

Programme Coordinating Centre (PCC) Progress Report June 2012 - May 2013

1. Activities aimed at the further development of ICP Forests

1.1 Representation of ICP Forests in the Working Group on Effects

As an outcome of the 27th Task Force Meeting of ICP Forests held in May 2012 in Białowieża National Park, Poland, PCC reported on the progress in the monitoring, database management, data quality assurance, and data analyses of ICP Forests at the 31st session of the Working Group on Effects (WGE) held on 20-21 September 2012 and at the meeting of the Extended Bureau of the WGE held on 19 September 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland. While WGE appreciated the progress of ICP Forests it recommended that results on critical loads and their exceedances at Level I should be discussed with ICP Modelling & Mapping (ICP M&M) and with that programme's National Focal Centres (NFCs). As a consequence, PCC discussed the issue with the Chair of ICP M&M and with the Head of the Coordinating Centre for Effects (CCE) at the Extended Bureau Meeting held on 21-22 February 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland. The outcome of the discussion is described in Section 3.2.

1.2 Programme Coordinating Group Meeting

The Programme Coordinating Group (PCG) convened on 22-23 October 2012 in Vienna, Austria. The PCG meeting was held back-to-back with the Joint Meeting of the Expert Panels (EPs) on Growth and on Biodiversity and Ground Vegetation. Main items on the agenda were the strive for co-financing of long-term forest monitoring (Section 1.3), the management, quality assurance, and scientific analysis of the monitoring data, and the reporting of results. PCC reported on its status, its participation in a CLRTAP review process and in an ad-hoc Working Group of the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) of the European Commission (EC) (Section 1.3), its post-FutMon obligations towards the LIFE Unit (Section 3.1), and a FutMon external evaluation. The continuation of the monitoring as well as the data management and scientific analysis of the monitoring data was further elaborated at the Combined ICP Forests Expert Meeting Deposition, Soil, Foliar, QA Labs on 9-12 April 2013, Ljubljana, Slovenia, and is the topic of the Scientific Conference to be held in Belgrade, Serbia on 28 May 2013. These meetings were organised by PCC and the Expert Panels and provide the opportunity for coordination among different expert groups. PCC will present conclusions from the PCG meeting to the Task Force for further consideration.

1.3 Strive for securing long-term forest monitoring

In close cooperation with the Northwest German Forest Research Station, PCC had initiated that the Committee for Environment, Public Health, and Food Safety of the European Parliament charged the European Commission with a Preparatory Action and granted a budget for contributing to maintaining an EU-level forest monitoring system in Europe with emphasis on harmonised monitoring at the large scale and at the forest ecosystem scale. The budget was obviously used by

EC for the development of a forest monitoring system currently discussed in its Standing Forestry Committee (SFC). Two requests by PCC to the Committee regarding the use of the budget by EC remained unanswered.

Having participated in the SFC ad-hoc Working Group on Forest Information, PCC had contributed to the Working Group's report. Several parts of that report describe the relevance of ICP Forests including its intensive monitoring approach at Level II, acknowledge ICP Forests as a main pillar of forest monitoring in Europe and as a contributor of information for several MCPFE/FE indicators, and mention a need for cooperation between ICP Forests and the institutions responsible for the NFIs. In preparation of the discussion of the report by the SFC, PCC asked the delegates of EU-Member States for support of ICP Forests. In a subsequent consultation by EC, many EU-Member States stressed directly or indirectly the relevance of ICP Forests for any future EU forest monitoring system. PCC will discuss further steps with the Task Force at its 29th meeting.

1.4 Database management

The database management system and the data validation were continued. This includes the operation of the online database for data submission, validation, and dissemination to internal and external users. Data formats for both Level I and Level II were amended and improved taking into account needs for improvements that became obvious after the finalisation of the FutMon project and taking into account new surveys for which no data base submission modules existed yet. Level I data for the monitoring year 2012 were submitted for 6217 plots. Level II crown condition data for 2010 were submitted for 382 plots. For other surveys the numbers of plots were lower. A detailed list of plot-numbers per survey and country is provided with the meeting documents.

In close cooperation with FSCC soil data bases of the Forest Soil Coordinating Centre for Level I and Level II data were harmonized with ICP Forests data formats and were made available in the programme's online data base. Already existing growth and biodiversity data from the years 2006/07 from approx. 3000 Level I plots were collected from NFCs and handed over to the ICP Forests Expert Panel on Biodiversity for harmonization of data formats and for testing and uploading these data on a newly created data base module.

Data of ICP Forests have been requested and made available to 12 external expert groups since June 2012 based on the procedures as described in the Intellectual Property Policy of the programme. All Expert Panels and various expert groups within the Expert Panels were provided with data access. Support related to the use of the data dissemination module was provided upon request.

1.5 Operation of the programme webpage icp-forests.net

The programme's web platform has been continuously operated and further developed. The webpage has now over 400 registered users that have access to additional information. Reports of the programme as well as reviewed scientific publications were made available. Updated information on meetings and additional activities of the programme such as data submission deadlines and formats were provided. Upon request experts were supported in the installation of discussion groups.

1.6 Preparation of the 28th Task Force Meeting of ICP Forests

PCC prepared the 29th Task Force Meeting to be held in Belgrade, Serbia, in close cooperation with the host country. This included the development of the agenda, the organisation of the sessions, the preparation of numerous presentations and meeting documents, and the preparation of a Scientific Conference to be held back-to-back with the main meeting.

