# FRA 2025 – what has changed and why?

Background paper 1

for discussion at the FRA 2025 Online Expert consultation

Contents

[FRA 2025 – what has changed and why? 1](#_Toc112846612)

[Introduction 2](#_Toc112846613)

[1. Forest extent, characteristics and changes 4](#_Toc112846614)

[2. Forest growing stock, biomass and carbon 7](#_Toc112846615)

[3. Forest designation and management 11](#_Toc112846616)

[4. Forest ownership and management rights 12](#_Toc112846617)

[5. Forest disturbances 13](#_Toc112846618)

[6. Forest policy and legislation 14](#_Toc112846619)

[7. ~~Employment, education and~~ NWFP removals and value 2020 14](#_Toc112846620)

[8. Sustainable Development Goal 15 16](#_Toc112846621)

## Introduction

This paper aims at documenting and explaining the rationale for the main proposed changes in the FRA 2025 specification. The guiding principle in the preparations of the FRA 2025 has been to reduce the reporting burden on countries, minimize reporting duplication, make the reporting more relevant, and to the extent possible, increase the quality, consistency and transparency of reported data.

A constant and reoccurring recommendation for FRA and similar processes is to reduce the reporting burden on countries and increase the quality and transparency of reported data. Despite this, every global assessment between FRA 2000 and FRA 2015 increased the reporting burden on countries (e.g. FRA 2005 covered about 45 broad variables, FRA 2010 covered about 90 and FRA 2015 about 120 variables). FRA 2020 marked, for the first time, a reduction in the reporting burden and the number of variables collected were reduced to about 60. The intention is to continue on the path of reducing the reporting burden and making FRA data more consistent, transparent and relevant. Furthermore, the reporting burden will be greatly reduced by pre-filling unchanged reporting tables with data reported for FRA 2020.

The proposed changes are the result of a thorough review of the FRA 2020 reporting process and scope with inputs from:

* the FRA team, together with the different teams of the FAO Forestry Division and the FRA Advisory Group;
* the FAO Office of the Chief Statistician; and
* in-depth user consultations targeting the FRA National Correspondents (NCs) and users at large.

The outline of this background paper follows the structure of the FRA 2020 country reports (table 1).

**Table 1. FRA 2020 structure of country reports**

|  |
| --- |
| **1 Forest extent, characteristics and changes** |
| 1a Extent of forest and other wooded land |
| 1b Forest characteristics |
| 1c Primary forest and special forest categories |
| 1d Annual forest expansion, deforestation and net change |
| 1e Annual reforestation |
| 1f Other land with tree cover |
| **2 Forest growing stock, biomass and carbon** |
| 2a Growing stock |
| 2b Growing stock composition |
| 2c Biomass stock |
| 2d Carbon stock |
| **3 Forest designation and management** |
| 3a Designated management objective |
| 3b Forest area within protected areas and forest area with long-term management plans |
| **4 Forest ownership and management rights** |
| 4a Forest ownership |
| 4b Holder of management rights of public forests |
| **5 Forest disturbances** |
| 5a Disturbances |
| 5b Area affected by fire |
| 5c Degraded forest |
| **6 Forest policy and legislation** |
| 6a Policies, legislation and national platform for stakeholder participation in forest policy |
| 6b Area of permanent forest estate |
| **7 Employment, education and NWFP** |
| 7a Employment in forestry and logging |
| 7b Graduation of students in forest-related education |
| 7c Non wood forest products removals and value 2015 |
| **8** **Sustainable Development Goal 15** |
| 8a Sustainable Development Goal 15 |

Some of the reporting tables have undergone a major revision, others have been modified slightly and a few have been removed. In this document, all FRA 2025 reporting tables are presented together with corresponding FRA 2020 tables. Items that are proposed to be excluded are displayed “~~like this~~” and new additions are shown “like this”.

**Introduction**



Pre-filled text box with introductory text provided in the FRA 2020 reporting for countries to edit and update where necessary. The introductory section should be mandatory and countries which did not provide an introductory text will be asked to do so.

In the introduction countries would also be asked to report the expected date (year) for next update/revision of the country report. This information would be very useful in order to know which countries can be expected to make a voluntary update of information in between the regular FRA 2025 and FRA 2030 reporting cycles.



## Forest extent, characteristics and changes

**Table 1a. Extent of forest and other wooded land**



* The category“Other land” is suggested to be replaced by the term “Remaining land area”. The reason for the name change is that “Other land” is already defined in FAO Questionnaire on Land Use, Irrigation and Agricultural Practices. There, “Other land” is defined as “Land area not classified as agriculture and forestry”. It includes the categories of the System of Environmental Accounting (SEEA) ''Land used for aquaculture", ''Built-up and related areas", ''Other uses of land not elsewhere classified" and ''Land not in use". Instead, using the terminology “Remaining land area” for the purpose of FRA reporting makes more sense, as it is defined as "All land that is not classified as "Forest" or "Other wooded land".
* The annual reporting years e.g. 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 are suggested to be omitted from the table and the year 2025 added.
* The official total land area maintained by FAOSTAT will be used to pre-fill the FRA reporting years and the most recent land area will be used for 2025 with a footnote.

