

**ABSTRACT FOR THE JOINT SWST-UNECE MEETINGS in GENEVA
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**Sustainable Biomaterials and Bioenergy – Examining how we think
about Forest Products, from Education to Global Policy**

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We would like to stimulate a discussion among conference participants on the direction of the field of wood science and forest products, and how to best present the importance of wood science, wood technology and related educational efforts to the public as we move into the future. Humankind has become increasingly disconnected from natural resources as the industrial processing of biomaterials and biofuels has advanced. Further, there has been a growing disconnect between the practices used to improve wood efficiency, and the impacts these practices have upon the natural resource. This disconnect has affected how the fields of wood science and forest products are viewed by perspective students and the public in general. While there has been increasing interest regarding the areas of environmental preservation and analysis, there has been a decline in interest associated with the processing of biomaterials needed to sustain human activities. This perception has negatively impacted the image of forest industries in general, but for wood science educational programs it has also meant a loss of students from educational programs. Perhaps less understood, this trend also has had a broader impact on natural resource management.

Enhancing the public's perception of the field by expanding their view of what we do beyond that of the traditional forest products industry is vital if experts in the field are to have a greater impact on issues ranging from resource conservation and utilization, to global policy issues. To address these issues it may be necessary to expand how we view ourselves, and the scope of our efforts, starting with education in the field. Broadening our scope to include other lignocellulosic materials in addition to wood, may be needed to increase the public's acceptance of the field within the context of sustainable biomaterials and bioenergy issues. Rebranding may also help to capture the public's interest while helping the field shed current negative perceptions associated with wood and forest products. Efforts such as rebranding may be more effective with unified organizational goals that will permit more rapid public acceptance, while helping to limit current confusion regarding similar organizations and institutes having different identities.