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REPORT

on the European Forest Strategy - The Way Forward
(2019/2157(INI))

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the European Forest Strategy - The Way Forward (2019/2157(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 on ‘The European Green Deal’ (COM(2019)0640), to the Commission communication of 20 May on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (COM(2020)0380), and to its resolutions of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal¹ and 16 January 2020 on the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity²,
- having regard to the New York Declaration on Forests, ratified on 23 June 2014 by the European Union,
- having regard to the Commission report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 7 December 2018 entitled ‘Progress in the implementation of the EU forest strategy – “A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector”’ (COM(2018)0811),
- having regard to its resolution of 28 April 2015 on ‘A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector’³,
- having regard to the Commission communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 23 July 2019 entitled ‘Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World’s Forests’ (COM(2019)0352),
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 15 April 2019 on the progress on the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy and on a new strategic framework for forests (08609/2019),
- having regard to Regulation No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species and the consecutive Implementing regulations with updates of the List of invasive species, among which also tree species⁴,
- having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 30 October 2019 on the report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 7 December 2018 entitled ‘Progress in the implementation of the EU Forest

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0005.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0015.

³ OJ C 346, 21.9.2016, p. 17.

⁴ OJ L 317, 4.11.2014, p. 35.

Strategy - “A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest sector””,

- having regard to the Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services published by the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IBPES) on 31 May 2019,
 - having regard to the report of the European Environment Agency on ‘The European environment – state and outlook 2020: knowledge for transition to a sustainable Europe’, published on 4 December 2019,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 10 and 11 April 2019 on the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy,
 - having regard to the Mid-Term Review of the Biodiversity Strategy to 2020,
 - having regard to the updated EU Bioeconomy Strategy,
 - having regard to the 2050 Climate Strategy,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 29 November 2019 on the updated EU Bioeconomy Strategy⁵,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 28 November 2018 entitled ‘A Clean Planet for All: a European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive’ (COM(2018)0773),
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 16 May 2018 on the mid-term review of the EU Forest Strategy⁶,
 - having regard to the Europe 2020 strategy, including the Innovation Union and Resource-Efficient Europe initiatives,
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinions of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A9-0154/2020),
 - having regard to the responsibilities of the EU Member States under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD),
- A. whereas the EU’s internal and international commitments to, for example, the European Green Deal, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Kyoto Protocol, the

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/publication/council-conclusions-updated-eu-bioeconomy-strategy-29-november-2019_en

⁶ OJ C 361, 5.10.2018, p. 5.

Paris Agreement and the creation of a zero-emission society, will be impossible to achieve without the climate benefits and other ecosystem services provided by forests and the forest-based sector;

- B. whereas the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union makes no reference to a common EU forest policy, and responsibility for forests lies with the Member States; whereas, however, the EU has a history of contributing, through its policies and guidelines, including Article 4 of the TFEU as regards energy, environment and agriculture, to sustainable forest management (SFM) and the Member States' decisions on forests;
- C. whereas forests and the entire forest-based value chain are fundamental to the further development of the circular bioeconomy, as they provide jobs, ensure economic welfare in rural and urban areas, deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation services, offer health-related benefits, protect the biodiversity and prospects of mountainous, island and rural regions and combat desertification;
- D. whereas properly funded high-quality research, innovation, collection of information, maintenance and development of databases, best practice and knowledge sharing are of the utmost importance for the future of the EU's multifunctional forests and for the entire forest-based value-chain, in light of the increasing demands being placed upon them and the need to tackle the multiple opportunities and challenges facing society;
- E. whereas forests are part of our natural heritage, which we must preserve and maintain, and whereas in order for this heritage to prosper and to be a source of biodiversity and an economic, tourism and social resource it is essential that it be well managed;
- F. whereas the Rural Development Fund, in the framework of the CAP, has provided tools and resources to support the forestry sector and should continue to do in the post-2020 CAP, through a strong focus on SFM;
- G. whereas there are 16 million private forest owners in the EU, who own about 60 % of the EU's forests; whereas the average size of privately-owned forests is 13 ha, while about two-thirds of private forest owners own less than 3 ha of forest;
- H. whereas sustainably managed forests are enormously important in guaranteeing jobs in rural areas, representing a benefit for human health while at the same time making a vital contribution to the environment and biodiversity;
- I. whereas climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in forests are interlinked inasmuch as aspects must be balanced and synergies between them encouraged, especially within Member States' Adaptation Strategies and Plans;
- J. whereas European forests and their situations differ and therefore need to be handled differently, but always with a view to improving their economic, social and environmental functions;
- K. whereas outermost regions contain very rich reservoirs of biodiversity and it is fundamental to preserve them;

