

Components of expert involvement within database and evaluation work in ICP Forests

Tasks and activities carried out by ICP Forests Expert Panels have changed within and since the termination of the FutMon project. This paper intends (i) to clarify and structure future expert work and (ii) to serve as a basis for related discussions at the 29th Task Force Meeting. It needs to take into account that expert activities are at present solely funded by national budgets.

During the first years/decades of the programme a main activity of the Expert Panels consisted in the development and implementation of harmonized monitoring methods. With the adoption of the revised manual in the years 2010/11 method development is largely finalized. At present no new methods/surveys are envisaged. Continuous method updates are needed but play a minor role in the work of the Expert Panels.

At the same time the ICP Forests data base hosted at the Thünen Institute has become operational and is now the basis for multiple evaluations that are mostly carried out by experts organized in Expert Panels. Depending on scientific interest and national funding possibilities the intensity of evaluation activities differs between Expert Panels.

After termination of the FutMon project data base service provided by the Thünen Institute is largely limited to technical operation and coordination of the database system with limited opportunities for own evaluations.

In this context the following fields for possible involvement of Expert Panels are suggested to be discussed:

1. Uniformity checks/WebGIS

After finalisation of the each annual data submission automated reports on plotnumbers per survey are provided by PCC. The WebGIS provides an excellent tool for Expert Panels to derive an in depth insight into the new data, into extreme and implausible values and data gaps. Based on such uniformity checks Expert Panels could take contact to National Focal Centres (NFCs) and clarify reasons for inconsistencies/gaps. Ideally this would result in lists of necessary and possible re-submissions. Resubmission would on this basis be organized by PCC in close collaboration with NFCs.

2. Descriptive analyses, definition of algorithms for automated calculations

Simple descriptive analyses could be defined by the Expert Panels for each of the surveys. Ideally evaluation algorithms for such analyses would be defined by the EPs. PCC will offer the possibility to program/implement such automated evaluations into the data base system and thus make routine results available on a regular basis. Intellectual property of related output needs to be discussed.

3. Lead and coordination of integrated evaluations

Expert Panels have already developed into efficient fora for coordination and stimulation of more complex transnational data evaluations. This needs to be continued. Transparency is essential in this respect in order to allow all interested experts to participate. Internet discussion groups have already and partly still need to be installed for each evaluation project. Evaluations will lead to feed back on data base gaps and errors; these need to be communicated to PCC, so that decisions on necessary corrections can be taken.

4. Submission of aggregated data via new database module

After finalization of evaluations plotwise result data will ideally be made available for continued analysis in new projects. PCC will develop a new data base module to enable upload of such aggregated data. Expert Panels need to be trained in the operation and use of such a module. Result data will exclusively be used within the programme and will stay the intellectual property of the respective scientists.

5. Database workshop

It is suggested to discuss these items in more detail at a database workshop in autumn 2013