To increase the understanding of data quality countries are asked to clearly identify data sources and rank them in reliability classes or Tiers (see below). Tier 3 indicates the highest level of quality and Tier 1 the lowest.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Forest area tier criteria** | | **Tier** |
| **Status** | Data sources: Recent (less than 10 years ago) National Forest Inventory or remote sensing based assessment with ground truthing, or statistical remote sensing survey with accuracy assessment | 3 |
| Data sources: Older (more than 10 years ago) National Forest Inventory or remote sensing based assessment with ground truthing or recent (less than 10 years ago) remote sensing based assessment without ground truthing. | 2 |
| Other | 1 |
| **Trend** | Estimate based on repeated compatible Tier 3 status assessments *or recent forest area change estimates (i.e. from a REDD+ FREL)* | 3 |
| Estimate based on repeated compatible Tier 2 or combination Tier 3 and 2 (tier for status) | 2 |
| Other | 1 |
|  |  |  |

**Table 1b. Forest characteristics**



* The previous reporting years remain the same and will be pre-filled with data reported in FRA 2020, the year 2025 has been added.
* In the FRA 2020 reporting “Primary forest” was reported in table 1c “Primary forest and special forest categories”. We are proposing moving the category “Primary forest” to table 1b as a sub-category of “Naturally regenerating forest”.



* We propose that the reporting of “Primary forest” specifies in which climatic domain the area of primary forest is located, considering that, from a biodiversity point of view, it is relevant knowing the extent of primary forest by different domains.

**Table 1c. Primary forest and special forest categories**



* Suggest changing the name of the table to “Specific forest categories” as we are proposing moving primary forest back to table 1b “Forest characteristics”.
* For consideration, should the category “Temporarily unstocked and/or recently regenerated” be removed? – conceptually difficult for countries to delineate this area consistently
* . Global and regional estimates can be generated from Remote Sensing Surveys.
* “Bamboos” – the International Bamboo and Rattan Organization (INBAR) is conducting bamboo mapping exercises and we propose making the results of the mapping available on the platform for countries to use for reporting if they want.
* Suggest adding a footnote to the category “Mangroves”, explaining that mangroves may contain areas of “Other wooded land” as well.

**Table 1d. Annual forest expansion, deforestation and net change**



No substantial changes are suggested for this reporting table.

* The reporting period 2020-2025 has been added
* We suggest replacing the “Calculated” values with a consistency check that the values add up. In FRA 2020 there were some issues with the calculated values: for some countries there was an inconsistency in the difference between forest expansion and deforestation which was not exactly equal to the calculated forest area net change. Automatically calculating either “Forest expansion” or “Deforestation” did not allow countries to report slightly different values. Replacing the “Calculated” values with a consistency check would allow accepting data not adding up 100%.

**Table 1e. Annual reforestation**



It is suggested for consideration deleting table 1e. In the FRA 2020 reporting it was found that it was quite difficult for countries delineating the area of "Reforestation”, where “Reforestation” was defined as:

Re-establishment of forest through planting and/or deliberate seeding on land classified as forest.

Explanatory notes

1. Implies no change of land use.
2. Includes planting/seeding of temporarily unstocked forest areas as well as planting/seeding of areas with forest cover.
3. Includes coppice from trees that were originally planted or seeded.

Further, the reported data was deemed inconsistent and thus not used in the analysis and, in addition, the reporting on this category was relatively low.

**Table 1f. Other land with tree cover** 

No major changes are suggested for this reporting table:

* Adding the reporting year 2020.
* Suggest deleting the “Total”, as it is a bit misleading since almost no country has data on all categories (“a” to “e”), as they often only have scattered information on some of the categories.

## Forest growing stock, biomass and carbon

**Table 2a. Growing stock** 

This reporting table matches the reporting categories contained in reporting table 1b “Characteristics”.

We are proposing removing the reporting for total growing stock and only maintaining the reporting of "Growing stock” per hectare. The rationale for the proposed change is based on the following:

* For biomass and carbon, we only collect per hectare values.
* Maintaining only per hectare values makes updates much less complicated e.g. if a country has only a new forest area estimate, there is no need to update the total growing stock.
* The total growing stock can always be calculated using growing stock per hectare multiplied by the total forest area.
* Volume per hectare will allow both countries and reviewers to have an idea of the reasonability of the reported data and improve the quality of the reported data, which in turn will provide better assessments of biomass and carbon stocks.