- L. whereas biodiversity loss in forests has significant environmental, economic and social consequences;
- M. whereas soil quality plays a crucial role in the provision of ecosystem services such as water filtration and storage, and hence flood and drought protection, CO₂ sequestration, biodiversity and the growth of biomass; whereas the improvement of soil quality, for instance in some regions by converting coniferous forest to permanent deciduous forest, is an economically challenging process that takes decades;
- N. whereas the crucial role of SFM should be promoted to European society, which is increasingly disconnected from forests and forestry, underlining the multiple benefits forests provide from the economic, social and environmental, and cultural and historical viewpoints;
- O. whereas, in addition to carbon sequestration, forests have a beneficial impact on the climate, the atmosphere, the preservation of biodiversity and river and waterway management, protect soil from erosion by water and wind, and possess other useful natural properties;
- P. whereas almost 23 % of European forests are to be found in Natura 2000 sites, with the share in some Member States exceeding 50 %, and almost half of the natural habitats in Natura 2000 areas are forests;
- Q. whereas forests can both be sources of primary forest products such as wood, and provide valuable secondary products such as mushrooms, truffles, herbs, honey and berries, which are very important for economic activities in some regions of the Union;
- R. whereas European forests play an important role in improving the environment, developing the economy, meeting the Member States' needs for wood products and enhancing the wellbeing of the population;
- S. whereas agroforestry, defined as land use systems in which trees are grown in combination with agriculture on the same land unit, is a suite of land management systems which boost overall productivity, generate more biomass, maintain and restore soils, and provide a number of valuable ecosystem services;
- T. whereas the multifunctional role of forests, the considerable time they take to become established and the importance of ensuring a good diversity of species make sustainable use and the preservation and multiplication of forest resources an important European task;
- U. whereas socially and environmentally responsible hunting also plays an important role in forests and semi-forest regions, by controlling numbers of game or the spread of related diseases, such as African swine fever;
- V. whereas forests play a crucial role in the fight against soil erosion and the desertification of landmasses; whereas studies show that trees in parks and city environment have a positive effect in terms of maintaining lower temperatures as compared to treeless areas;
- W. whereas in the current programming period (2014-2020) there are measures in the CAP

targeted at helping economic actors in building capacities with regard to forestry management;

- X. whereas some forestry regions have been massively invaded by pests and insects such as woodworm and various fungi; whereas natural populations of chestnut forests have been massively invaded by *Cryphonectria parasitica*, which causes a serious threat to the survival of these populations, but also in the long run threatens related human-led activities, such as the production and collection of chestnuts;
- Y. whereas the data available on forests at EU level is incomplete and of varying quality, thus hampering the capacity of coordination at EU level concerning forest management;
- Z. whereas illegal logging is ongoing also in the EU;

The past – revisiting recent implementation successes and challenges

1. Welcomes the publication of the Commission report entitled ‘Progress in the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy – “A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest sector”’ (COM(2018)0811);
2. Welcomes the actions taken by the Member States and the Commission to meet the objectives of the EU Forest Strategy and the involvement of the Standing Forestry Committee, the Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry and Cork, the Expert Group on Forest Fires, the Expert Group on Forest-based Industries and Sectorally-related Issues, and relevant stakeholders in the Forest Multiannual Implementation Plan (Forest MAP);
3. Recognises that the Commission’s 2018 report on progress of the implementation of the current EU Forest Strategy states that the strategy has been useful as a coordination tool and that, generally speaking, the ‘eight plus one’ priority areas of the strategy have been implemented with relatively few impediments, with the exception of major challenges to be addressed through biodiversity policy and ongoing challenges in the areas ‘What forests do we have and how are they changing?’, specifically concerning the public perception and information on the forestry sector, and ‘Fostering coordination and communication’, specifically concerning forest-related policies;
4. Highlights the fact that a definition of SFM was internationally agreed as part of the pan-European FOREST EUROPE process; notes that the definition has been incorporated into national legislation and into the voluntary systems, such as forest certifications, that are in place in the Member States;
5. Stresses that the promotion of SFM in the EU, as part of the EU Forest Strategy and the rural development measures implemented under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), has had a broadly positive impact on forests and forest conditions and on livelihoods in rural areas, as well as on the biodiversity of forests in the EU, and has enhanced the climate benefits offered by the forest-based sector; notes, however, that there is still a need to strengthen SFM in a balanced manner in order to ensure that forests' ecological status improves, to enhance the health and resilience of ecosystems and ensure that they are better able to adapt to changing climate conditions, to reduce the risks and impacts of natural disturbances, and to safeguard opportunities for present and future generations to manage forests, for example in such a way that forest owners'

