expressed interest in organizing a dedicated webinar with industry to discuss in more detail.

v. Wood chips and particles definition

The Secretariat presented a number of outstanding definitional questions related to wood chips and particles and asked the Team for guidance on whether the definition should be revised.

The Team agreed this topic deserves more attention and expressed interest in organizing a dedicated webinar with industry to discuss in more detail.

c. Update on HS2027 revisions

The Secretariat updated the team on the status of the HS2027 revisions, including actions by UNECE and other members of the Intersecretariat Working Group, represented by FAO, to propose changes for the HS2027 update, including proposals to retain some codes that were proposed for deletion under the World Customs Organization process.

The Secretariat also asked the team for guidance on the proposal to create a new subheading for wooden pallets under 4415.20 (HS2027), noting that there is an existing code in the combined nomenclature (CN) that combines pallets with pallet collars.

The team expressed a preference to have a dedicated code for pallets, without include pallet collars, and proposed further consultations with industry.

6) Statistical systems (information on our partners and how data is handled)

a. Update on ECE Database

The Secretariat updated the team on the status on the ECE Database, highlighting that it requires urgent replacement, and presented a concept for a modernized, tailored central data platform, backed by long-term funding for hosting and maintenance, as a possible solution to this need if sufficient extrabudgetary funding is mobilized. The Secretariat noted that this will be further discussed at the Joint Working Party given that it is relevant also to the work of other Teams of Specialists.

b. INForest

The Secretariat presented the INForest Platform, which presents key forest product indicators using JFSQ data.

c. Data exchanges

The Secretariat noted that Eurostat revised its JFSQ deadline to 10 June this year (previously it was in September). The UNECE deadline was May 19, as in previous years, and that a FAOSTAT upload is planned in August and December. The Secretariat noted that data for the most recent reporting year is published by UNECE as provisional data.

7) Updates – members of the Team are invited to come forward with proposals

The Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners of Finland, presented on Forest market data automation in Finland and highlighted a dashboard with weekly updates and detailed market information, including drill-down capacities and geographic information.

- a. Members of the Team are invited to come forward with additional proposals

A representative from the European Organization of the Sawmill Industry, presented a proposal to work with the team to develop statistics to track the market share of wood-based buildings in the ECE region. The Team agreed that the Leadership would consider this request and potential steps in further detail, including in consultation with the Joint Working Party and Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry as necessary.

A Team member presented a proposal for a future work item by the team on how forests will look in the future, how they should be planned and management, and what future wood supplies will look like. The Secretariat noted that much of this proposal is beyond the mandate of the Team and suggested it may be an item for the Joint Working Party to consider, or for informal discussion among leaders of ECE/FAO Teams of Specialists.

8) Next meeting, topics, timing and location

- a. Next ToS Meeting: Team members are invited to propose possible locations for the next ToS meeting

The Team discussed the time and place of the next meeting. There were mixed opinions on whether it is preferable to hold the meeting back-to-back with the 45th Joint Working Party (1-3 June 2024) or as a stand-alone meeting during spring 2024.

The Team agreed that the Leadership will coordinate with the Secretariat regarding the date and place of the next meeting.