

COST ACTION E43

Harmonisation of National Forest Inventories in Europe: Techniques for Common Reporting

Draft Minutes of the 5th Steering Committee Meeting

Finnish Forest Research Institute (METLA), Helsinki

28 July 2005, 15:00 – 29 July 2005, 15:30

Participants

Erkki Tomppo (Chair, FI), Klemens Schadauer (AT), Claude Vidal (FR), Adrian Lanz (Secretary, CH), Göran Ståhl (SE), Annemarie Bastrup-Birk (JRC Ispra, IT), Marco Marchetti (IT), Jesus San Miguel (JRC Ispra, IT), Lucio Di Cosmo (IT, STSM WG1), Thomas Gschwantner (AT, STSM WG1), Nicolas Robert (FR, STSM WG1).

1 Welcome and Opening the Meeting

The chairman of the action, Erkki Tomppo, welcomes participants in the meeting room of the Forest Research Institute (METLA) in Helsinki, where already the first SC meeting has been held in Summer 2004. He also welcomes the three members of a short-term scientific mission (STSM) of WG1 currently being hosted at METLA as guests to the SC meeting.

2 State of the art reports and work plans

2.1 The Action

Minutes Some minutes of passed meetings are still in draft state or are missing. Plenary WG minutes can only be completed after having received all WG session minutes. In future, draft minutes will also be put on the web pages. The intended deadline for delivery of minutes from the Vienna meeting an this SC meeting is set to the end of August.

Training Courses The list of participants at the TC in autumn (CZ) has been sent to Günter Siegel. Some places are still available. Financement (COST funding) of training courses may be better in future. Preparation of the Italian and Danish TC should be continued, so that they can be announced immediately after approval of grants. TCs on GHG reporting techniques and data delivery policy may be organised later in the Action.

Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSM) Reports from WG1 and WG2 STSMs are on the Action's web pages (private section). Results also have been presented at the Vienna meeting. Members of a WG3 STSM in Italy (Viterbo or Ispra) from 24-27 October are not known yet. The names of candidates should be announced to Annemarie or Marco within the next few days.

Meetings The announcement of the joint WG and MC meeting at Freiburg University has been sent out last week. The local organiser is Forest Research Institute Baden-Württemberg (FVA) - not Freiburg University as given in the official papers coming from the COST office. The local organiser will collect pre-registrations and send the list of participants to

the chairman of the Action for approval of reimbursements. At the moment, the number of reimbursed participants is limited to 50. In case of too many participants, Erkki will check availability of additional funds at COST office and he decides on the number of reimbursed participants per country. If restrictions are needed, he puts the issue on the agenda of the MC meeting in Freiburg.

The date of the next SC meeting in Viterbo is changed from 27-28 October to Wednesday and Thursday, 26-27 October 2005.

Collaboration between working groups Co-working and information exchange between WGs is important for the overall progress in the action. SC meetings, joint WG sessions and the web pages are important tools for this. No further tools are needed at the moment.

References for four core variables (forest, growing stock volume, tree biomass and forest types) are under development and the definitions will be sent to all SC members next week (see WG activities below). SC members should review the definitions until 2 September. All references should then be discussed during the WG sessions in Freiburg.

Similar, WGs are encouraged to create and maintain a vocabulary of terms and definitions for the purposes of the action. The ongoing WG1 STSM will provide some terms. WG3 also created a list of terms and definitions.

Publications Peer-reviewed publications on the work done in our action is encouraged. Keith Rennolls, the organiser of the FEIDSS meeting in Copenhagen (26 August 2005) has asked an invited talk, which could also be published in a special issue of FBMIS (electronical journal). Talk and publication has been accepted by the SC, Erkki taking the lead. WG2 (Göran and others) are preparing also a paper; the draft is nearly ready. WG1 (Claude and Adrian) are planning a paper by the end of the year. WG3 (Annemarie) and Erkki are preparing a paper in the 7th annual FIA symposium (October, Portland, USA). In general, papers and talks about E43 activities and results should be approved by Erkki and Klemens. Erkki also mentions the possibility to publish in METLA publications series.

COST brochure Erkki and Klemens will have to provide final input in the coming week.

Participation in the action USA has sent application for participation in the action. NZ and CA are still interested. Poland will most likely not join the action soon. The situation with Portugal is not clear. Ukraine will not join the action but is following the activities with interest (and is preparing the transition form stand wise inventory to statistical sampling).

European Forest Information and Communication Platform (EFICP) FR applied to a JRC's call for tender; some countries are involved with NFI expertise (AT, CH, FI). Evaluation of these applications is expected to be handled in September.

Pilot Studies JRC, Ispra The call for tenders are expected to published by end of August. The time to apply may be only 40 days (or 52 days).

Data delivery policy The SC discusses NFI's data availability and delivery policy in different NFIs in general, and in represented countries. Published data are free in all NFIs. Plot level data for national research projects are usually free with contract. Remotely sensed data and digital maps are sometimes not free, as well as data preparation work of NFI staff. There is also a problem of privacy (companies, rare species, ...). Some countries allow data collection by third parties on NFI plots, others not. For international (research) projects,

data delivery is usually no problem for aggregated data; plot level data availability depends mainly on involvement of the NFI in the project.

