

Metsä conference 2013

Report from IFSA delegation

Background

The joint session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI, formerly “Timber Committee”) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) European Forestry Commission (EFC) was held from 9-12 December 2013 in Rovaniemi, Finland. The event was called Metsä2013, with “metsä” meaning forest in Finnish, and was organized in parallel with the second European Forest Week. The joint session focused on market discussions, on engaging the private sectors, and on measuring and communicating the contribution of the forest sector to a green economy.

The UNECE region covers more than 47 million square kilometres. Its member States include the countries of Europe, but also countries in North America (Canada and United States), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and Western Asia (Israel).

Around 450 participants attended the meeting, representing governments, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, academia and the private sector.

Roundtables and discussions

On Monday, some participants, including most of the IFSA delegation, were taken to a pre-congress visit in the city of Kemi. We saw the northernmost pulp and paper mill there operated by the Metsä group. In the afternoon the official opening took place, with a fine ceremony held outdoors, that featured singing from Sami people and the lighting of a fire. It was followed by a heartwarming hot wine in the Arktikum, a place IFSS 2011 participants will remember.

Tuesday morning, a roundtable was held, discussing the latest information regarding trends of forest products trading in the UNECE region. A market statement that summarizes market trends and developments in the UNECE region was adopted in the end.



On Tuesday afternoon, the roundtable focused on *engaging the private sector*, and addressed the following question: “What are the opportunities and challenges in forest product industries that policy makers and others should be aware of to maintain a thriving forest industry?” Eight speakers from different private sector enterprises shared their experiences and views on this question.

The IFSA delegation sitting in the room where the discussions took place

On Wednesday morning, the roundtable was entitled “Measuring and communicating the contribution of the forest sector to a green economy”. It presented the Green Economy concept and the work on indicators done by UNEP (UN Environment Programme), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank, under the Green Growth Knowledge Platform. The challenges in measuring progress of the forest sector towards a green economy were outlined, and proposals for possible indicators were made. Participants raised several issues, including the difference between “green economy” and “bioeconomy”.

Same day in the afternoon, the discussions focused on the FAO European Forestry Committee and the UNECE COFFI. In addition to the follow-up of the 10th session of UNFF in April 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey, an Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy was discussed. Participants agreed to name it the “Rovaniemi Action Plan”. It lists principles and activities relevant to the Green Economy, grouped under five pillars: sustainable production and consumption of forest products; a low-carbon forest sector; decent green jobs in the forest sector; long-term provision of forest ecosystem services; and policy development and monitoring of the forest sector in relation to a green economy.

On Thursday, the Integrated Programme of Work 2014-2017 for the COFFI and the EFC was discussed, amended and eventually adopted.

A detailed report, upon which this one is based, can be found online at <http://www.iisd.ca/forestry/metsa/2013/>

Side-events held during the joint conference

During Metsä 2013, apart from the official roundtables and parallel events, many informative and interesting side-events took place as well. The main objective of all 28 different side-events was to encourage experts, stakeholders and delegates from all participating countries to share their views and opinions on a wide scale of important forestry-related topics.

The side-events program started with a meeting on the first day of Metsä 2013, where participants could get insight about raising awareness towards using wood-based products more intensively in the construction sector. The next day was followed by topics such as: global look on the sustainable forest products supply chains; improving markets for forest ecosystem services; possible uses of modern bioactive compounds in medicinal and health-related products; learning to increase resource efficiency along the value added chain of timber processing; delivering ideas and messages of sustainable forestry and forest industry to the youth; overview of Global Plan of Action on forest genetic resources; sharing knowledge on management of forest fires in different countries; examples of overcoming difficulties and challenges related to green economy, based on the Finnish Forest Industry Federation.

The next day, side-events continued to attract Metsä 2013 participants to discuss relevant topics. In many cases, it was hard to make up one’s mind about in which meeting to participate, as many side-events were held at the same time. Day started with IFSA-IUFRO co-organized meeting which aimed at raising awareness of the importance of forestry education. Many great ideas and future possibilities were presented. Further information about this side-event can be found on the IUFRO blog: <http://theiufroblog.wordpress.com/2013/12/19/addressing-the-challenges-of-higher-forestry-education/>

During the same day, interested stakeholders and experts had the chance to learn more about Robinwood Plus program, discussed about carbon efficient wood construction, gathered information about GIS and ICT use in the case of Metsähallitus in Finland, gained insight about Israeli experience concerning afforestation and forest management.

Afternoon session of side-events continued with very interesting themes, such as forestland ownership changes in Europe; future challenges of UNECE/FAO Team of Specialist on the topic of Sustainable Forest Management; increasing the importance of health and well-being benefits derived from our forests; overview of modern innovative wood products and buildings (examples from Canada); how to support private forest owners regarding to forest services and forest data; discussion on forest ownerships in Finland; developing forest industry and forest sector in a bio-based economy.



