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PREFACE

Are there really forestry experts who are more concerned with numbers than with trees? Absolutely, and on 24th and 25th November 2008 35 such representatives from four continents accepted an invitation from the Baden-Württemberg Forest Research Institute to gather in Freiburg, Germany to discuss the collection, calculation and application of economic data in forestry.

It was obvious to the participants that goals and visions are necessary and important for the future of forestry. But in order to sensibly and sustainably manage forests, hard facts and figures are also needed. Not as goals themselves, but as a basis and tool for those who discuss, argue and decide the conditions and measures to be taken in a forest. Which analyses are meaningful, how are they calculated and in which contexts can they be applied were the basic questions of this inaugural two day international workshop “Figures for Forests”.

The workshop, hosted by the IURFO Group 3.08.00 “Small-scale Forestry” and the European Alliance of Private Forest owners (CEPF) and organised by the Baden-Württemberg Forest Research Institute, was the meeting place of forest economists and data-specialists from all over the world. Its purpose was to bring together key researchers to share their experience and discuss the current state of knowledge in this important area, including recent advances in various new approaches and techniques regarding data collection, processing and presentation. Successful solutions to different problems were presented and discussed.

Issues discussed on the first day included categorizing forest owner collectives, various data collection methods and surveys of multidimensional data. There were also presentations demonstrating the application of monitoring data analyses for documentation, forecasting and political purposes. On the second day numerous case studies and issues relating to harmonizing different national monitoring networks were on the agenda. The participants used the afternoon technical sessions for intensive information exchanges and sharing insights about different electronic data tools for processing forest data-sets.

The 17 papers gathered in these workshop proceedings allow – for the first time - an intensive and overarching insight into current developments in this area. We agree with a lot of the findings of participants. Although not all relevant issues could be addressed at the workshop, we see it as a promising starting point for future meetings and further discussions and exchange of knowledge. Clearly the use of figures in and for forests is not a dreary issue at all. Rather it is as manifold as the forests and their owners themselves.

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