In addition, the usefulness of reported data for further analysis will be greatly improved if growing stock is broken-down by different forest types or characteristics. Introducing reporting average growing stock per hectare does not necessarily imply an increased reporting burden, as these values can be calculated using area from table 2a “Forest characteristics”. Furthermore, this will greatly facilitate reporting for countries that may have to rely on expert estimates.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Growing stock tier criteria** | | **Tier** |
| **Status** | Data sources Recent 10 years National Forest Inventory or programme for repeated compatible NFI 10 years | 3 |
| Data sources/registers and statistics modelling or old NFI 10 years or partial field inventory | 2 |
| Other | 1 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Table 2b. Growing stock composition**

**FRA 2020 reporting table**



New proposal for FRA 2025 reporting table



In line with the proposed change for the reporting on table 2a “Growing stock”, we are proposing changing the reporting on “Growing stock composition” in the following way:

* Instead of reporting and ranking the species in terms of total volume we propose ranking the species according to percent of total growing stock. This would greatly facilitate future updates of the country report. This means if a country updates the forest area there would be no need to update the “Growing stock composition” table unless new inventory data on growing stock composition is available.
* Previous reporting asked countries to report “Growing stock composition” and “Total volume by species” for 5 reporting years (1990, 2000, 2010, 2015 and 2020). For FRA 2025 we propose reporting volume by species expressed as percent of total growing stock for the most recent inventory year. The main reasons for this change are:

- Maintaining the report updated is easy e.g. if a new forest area estimate is needed.

- The table does not have to match table 2a.

- The previous reporting showed that often the change in total volume over time was explained by differences in the data collection methods or random errors, rather than showing the actual trend by species.

- It is deemed that having a better and more consistent estimate for growing stock composition for the most recent inventory year when data were collected is more relevant, as typically the changes in growing stock composition over time are slow and difficult to monitor.

* We are further suggesting adding a “drop-down” menu for assigning the scientific name, as in previous reporting there were a lot of inconsistencies in the scientific names for different species.

**Table 2c. Biomass stock**



The only change to this reporting table is related to the reporting years. Instead of asking for annual data, it is proposed that the reporting years in this reporting table correspond to the reporting years in table 1a “Forest area”.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Biomass estimation methods tier criteria** | | **Tier** |
| **Status** | Country specific or biome specific biomass conversion expansion factors applied or allometric equations | 3 |
| Application of a combination of country/biome specific conversion factors and International default biomass expansion factors or allometric equations | 2 |
| International/regional default biomass expansion factors/generic allometric equations applied e.g. using the "biomass calculator" for reporting | 1 |

**Table 2d. Carbon stock** 

The only change to this reporting table is related to the reporting years. Instead of asking for annual data, it is proposed that the reporting years in this reporting table correspond to the reporting years in table 1a “Forest area”.

## Forest designation and management

**Table 3a. Designated management objective**



Only one minor change is proposed for this reporting table. In FRA 2020 reporting countries could report on the category “No/unknown”, however this created a slight challenge for the data analysis, as it was not possible to determine to what extent was “unknown” or had “no” designation.



It is proposed to delete the table on “Total area with designated management objectives”. The data reported in this table was not used in any of the analysess and the reasons for that are the following:

* The different reporting categories are not mutually exclusive and, in principle, the entire forest area could be reported for each of the categories.
* Countries appeared to interpret the reporting in very different ways, leading to highly inconsistent data sets.
* Many countries faced problems in interpreting the actual designated management objective and service/function provided by forests.
* Producing aggregate findings was not meaningful.

**Table 3b. Forest area within protected areas and forest area with long-term management plans**



The main change to this reporting table is related to the reporting years. Instead of asking for annual data, it is proposed that the reporting years in this reporting table correspond to the reporting years in table 1a “Forest area”.

## Forest ownership and management rights



* It is proposed that the sub-category of private ownership by individuals is further sub-divided into “*…of which female”.*
* In the FRA 2020 reporting, countries could report on the category “Unknown/other”, however, this created a problem during the analysis of the data, as it was not possible to determine to what extent was “Unknown” or “Other” ownership.
* We are proposing changing the name of the category “Local, tribal and indigenous communities” to “Indigenous peoples and local communities” as the terminology “tribal/tribes” are rarely used in UN documents.

**Table 4b. Holder of management rights of public forests**



Only minor changes are proposed for this reporting table:

* In FRA 2020 reporting countries could report on the category “Unknown/other” however this created a slight problem during the analysis of the data as it was not possible to determine to what extent was “unknown” or “other” ownership.
* In FRA 2020 only about 10 countries reported that “Individuals” held management rights of public forests. Considering that it was so few countries, it is suggested to delete this category and countries can report Individuals under the category “Other” and specify in comments that is refers to Individuals.
* As for Table 4a, we are proposing changing the name of the category “local, tribal and indigenous communities” to “Indigenous peoples and local communities” as the terminology “tribal/tribes” are rarely used in UN documents.