Attendance and attention were high during the IFSA/IUFRO side event on forestry Education

Towards the end of this amazing week, program of side-events followed its path to bring together policy makers and interested participants of Metsä 2013.

Thursday started with a meeting on the issue of Natura2000 network, while in parallel to that was held a private side-event (Biennial meeting of Baltic/Nordic Forest statistics Group). As the day went on, side-events highlighted following topics: social values of FSC certification in Scandinavia; implementation of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in the pan-European region; and how to integrate international network and forest sector employers in our forestry education system.

Last side-event of Metsä 2013, organized by the Sami Parliament, presented the best practices of cooperation between indigenous people and the state of Finland, considering management and use of state lands in Lapland.

In conclusion, all the side-events held during Metsä 2013 attracted a variety of specialists and every participant had the chance to join favorable meetings. Topics included sustainability, innovation, markets, biodiversity, with examples from different countries as well as global economy and

specifically green economy. Thanks to organizers, program of side-events contributed greatly to the overall themes of Metsä 2013 and European Forest Week.

IFSA delegation's opinions

IFSA delegation in Metsä 2013 attended different side events according to their major study field and personal interests. It was a fruitful experience for IFSA delegation, in learning innovation of forest sectors and networking with different professionals. Outside the conference, IFSA delegations were hosted by Finnish students from the Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences. Contrasting with the coldness in Arctic Circle, IFSA delegation received very warm welcome from our Finnish friends.

This was a very positive experience for our members. Below is the opinion from four of the delegation members about the Metsä 2013 conference.

Dilan Kaplan (Turkey):

"I think the most interesting side event was "Wood in carbon-efficient construction". It was interesting because I am extremely interested about the topic and also Mr. Matti Kuitinen was such a good speaker, the context he introduced was intriguing. During the side events I learned a lot and believe the network I have reached will be useful for my future projects and career."

Jan Kreuter (Germany):

"First I would like to refer to the unbelievable hospitality of the Finnish students, this was really great!

The European Forest Week was a successful event. The organization was very good. Particularly I would like to emphasize that the field trip in the last day was really interesting and we received good attention from employees of Metsähallitus (Finnish state forest enterprise). Besides, I found the celebration in Science Centre Pilke in the evening of the 11th of December very valuable. We had many great opportunities to talk without barriers to other participants, who are representatives from UNECE member States and staffs of FAO or UNECE.

I felt the general context of the conference focused too much on policy and economics. Only four side events in EFW introduce the important subjects, like biodiversity, nature conservation, ecosystem services, etc. From a scientific point of view, I found this was a pity. However, my general opinion of this week is still positive!"



The whole IFSA delegation with IUFRO Executive Director Alexander Buck, after our successful side-event

Kathrin Müller-Rees (Germany)

"I liked the most the side event about GIS & ICT (Geographical Information Systems & Information Communication Technology) for multiple uses of forest sectors. Processing information by computers in forestry-related fields will be more and more important and I will focus my studies more on this topic.

I felt myself proud to be in the IFSA delegation and I have to admit that I got a good impression and a general overview of the way policy-making is working. Different delegations from all UNECE member States need to spend hours and hours to discuss. I learnt that there are many important ideas about how we should change our behavior towards Mother Nature. All in all I am very happy to have had this great chance to experience the Metsä Conference 2013 in Rovaniemi!"

Ping-Lian Wu (Taiwan)

"I was really glad to attend our side event, "Future of Education – Future of the Sector? Current issues in Forestry Education" which we organized together with IUFRO (the International Union of Forest Research Organizations). There were more than 80 participants attending it. We received a lot of interesting feedback on forestry education from participants. As a Masters student, I was happy to experience the UN policy-making process. It was so much effort and negotiation behind the statements which were written in the report.

Main theme of this conference is wood innovation, which is very closely linked with current business strategy of many Finnish forest industries. Through this conference, Finnish forest sectors demonstrated a great example and solutions for other countries to mitigate challenges from global climate change."

List of the IFSA delegation in Metsä 2013

Jakob Hörl (Head of Commission Forestry Education, Germany),
Yemi Adeyeye (Liaison Officer FAO, Denmark (Nigeria)),
Hugo Pierre (IFSA-IUFRO Joint Position, Austria (France)),
Torben Hansen (Germany),
Ignacio Arizmendi Romero (Spain),
Kathrin Müller-Rees (Germany),
Jan Kreuter (Germany),
Christian Lankinen (Finland),
Yagmur Bütün (Turkey),
Ping-Lian Wu (Germany (Taiwan)),
Andre Purret (Estonia),
Janne-Perttu Rantonen (Finland),
Vesa Miettunen (Finland),
Sami Nivala (Finland).

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