and SMEs' objectives are realised, and to improve the quality of existing forests and woodland; considers that the EU forest strategy should include adequate instruments in this regard; points out that the Member States are obliged to undertake SFM in exemplary fashion; considers that forest management models should incorporate environmental, societal and economic sustainability, which means that the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands are such that they maintain their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions at local, national and global levels and do not cause damage to other ecosystems; stresses that acknowledging and safeguarding property rights is key to achieving a long-term commitment to SFM; notes that safeguarding and sustainably managing our forests is a core part of our general wellbeing, as they are a home for public-interest activities in the field of leisure and health as well as education, and recognises that SFM promotes the protection of European forest biodiversity; calls for the protection of primary forests with preserved structure, species richness and adequate area where such forests still persist; notes that there is no EU definition of old growth forests and calls on the Commission to introduce a definition, to be prepared in the Standing Forestry Committee, in the process of drafting the future EU Forest Strategy; stresses that there could be diverging views on the CO₂ absorption capacities of different kinds of forests, and therefore believes the new EU forest strategy should promote sustainable forest management; regrets the unsustainable practices and illegal logging taking place in some Member States despite the EU Timber Regulation, and further calls on the Member States to do more to put an end to it, and also to improve or strengthen their national legislation where necessary; urges the Commission and the Member States to take urgent action on these issues, through close monitoring and through the enforcement of existing EU laws, and calls on the Commission to swiftly pursue infringement procedures when breaches occur, as well as to follow through on illegal logging cases through all competent bodies; calls on the Commission to finalise, without delay, the fitness check of EU rules against illegal logging;

6. Concludes that the differences between Member States, as well as the differences between regions within Member States, have been an important factor in considering measures at EU level;
7. Expresses its deep concern that in parts of the Union failure to implement existing EU legislation and suspicion of corruption have resulted in illegal logging and unsustainable forestry activities; calls on the Commission and the Member States to combat corruption and to fully implement the existing legislation;

The present – state of play of the EU's forests

8. Emphasises that the EU's forests, together with those of its overseas territories and outermost regions, are multifunctional and characterised by great diversity in such aspects as ownership patterns, size, structure, biodiversity, resilience and challenges; points out that forests, in particular mixed forests, offer society a wide variety of ecosystem services including habitats for species, carbon sequestration, raw materials, renewable energy, improved air quality, clean water, groundwater recharge, erosion control and protection from drought, floods and avalanches, and provide ingredients for medicinal products, as well as being an important cultural and recreational amenity;

whereas all this no longer seems to be completely safeguarded, as forest owners can no longer reinvest in forests as a result of the difficult economic situation caused by climate change and other contributing factors; notes that according to the latest estimates, only 26 % of forest species and 15 % of forest habitats demonstrated a favourable conservation status; calls on the Member States to ensure the safeguarding of ecosystems and, where necessary, to develop and enhance guidelines regarding non-timber forest products;

9. Takes note of the progress made on valuing ecosystem services under the Mapping of Ecosystems and their Services (MAES) initiative; stresses, however, that there is currently no adequate remuneration for the provision of ecosystem services such as CO₂ sequestration or fostering biodiversity or soil improvement, and that foresters who focus on converting their forests accordingly currently might be managing their forests at a loss despite the provision of substantial ecosystem services; calls on the Commission and the Member States to explore options to incentivise and remunerate climate, biodiversity and other ecosystem services appropriately in order to permit an economically viable forest conversion;
10. Notes that over the past decades the EU's forest resources have been increasing in terms of forest cover and volume, and that currently forests and other wooded areas cover around 43 % of the surface of the EU, reaching at least 182 million hectares and comprising 5 % of the world's total forests, thanks to afforestation and natural regeneration; notes that half of the Natura 2000 network is made up of forest areas (i.e. 37.5 million hectares) and that 23 % of all forests in Europe are within Natura 2000 sites, while some Member States have more than half of their territory covered by forests and are dependent on forestry; points out the importance of improving knowledge about Natura 2000 and its effects on biodiversity, forest management and other uses of land throughout the EU; notes that 60 % of EU forests are privately owned, with a high proportion of small-size forest holdings (less than 3 ha) and 40 % are publicly owned; points out that over 60 % of the productive forests in the EU, and over 20 % worldwide, are certified according to SFM voluntary standards; notes also that the share of the round wood stemming from certified forests processed by the wood-based industries globally is higher than 20 % and that this share is as high as 50 % in the EU; points out that the sector employs at least 500 000 people directly⁷ and 2.6 million indirectly in the EU⁸ and that maintenance of this level of employment as well as the sector's long-term competitiveness require constant efforts to attract a skilled and trained workforce to the sector and ensure that workers have proper access to social and medical assistance; notes that these jobs are dependent on resilient and well-managed forest ecosystems in the long term; stresses the crucial role that forest owners play in the implementation of SFM and the important role that forests play in the creation of green jobs and in growth in rural areas; in addition, highlights that EU forest owners and managers have a long tradition and experience in management of multifunctional forests; calls on the Commission to include the need for support to forest owners, including financial support, in the new EU Forest Strategy; considers that such support should be made subject to the application of SFM, to ensure a continued investment in modern technologies and in environmental and climate measures that