2. Data analyses, publications, and presentations

2.1 Finalized publications

2.1.1 2012 Technical Report on Forest Condition in Europe

The 2012 Technical Report on Forest Condition in Europe was published in the series of Work Reports of the Institute for World Forestry. A limited number of copies were distributed among the Task Force and Expert Panels. It was also made available on the ICP Forests' web site.

2.1.2 2012 Executive Report on Forest Condition in Europe

After adoption by the Task Force at its 28th meeting, the Executive Summary "2012 Results of Monitoring Forest Condition in Europe" was presented by PCC at the 31st session of WGE held on 20-21 September 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland, for derestriction. The Executive Report 2012 was printed as a glossy brochure. 3 500 copies were printed and distributed.

2.1.3 Forest monitoring book

PCC contributed to the editing and publication of a book on "Forest Monitoring" (Ferretti and Fischer 2013). The book presents methods and descriptive results for nearly all surveys carried out within ICP Forests and includes contributions from all Expert Panels of the programme.

2.2 Draft reports

2.2.1 2013 Draft Technical Report

Among the results of recent descriptive and analytical scientific studies based on ICP Forests data the following are foreseen for publication in the 2013 Technical Report.

- Spatial and temporal variation of defoliation (Level I);
- Damage causes for defoliation at the large scale (Level I);
- Spatial and temporal variation of deposition (Level II).

The preparation of the draft was delayed by the occupation of PCC with remaining obligations towards the FutMon Final Report and Final Financial Statement. Further delay was caused by recent changes in database management. Given the fact that most results based on ICP Forests data are now published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, PCC will discuss the future shape of the Technical report with the Task Force at its 29th meeting.

2.2.2 2013 Draft Executive Reports

Based on the above mentioned evaluations, PCC produced a draft Executive Summary 2013 for discussion and adoption by the Task Force at its 29th meeting and for submission to WGE. The re-organisation of the data management at PCC prevented the finalisation of the 2013 Executive Report in time for presentation at the Task Force Meeting. It is in addition foreseen to include latest results as presented at the Scientific Conference in Belgrade. The report will, however, as in previous years, be published as a glossy brochure. The Task Force will be kept informed about the finalisation of the Executive Report during the summer of 2013.

3. Co-operation with other bodies

3.1 Co-operation with FutMon

As part of the co-operation with the LIFE project “Further development and implementation of an EU-level forest monitoring system” (FutMon) PCC had taken over the editing of the FutMon Final Report and the FutMon Final Financial Statement. By letters of 11 June and 31 July 2012 the LIFE Unit asked PCC of a revision of the documents and their annexes. The revision was finished in close co-operation with the FutMon associated beneficiaries only end November 2012. Two months thereafter the LIFE Unit asked for revised individual Financial Statements signed by each of the associated beneficiaries. The last of these documents were received by PCC after six weeks so that they could be forwarded to the LIFE Unit only on 20 March 2013. According to LIFE Financial Provisions the final payment may be expected by end June 2013 unless the LIFE Unit raises further questions.

The final draft of the FutMon Scientific Report had been finished and distributed in March 2012. The final version with a preface by MEP Rebecca Harms will be distributed among the Task Force before its 29th meeting.

3.2 Cooperation with ICP M&M

At its 28th meeting the Task Force had discussed critical load exceedances for nitrogen and acidity calculated with ICP Forests data for about 4600 Level I plots and had recommended that the results be discussed with the NFCs of ICP M&M. The same recommendations were received from the Task Force of ICP M&M and from WGE (Section 1). As a consequence, PCC agreed with the Chair of ICP M&M and with the Head of CCE on the following procedure: PCC will

- distribute the critical loads as calculated per Level I plot numerically and as a map to the NFCs of ICP M&M;
- suggest to the NFCs of ICP M&M to add the results to their national critical loads database;
- provide to the NFCs of ICP M&M online access to the input data of ICP Forests underlying the critical loads calculations;

It was also agreed that ICP Forests could publish its maps of critical loads and their exceedances with disclaimers avoiding confusion with results based on the national critical loads calculations under ICP M&M. Moreover, PCC will

- explain to the NFCs of ICP M&M how critical loads at Level I were calculated,
- ask the NFCs of ICP M&M for information how else they would have calculated critical loads based on their individual expertise;

- consider to recalculate critical loads and their exceedances based on the information received from the NFCs of ICP M&M.

3.3 Co-operation with the International Union of Forest Research Organisations

PCC finished the draft of its chapter to the book “Forests under pressure: Local responses to global issues” of the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO) - Special Project “World Forests, Society and Environment” (WFSE). Co-authors are Mr. Peringe Grennfelt (Swedish Environmental Research Institute) and Ms. Paola Deda, Mr. Roman Michalak, and Mr. Arnaud Brizay of the UNECE/FAO Timber Section. The chapter has undergone peer-review and is currently being revised accordingly. The book will be presented at the 2014 IUFRO World Congress in Salt Lake City, USA.

3.4 Co-operation with COST

PCC is represented in the Management Committee of COST Action FP0903 “Climate Change and Forest Mitigation and Adaptation in a Polluted Environment” and functions as vice-chair of the action’s working group on “Protocols and Supersites”. PCC contributed to the publication of an article in a book on "Climate Change, Air Pollution and Global Challenges: Understanding and Solutions from Forest Research" which will be published under the umbrella of this COST action.

4. Staff of PCC

The staff of PCC is currently:

Martin Lorenz (Head);
Richard Fischer (Database);
Georg Becher (Data analyses and reporting)
Henny Haelbich (Data analyses and reporting)
Ursula Carstens (Foreign language correspondent)