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TECHNOLOGY MAKES WOOD MORE COMPETITIVE

The Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) is an analytical arm of Congress. The studies that it conducts at the request of members of Congress are intended to help policymakers anticipate and plan for the consequences of technological change. Several SWST members have been consulted during OTA's recent study, "Wood Use, U.S. Competitiveness and Technology," which is now available from the Superintendent of Documents (OTA-ITE-210, August 1983).

The 200-page report deals in considerable detail with both the growing and the use of wood. Space does not permit a comprehensive discussion here. I *do* present, out of context, those "Congressional Options" contained in the report that related most directly to what I perceive to be the interests of wood scientists, along with the page number. I have no idea if any of these are under consideration by Congress at the present time:

Relative to encouraging research, development, and transfer of forestry-related technology, the report suggests:

2. Direct the administration to issue regulations and guidelines to expressly permit joint research efforts among firms without interference from antitrust restrictions.
3. Direct the Secretary of Agriculture to place greater emphasis on forestry technology transfer . . .
4. Establish two or three national centers of excellence aimed at improved utilization of wood and wood materials. The laboratories could be located at universities with strong supporting departments and could emphasize collaborative research among academia, industry, and government (page 35).

Relative to enhancing the role of the U.S. in international trade, the report suggests:

1. (FAS or the Foreign Commercial Service) assist the private sector in market development and reduction of nontariff barriers to trade in pulp and paper products.
2. . . . give high priority to identifying and negotiating reductions in tariffs and quotas that most severely limit increased exports of wood products.
4. . . . identify legislative changes needed to make U.S. wood products export trading companies competitive in world markets (page 37).

The report suggests additional "Congressional Options" relative to goals for forest management (page 32), improving information for formulating policy (page 39–40), identifying timber management needs (page 42), and establishing public and private management priorities (page 45).

The "bottom line" is that this is yet another report which puts forth the potential value of U.S. forests and wood products. The difference *may be* that, this time, because the report has OTA's stamp of approval on it, policymakers will pay more attention. We certainly hope so.

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