⁷ Eurostat database on forestry, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/forestry/data/database>

⁸ European Parliament fact sheet of May 2019 on the European Union and forests.

reinforce the multifunctional role played by forests, with a specific financial instrument for the management of areas in the Natura 2000 network and creating decent working conditions; believes that such financial support should be the result of a robust combination of financial instruments, national funding and private-sector financing; underscores the importance of averting a rural exodus and considers it essential to invest in ecosystems; welcomes afforestation and reforestation as suitable tools in enhancing forest cover, especially on abandoned land that is not suitable for food production, close to urban and peri-urban areas as well as in mountainous areas, where appropriate; encourages financially backed-up actions for using the harvested timber in proportion to the sustainable forestry stock and increasing forest cover and other wooded land where relevant, particularly in those Member States where forest cover is low, while encouraging in other Member States the preservation of forest cover in areas with accentuated ecological functions; notes that forests host a significant part of Europe's terrestrial biodiversity;

11. Observes that the area of forest in the Union is growing, inter alia as a result of afforestation, and that managed commercial forests not only bind carbon better than unmanaged forests but also reduce emissions and problems caused by deterioration of the condition of forests; notes that sustainable management of commercial forests has the very best impact on the climate, and that countries which manage their forests well should be rewarded for this;
12. Recognises that long-term public and private investment in a reinforced SFM which places equal focus on the social, environmental and economic benefits of forests and on adequate funding and compensation mechanisms can help ensure forests' resilience and adaptive capacity and help the forest sector to stay economically viable and environmentally sound, but can also contribute to achieving numerous EU goals, including the successful implementation of the European Green Deal and the transition to a circular bio-economy and the promotion of biodiversity; highlights also the need for other easily accessible, well-coordinated and relevant EU funding mechanisms, such as financial instruments or the support of the European Investment Bank in bolstering investment in forestry projects, targeting SFM and forest fire prevention and mitigation, as well as the structural funds and funds from the Horizon, Erasmus+ and LIFE+ programmes, which could provide essential support for investment and services for carbon storage and sequestration as part of the SFM, also ensuring consistency with the Green Deal;
13. Acknowledges the crucial climate benefits of forests and the forest-based sector; reiterates the need to foster the environmental, economic and social aspects of forests and forest management in a balanced manner while strengthening the overall climate benefits stemming from forests and the forest-based value chain, namely fostered CO₂ sequestration and carbon storage in wood products and material substitution; highlights the need to maintain, further promote and where possible increase CO₂ sequestration in forests to a level which enables sustainable management of all forest functions, carbon storage in situ, including in agroforests, deadwood and forest soil and wood-based products by means of active SFM; points out that over 10 % of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions are absorbed by forests; stresses the need to promote the use of wood as a sustainable construction material as it enables us to move towards a more sustainable economy; encourages the Commission to explore different market-based mechanisms in

order to incentivise substitution of fossil fuels by renewable raw materials which offer climate benefits; stresses the crucial role of wood-based materials in substituting fossil-based alternatives and alternatives with a higher environmental footprint in industries such as construction, textiles, chemicals and packaging, and the need to fully take into account the climate and environmental benefits of this material substitution; further highlights the as yet under-used advantages offered by the replacement of single-use products, notably plastic products, by sustainable wood-based products; stresses that the circular use of wood-based products should also be increased in order to improve the use of our sustainable resources, promote resource efficiency, reduce waste and extend the carbon life cycle for the deployment of a sustainable and local circular bioeconomy;

14. Welcomes, as regards the substitution of fossil-based raw materials and energy, the continuing work of promoting the most efficient use of wood following the ‘cascading principle’; calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue the implementation of sustainability criteria for biomass under the recast of the Renewable Energy Directive, and to make optimum use of the substitution effect by substituting CO₂-intensive fossil-based materials and energy; notes, however, the importance of avoiding unnecessary market distortions for wood-based raw materials when it comes to supporting schemes for bioenergy; draws attention to the fact that a foreseeable increase in demand for wood and biomass must be accompanied by SFM; emphasises, in this respect, the need to increase funding for research into the substitution of fossil fuels and fossil-fuel materials; notes that leftovers at the end of the wood value chain can be favourably used as biomass in order to substitute fossil-based heat, but that where possible timber should be kept for uses with a longer life cycle in order to increase global carbon dioxide storage;
15. Highlights the beneficial effects of forest shelterbelts, both for protecting farmland and for increasing agricultural output; strongly advocates methods to encourage farmers to develop forest shelterbelts;
16. Stresses the key role that flowering trees and bushes in natural ecosystems play for the apiculture sector, and in assisting the natural process of pollination and enhancing the consolidation and protection of deteriorated and/or rough land; urges the inclusion of such trees and bushes in EU support programmes, taking regional characteristics into account;
17. Regrets the fact that although forests in the EU are managed according to the commonly agreed principle of SFM and forest cover in the EU has been increasing over the past decades, a different approach to SFM has been developed in the context of the recently agreed Regulation 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment and amending Regulation 2019/2088 on sustainability-related disclosures in the financial services sector⁹;
18. Underlines the importance of resilient and healthy forest ecosystems including fauna and flora, in order to maintain and enhance the delivery of the multiple ecosystem services that forests provide, such as biodiversity, clean air, water, healthy soil and

