



# NEWS RELEASE

USDA FOREST SERVICE • FOREST PRODUCTS LABORATORY  
One Gifford Pinchot Drive • Madison, WI 53726-2398 • Web site: [www.fpl.fs.fed.us](http://www.fpl.fs.fed.us)

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: **George Couch, (608) 231-9295**  
E-mail: [gcouch@fs.fed.us](mailto:gcouch@fs.fed.us)

### Economist honored for groundbreaking work on U.S.-Canadian timber dispute

Madison, Wis.— Henry N. Spelter of McFarland, an economist with the USDA Forest Service's Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, has been selected by Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman to receive the coveted U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Honor Award. The award, for "expanding economic and trade opportunities for U.S. agricultural products," will be presented in Washington today (June 13).

Spelter was cited for research that has "helped lumber and panel firms understand overcapacity and its effect on profitability and trade, and aided those working to resolve the U.S.-Canadian lumber trade dispute."

As part of this effort, Spelter developed a new, more accurate method for calculating the conversion factors required to compare U.S. and international timber prices. In the United States, timber is measured in terms of "board feet" of usable lumber. In other countries, timber is measured in cubic meters based on the entire log. The problem arises because the number of board feet of lumber that can be produced from a cubic meter of timber varies depending on the diameter of the log.

Spelter demonstrated that the older conversion factors in use when average log diameters were large are no longer appropriate because the size of timber harvested in the Western United States has decreased. Small diameter logs contain a higher proportion of wood that would be considered waste in the U.S. measurement system and ignored, thereby skewing conversions. Spelter's research on conversion factors has aided in the ongoing efforts to resolve trade disputes regarding U.S. imports of Canadian lumber.

Besides Spelter, the FPL's Technology Marketing Unit also was selected to receive the USDA award for helping rural communities find new businesses involving forest resources.

The USDA Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory was established in 1910 in Madison, Wis., with the mission to conserve and extend the country's wood resources. Today, FPL's research scientists work with academic and industrial researchers and other government agencies in exploring ways to promote healthy forests and clean water, and improve papermaking and recycling processes. Information is available at FPL's Web site: [www.fpl.fs.fed.us](http://www.fpl.fs.fed.us). Through FPL's Advanced Housing Research Center, ([www.fpl.fs.fed.us/ahrc/](http://www.fpl.fs.fed.us/ahrc/)), researchers also work to improve homebuilding technologies and materials.

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