## Forest disturbances

**Table 5a. Disturbances** 

* Propose removing the “Total” as there are in some cases issues/inconsistencies in reporting, mostly related to non-exclusiveness of some data.

**Table 5b. Area affected by fire**



No major change is proposed for this reporting table.

**Table 5c. Degraded forest**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Does your country monitor area of degraded forest** | **Yes/No** |  |  |  |
| **If "Yes"** | **What is the national definition of "Degraded forest"?** | | | |
| **Describe the monitoring process and results** | | | |

No major change is proposed for this reporting table.

**Table 5d. Forest restoration**



* For FRA 2025 we are proposing introducing a new reporting table on forest restoration. The idea is to do a stock tacking assessment to understand how many countries have forest restoration commitments in place and to understand what these commitments entail.

## Forest policy and legislation



It is proposed that this reporting table is omitted:

* How can the data be analyzed in a meaningful way?
* Is the FRA process the right one for collecting this data?
* One way forward could be to let the FAO regional and sub-regional offices spearhead this type of data collection. The FRA Secretariat does not always have the capacity to properly review reported data.

## ~~Employment, education and~~ NWFP removals and value 2020





It is proposed to discontinue the collection of data on Employment and Graduation of students in forest-related education for the following reasons:

* As part of the FAO’s strategy to improve the collection and dissemination of FAO data, the FAO Office of the Chief Statistician prepared an assessment report to support the data collection on employment covered by the FRA reporting process. Among other things, the assessment recommended FRA to “use data already collected by other international organizations that regularly disseminate harmonized national, regional and global employment data, instead of collecting employment data through the FRA process” and to partner with the International Labour Organization and FAO Statistics Division to support reporting on employment.
* In line with the general recommendation to reduce duplication among the UN agencies, data on Education could potentially be sourced from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
* This does not mean that these areas will not be covered in the next FRA report, but rather than asking the FRA NCs to report on these variables it is proposed that data from external data providers would be sourced if need be.

**Table 7. Non wood forest products removals and value 2020**

No changes are proposed for this reporting table.



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## Sustainable Development Goal 15

**SDG Indicator 15.1.1 Forest area as proportion of total land area** 

Data for this table is populated based on reported data in table 1a “Extent of forest and other wooded land”. The table is populated with data reported for the “FRA reporting years”.

* The annual data 2021-2024 is proposed to be automatically interpolated using the data reported for the FRA reporting years 2020-2025 and the data for year 2005 is interpolated using the 2000 and 2010 data. Noting that countries will have the option to override interpolated data with their own estimates.

**SDG Indicator 15.2.1 Progress towards sustainable forest management**

**Sub-indicator 1**



2005-2015 change rate calculated and pre-filled using SDG indicator 15.1.1 value for 2005 and forest area for 2015 from Table 1a

Data for this table is populated based on reported forest area in table 1a. The table is populated with data reported for the “FRA reporting years” the annual data 2021-2024 is automatically interpolated using the data reported for the FRA reporting years 2020-2025. Countries will have the option to override interpolated data with their own estimates.

**Sub-indicator 2**



Data for this table is populated based on reported biomass stock in table 2c. The table is populated with data reported for the “FRA reporting years” the annual data 2021-2024 is automatically interpolated using the data reported for the FRA reporting years 2020-2025. Countries will have the option to override interpolated data with their own estimates.

**Sub-indicator 3**

Data for this table is populated based on table 3b “Forest area within protected areas and forest area with long term management plans” and table 1a “Extent of forest and other wooded land”. The table is populated with data reported for the “FRA reporting years” and the annual data 2021-2024 is automatically interpolated using the data reported for the FRA reporting years 2020-2025. Countries will have the option to override interpolated data with their own estimates.

**Sub-indicator 4**



Data for this table is populated based on table 3b “Forest area within protected areas and forest area with long term management plans” and table 1a “Extent of forest and other wooded land”. The table is populated with data reported for the “FRA reporting years” and the annual data 2021-2024 is automatically interpolated using the data reported for the FRA reporting years 2020-2025. Countries will have the option to override interpolated data with their own estimates.

**Sub-indicator 5**



Data for this table is populated with external data sourced from Forest Stewardship Council

(FCS) and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). Overlaps and double accounting have been addressed by the FSC and PEFC Secretariats. Countries will not have the option to override interpolated data with their own estimates. If there are any issues with the data, countries will have to contact the FSC and PEFC Secretariats.