⁹ OJ L 198, 22.6.2020, p. 13.

wood and non-wood raw materials; highlights that voluntary tools and legislation in place, such as the EU Birds and Habitats directives, affect land management decisions and must be respected and implemented appropriately;

19. Notes that farmers and forest owners are key actors in rural areas; welcomes the recognition of the role of forestry, agro-forestry and forest-based industries in the Rural Development Programme of the 2014-2020 CAP, and the improvements introduced through the Omnibus Regulation; encourages safeguarding this recognition in the CAP 2021-2027 and in the implementation of the European Green Deal;
20. Highlights the suitability and viability of the two-step approach to verifying the sustainability of forest biomass, as agreed in the recast of the Renewable Energy Directive; notes that this should be achieved by continuing the halted development of non-end-use-specific sustainability criteria by the Standing Forestry Committee and the Commission;
21. Recognises the role of forests as regards provision of recreational values and forest-related activities such as harvesting of non-wood forest products, e.g. mushrooms and soft fruit; takes note of the opportunities for enhancing biomass removals in terms of forest fire prevention via grazing, but also notes that wildlife grazing has a negative impact on seedlings and therefore points to the need for sustainable management of grazing fauna;

The future – the crucial role played by the post-2020 EU Forest Strategy and the European Green Deal in meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

22. Welcomes the recent publication of the Commission’s European Green Deal, and looks forward to the upcoming post-2020 EU Forest Strategy, which should be aligned with the European Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy; furthermore considers that stepping up the circular bio-economy is an essential approach to achieving a low-carbon society in the implementation of the Green Deal; points out the importance of further enhancing the potential of forests in order to reach the objectives of the European Green Deal, and of the development of the circular bio-economy while guaranteeing other ecosystem services including biodiversity;
23. Welcomes the Commission’s 2020 Work Programme, and especially the acknowledgment of the new EU Forest Strategy’s contribution to the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; stresses, in this regard, that in future, forests should not be considered as the only type of CO₂ sink as that would give other sectors less of an incentive to minimise their emissions; highlights, in addition, the need for concrete and effective actions in climate adaptation strategies and plans, incorporating the synergies between mitigation and adaptation, which will be crucial to lessening the detrimental impacts of climate change on disturbances such as forest fires and their negative effects on the rural economy, biodiversity and provision of ecosystems services; underlines the need for more resources and development of science-based fire management to tackle the effects of climate change in forests; notes that in order to preserve forests’ biodiversity and functionality, together with the need for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change

and as also recognised in the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation, deadwood in the forest constitutes microhabitats on which numbers of species are dependent;

24. Reiterates that forests and the forest-based sector significantly contribute to the development of local, circular bio-based economies in the EU; emphasises the crucial role of forests, the forest-based sector and the bio-economy in achieving the goals of the European Green Deal and climate neutrality by 2050; stresses that in 2015 the bio-economy represented a market estimated to be worth over EUR 2,3 trillion, providing 20 million jobs and accounting for 8.2 % of total employment in the EU; notes that every euro invested in bio-economy research and innovation under Horizon 2020 will generate about EUR 10 in added value; points out that achieving the EU's goals for environment, climate and biodiversity will never be possible without forests that are multifunctional, healthy and sustainably managed applying a long-term perspective, together with viable forest-based industries; stresses that under some circumstances there are trade-offs between protecting the climate and protecting biodiversity in the bio-economy sector and particularly in forestry, which plays a central role in the transition towards a climate-neutral economy; expresses its concern that this trade-off has not been sufficiently addressed in recent policy discussions; points out the need to develop a coherent approach to bring together biodiversity protection and climate protection in a thriving forest-based sector and bio-economy; stresses the importance of developing and ensuring a market-based bio-economy in the EU, e.g. by incentivising innovation and development of new bio-based products with a supply chain making effective use of the biomass materials; considers that the EU should encourage the use of timber, harvested wood products or forest biomass in order to stimulate sustainable production and jobs; calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage the return of materials of biological origin, including wood waste, to the value chain, by encouraging eco-design, further boosting recycling and promoting the use of secondary raw materials comprising wood for products before their potential incineration at the end of their life;
25. Stresses the need to give full and real political support to the forestry sector and stresses, in this regard, that an ambitious, independent and self-standing EU Forest Strategy is needed for the post-2020 period in parallel with other relevant sectoral strategies; notes that since agroforestry can have both agricultural and forestry characteristics, the EU Forest Strategy needs to be coordinated with the Farm to Fork strategy; calls for a new EU Forest Strategy that builds on the holistic approach to SFM, taking into account all of the economic, social and environmental aspects of the forest-based value chain, and ensuring the continuity of the multifunctional and multidimensional role played by forests; stresses that an EU Forest Strategy that is coordinated, balanced, coherent and better integrated with the relevant EU legislation related to forests, the forest-based sector, including the people who directly or indirectly work and live in the forest and the forestry sector, and the multiple services they provide, needs to be developed, given the growing number of national and EU policies directly or indirectly affecting forests and their management in the EU;
26. Calls on the Commission to make every effort to ensure, in the implementation of the Regional Development Fund, that, in particular, initiatives aimed at putting a stop to biodiversity loss in forests, promoting mixed and native species planting and improving