Conclusion: There is not really a common, consistent policy, not even within NFIs. However, differences are not too big between NFIs. Recommendations and principles would be good and should be written. Göran will send a draft (Swedish example) to all SC members by 10 September. The issue will be discussed in one of the next joint WG meetings.

2.2 Working Group 1

Parts I (forest definition) and II (tree definition and volume functions) of a follow-up questionnaire to the first questionnaire aiming at enhancing, clarifying and verifying results has been sent out to all countries in June (part III on sampling designs will follow early August).

13 (11 part II) countries did reply until now. Answers have been analysed by the STSM in Helsinki and the database with answers, as well as the preliminary results given in the scientific report after the STSM in Birmensdorf are constantly updated.

The STSM hosted and supported by Erkki in Helsinki, did work on harmonisation concepts and options, definitions of terms and references. During the STSM, a short questionnaire on the relation between ICP Forest inventory and NFI has been sent to all countries (12 countries did already reply). Countries should make sure, that the National Focal Centres are informed and contacted.

Definitions of references for forest (basically FRA 2005), growing stock (basically TBFRA/FRA 2000) and tree biomass have been proposed. These definitions will be enhanced next week and sent to all SC members for comments/enhancements and checking of usability in their working group until 2 September.

The participants of the STSM present the ongoing work. A draft for a common reference for forest (land) will be available, but also precise answers on measurement techniques are needed. Related land use and land use change issues and forest type classification matters need strong links to WG2 and WG3. The missing volumes below DBH thresholds could be modelled with volume distributions in other countries. Some examples with real data have been given and discussed.

2.3 Working Group 2

The meeting in Graz opened interesting contacts and detailed discussions about the interpretation of definitions. Reports are available on E43 web pages.

A task force lead by Emil will propose a refinement of the questionnaire (intended for spring 2006) at the Freiburg meeting.

Göran will prepare and check a reference and definition for carbon reporting next week (based on a tree biomass reference proposed by WG1 STSM).

2.4 Working Group 3

The open online questionnaire on the 42 most important and generally available, biodiversity related variables in NFIs contains already more than 9000 records. The system allows online analysis and integrates a component to declare (and analyse) importance and feasibility of variables in a participative way. 10-15 core variables will be selected in a next step, taking into account other activities in the field like CBD and MCPFE (reporting) on one side, and related projects like COMMON, BioSoil, ForestBiota on the other side.

At the moment, templates for detailed description of definitions and methodologies of the selected core variables are prepared. Some questions have already been answered by NFI experts in the WG1 questionnaire and will be taken from there (as default values). The templates will be used for the next online questionnaire, and the answers are the base for the harmonisation work, which will start with the STSM in autumn 2005.

Reports on first and second questionnaire are under way.

Forest type classification will be treated by WG2. Annemarie will send a proposal for a definition of forest types next week.

3 European Forest Management Centre (EFMC) and other European initiatives and activities

Robert Flies (DG Environment) will propose ideas for a future forest monitoring system in Europe to the standing forestry committee during its meeting on 26th of September. For this, an ad-hoc group of experts (JRC, NFIs, ICP Forest, EFFIS, MCPFE) did come together in June and will meet again on the 9th of September.

At the moment, Claude (on the management of a European forest monitoring system), Annemarie (data providing system) and Michael Köhl (on reporting) are preparing reports. The original proposal was that JRC will manage the EFMC (as a pilot project) and that EEA and ICP Forest will report. Claude, supported by French authorities, will launch the idea of establishing a European Economic Interest Group (EEIG) as a new body for a EFMC. EEIGs join institutions under a voluntary basis, on a specific mission. They are located in an EU country and are under the hosting country's law. They have a large autonomy of functioning and may work under a collegial system of decision making.

One idea seems to be to establish an enhanced ICP Forest grid (EU grid).

Different opinions are expressed in the SC meeting: On one hand, the EU grid with its detached plots is an inefficient and expensive solution and the existing knowledge and data base of NFIs are not used for common reporting. On the other hand, it seems to be clear that member states will not accept to loose existing ForestFocus funds in future (under LIFE+) and therefore may opt for a continuation of the ICP inventory (and its financement). A compromise between strengthening our initiative for harmonisation of NFIs and maintaining the old ForestFocus inventories may be needed (come out).

In the long run (after COST E43), several bodies may support our ongoing harmonisation activities and require NFI data: like UNECE, MCPFE, JRC, EFI, ICP Forest, EEA, EuroStat. At the moment, however, the capabilities of NFIs to provide high-quality forest data may not be known and represented enough in the standing forestry committee. However, some funding would be needed to promote quality and possibilities of NFIs for common reporting.

The SC decided that Erkki will inform MC members about the issue and the forthcoming standing forestry committee meeting by email.

Solböle // 02-AUG-2005 // Adrian Lanz