forest management are fostered, and that projects are implemented and funding is targeted;

27. Takes the view that the EU Forest Strategy should act as a bridge between national forest and agroforest policies and EU objectives relating to forests and agroforests, recognising both the need to respect national competence and the need to contribute to wider EU objectives, while coherently addressing the specificities of both private and publicly owned forests; calls for action to ensure long-term stability and predictability for the forestry sector and the whole bio-economy;
28. Stresses the importance of evidence-based decision-making with regard to EU policies relating to forests and to the forest-based sector and its value chains; calls for consistency of ambition of all forest-related aspects of the European Green Deal and the Biodiversity Strategy with the post-2020 EU Forest Strategy, particularly with a view to ensuring that SFM has a positive impact on society, including connectivity and representativeness of forest ecosystems and ensuring long-term and stable benefits for the climate and the environment, while also contributing to the achievement of the SDGs; highlights that any possible EU guidelines related to SFM should be developed in the framework of the post-2020 EU Forest Strategy;
29. Highlights the need to take into consideration the links between the forest-based sector and other sectors, such as agriculture, and their coordination within the circular bio-economy, as well as the importance of digitalisation and investing in education, research and innovation and biodiversity preservation, which can positively contribute to further solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation and job creation; notes that forests are an integral part of sustainable development;
30. Stresses the importance to rural society of agroforestry systems, which are very low-density and barely economically viable, taking into account that annual income is complemented by other activities, such as livestock farming, tourism and hunting, which need to receive enough financing to prevent desertification and overexploitation;
31. Stresses that due to climate change and the effects of human activity, natural disturbances such as fires, droughts, floods, storms, pest infestations, diseases and erosion are already occurring today and will occur more frequently and intensely in the future, causing damage to forests in the EU, and that this will call for risk and crisis management tailored to each scenario; emphasises, in this context, the need to develop a robust post-2020 EU Forest Strategy, as well as risk management measures, such as reinforcing the European disaster resilience and early warning tools, with a view to being better prepared and better preventing such events, increasing forests' resilience and making them more climate-resistant, for example by strengthening the implementation of sustainable and active forest management and through research and innovation, which will make it possible to optimise the adaptability of our forests; recalls that according to the European Environmental Agency the main sources of pressure on forests in the EU include expanding urban areas and climate change; stresses also the need to offer better support mechanisms as well as financial resources and instruments for forest owners to apply prevention measures as well as restoration of affected areas, such as reforesting deteriorated land that is not suitable for agriculture, also having recourse to special disaster funds, including through extraordinary

intervention, such as the European Union Solidarity Fund; calls for the need to ensure coherence between the EU Forest Strategy and the European Civil Protection Mechanism; calls on the Commission and the Member States to set up an emergency mechanism, and believes it is essential to include support for silvopasture (forest grazing) within the agroforestry measures and to encourage Member States to implement it in the next Rural Development (RD) programme; underlines the need for more resources and development of science-based fire management and risk-informed decision-making, taking into account the socio-economic, climate and environmental roots of forest fires; calls for the introduction of a response component for climate change-related common challenges;

32. Calls on the Member States to design initiatives for preserving and where necessary establishing high conservation value (HCV) forests, with the necessary mechanisms and instruments for incentivising and, where applicable, compensating forest owners, so that knowledge and science can advance vis-à-vis these forests, alongside the preservation of natural habitats;
33. Recognises the role of biodiversity in ensuring that forest ecosystems remain healthy and resilient; highlights the importance of the Natura 2000 sites, which offer the possibility to provide society with multiple ecosystem services, including raw materials; notes, however, that technical advice and fresh sufficient financial resources are needed to manage such areas; stresses that economic losses caused by protection measures should be fairly compensated; highlights the importance of the pragmatic integration of nature conservation into SFM, without necessarily enlarging the protected areas and avoiding additional administrative and financial burdens; supports the establishment of networks created on the basis of Member States-driven initiatives to this end; calls on the state or regional actors to negotiate the repopulation of riverside forests, where relevant, with specialised stakeholders, with the aim of creating biodiverse habitats, after the creation of which ecological services, such as absorption of harmful substances which circulate through groundwaters, will be developed; stresses the results of the evaluation study of the impact of the CAP indicating where CAP instruments and measures have the potential to be more significant contributors to biodiversity goals, and encourages the exploration of ways to improve the existing tools; also encourages further research into the relationship between biodiversity and resilience;
34. Observes that nearly 25 % of the total area of forest in the EU belongs to the Natura 2000 network;
35. Notes that the negotiations conducted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and supported by the Food and Agriculture Organisation foundered on the issue of a legally binding, pan-European agreement on forests, given that the Russian Federation withdrew from the negotiating process; continues, however, to support robust instruments to boost SFM at pan-European and global level;
36. Highlights that a growing number of EU policies address forests from different directions; encourages the completion of the ongoing process established by the current EU Forest Strategy to develop a non-end-use-driven sustainability approach with the close involvement of the Standing Forestry Committee and the Member States, building on the two-step approach of the recast Renewable Energy Directive; believes that the

two-step approach could be used in other policies aiming to ensure the sustainability criteria of forest biomass and the cross-sectorial coherence of EU policies and reward ecosystem-related achievements, in particular the socially significant climate-related achievements of forests; at the same time, acknowledges that forestry in the EU already operates to the highest sustainability standards; notes that the sustainability approach for forest biomass must take account of the need for competitiveness of wood as compared with other raw materials; highlights the importance and encourages the use of market-developed tools, such as the forest certification systems in place, as suitable means of proof to verify the sustainability of forest resources;

37. Stresses the crucial importance of forest and agroforestry measures under the CAP and other forestry measures, as well as ensuring fair and competitive market conditions within the EU, for the successful development of a sustainable circular bio-economy, while implementing the EU Forest Strategy; recalls the need for continuity and for explicit and improved forestry and agroforestry measures under the 2021-2027 CAP; points out that further cuts in the CAP budget would have a negative effect on investment in SFM and on achieving EU forest sector objectives; considers that SFM should have a visible place in the new CAP strategic plans; emphasises the need for a reduction of administrative burdens in the EU forestry measures and in state aid generally, for example in order to boost woody vegetation promotion and preservation linked to landscape features and policies associated with Pillar I and II payments, and by allowing block exemptions making it possible to react promptly to challenges to forests; is worried at the same time that horizontal Rural Development Programme (RDP) measures such as ‘Young farmer’ do not include forestry activities, at least in some Member States;
38. Highlights the benefits of the association between grazing and forest management, namely fire risk decrease and reduced costs of forest maintenance; considers that research and knowledge transfer to practitioners in this regard are crucial; highlights the value of traditional extensive agroforestry systems and the ecosystem services they deliver; calls on the Commission to coordinate the EU Forest Strategy with the Farm to Fork Strategy so as to achieve these goals and to promote EU-wide specialised training programmes, in order to make farmers aware of the benefits and the practice of integrating woody vegetation with agriculture; takes note of the low uptake of the numerous measures within the 2014-2020 RD Regulation designed to support the deliberate integration of woody vegetation with farming; recognizes the capacity of agroforestry to boost overall biomass productivity in specific areas, and underlines that mixed ecosystems produce more biomass and absorb more atmospheric carbon;
39. Stresses that the Union should allocate sufficient funding to measures for the forest-based sector, corresponding to the new expectations of that sector, including investment in the development of forest areas and in improving the viability of forests, maintaining networks of forest roads, forestry technology, innovation, and processing and taking into use forestry products;
40. Calls on the Member States to align their various strategies and plans for forestry management so that the respective targets can be followed and corrected accordingly in due course, instead of creating administrative mosaics which then threaten achieving the goals set in their strategic documents;

41. Regrets the omission in the CAP proposal for the 2021-2027 programming period regarding agroforestry; considers it fundamental that the next CAP regulation should recognise the benefits of agroforestry and continue promoting and supporting the establishment, regeneration, renovation and maintenance of agroforestry systems; calls on the Commission to promote the uptake of agroforestry support measures by Member States in their Strategic Plans;
42. Welcomes the initiative announced by the Commission on the ‘Farm Carbon Forest’, aiming to reward farmers who commit themselves in projects intended to reduce CO₂ emissions or to increase CO₂ storage in order to contribute to the objective of ‘zero carbon’ in 2050, in the context of the new Green Deal;
43. Underlines the essential role of high-level research and innovation in fostering the contribution of forests, agroforestry and the forest-based sector to overcoming the challenges of our time; stresses the importance of the EU’s post-2020 research and innovation programmes, recognises the role of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research, and notes that research and technology have come a long way since the EU Forest Strategy was introduced in 2013; stresses the importance of encouraging further research into, inter alia, forest ecosystems, biodiversity, sustainable substitution of fossil-based raw materials and energies, carbon storage, wood-based products and sustainable forest management practices; calls for the continued funding of research into soils and their role in forests’ climate change resilience and adaptation, biodiversity protection and enhancement, as well as the provision of other ecosystem services and substitution effects, and for gathering data on innovative methods of protecting and building resilience of forests; notes with concern that the data on primary forests remain incomplete; stresses that more research and funding would make a positive contribution to climate change mitigation, safeguarding forest ecosystems and boosting biodiversity, sustainable economic growth and employment, especially in rural areas; takes note of the Commission’s recommendation that a strong capitalisation of innovation along the value chain would help to support the forest-based sector’s competitiveness; welcomes in this regard the EIB’s new climate ambition to fund projects that can boost opportunities for the forest-based sector, which plays an important role in the substitution of fossil-based materials and energies; commends the forest-related research and innovation already undertaken, especially under the Horizon 2020 and LIFE+ programmes; applauds those cases where the results contribute to the development of the sustainable bio-economy, seeking a balance between different aspects of SFM and underlining the multifunctional role of forests; calls on the Commission to invest in, and where necessary, intensify research on finding a solution to the spread of pests and diseases in forests;
44. Calls on the Commission to take initiatives, in concert with manufacturers of forestry machinery, to improve the environmental design of that machinery in order to reconcile a high level of protection for workers with minimum impact on the soil and water in forests;
45. Is concerned that the total surface area of forest has greatly diminished globally since the 1990s; highlights the fact that global deforestation and forest degradation are serious problems; emphasises that the EU Forest Strategy should exert an influence in the global political context and include the EU’s external objectives and action on

promoting SFM worldwide, both bilaterally and through multilateral forest-related processes, placing the emphasis on measures to stop deforestation worldwide including supporting legal, sustainable and deforestation-free production and supply chains which do not result in human rights violations, and to ensure the sustainable management of forest resources; points out that policy initiatives should be developed to tackle issues outside the EU, with a focus on the tropics, while taking into account the different degrees of ambition as regards to environmental policy in different tropical countries, and the drivers of unsustainable practices in forests from outside the sector; stresses the need to implement traceability measures for imports and encourages the Commission and the Member States to foster cooperation with third countries so as to consolidate higher standards of sustainability; stresses the need to foster the implementation of the EU Timber Regulation and the FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) action plan in order to allow better prevention of the entry of illegally-felled or sourced wood, which constitutes unfair competition for the European forestry sector and on the EU market; reiterates the need for certification systems and for the inclusion of specific provisions of SFM in trade agreements; calls for a coherent and systematic interpretation of the EUTR due diligence system;

46. Stresses the importance of education and a skilled, well-trained workforce when it comes to the successful implementation of sustainable forest management in practice; calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue to implement measures and to use existing European instruments such as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European training programmes (ET2020) to support generation renewal and to compensate for the skilled workforce shortage in the sector;
47. Calls for the importing of illegally acquired timber to be included in trade agreements, with sanctions to be imposed in the event of infringements;
48. Calls on the Member States and the wood industry to make substantial contributions to ensure that as many areas are reforested as are deforested;
49. Stresses the need to further develop the EU-wide Forest Information System for Europe (FISE), taking into account existing systems, under the shared responsibility of all the relevant Commission Directorates-General working on different topics covered by FISE; believes that the coordination of this instrument should be undertaken by the EU Forest Strategy; stresses the importance of providing real-time, comparative, science-based and balanced information on European forest resources while monitoring whether forests and natural reserves are well managed and preserved if required, and while aiming at forecasting the impact of natural disturbances resulting from climate change and their consequences, with environmental and socio-economic indicators for the development of any forest-related EU policy; notes that national forest inventories represent a comprehensive monitoring tool for assessing forestry stocks and take into account regional considerations; calls for the EU to create a monitoring network for European forests to collect information at local level, linked to Copernicus earth observation programmes;
50. Welcomes the trend toward digitalisation in the sector and calls on the Commission to

consider the implementation of an EU-wide digital wood-traceability mechanism for data gathering, consistent transparency, ensuring a level playing field, and reducing uncompetitive behaviour and deliberate wrongful action in the wood trade, within and outside the EU, through a verification system; further takes the view that such a verification system would improve compliance, limiting and combating financial fraud, while hampering cartel practices and dismantling illegal logging logistical operations and movements; further encourages exchanges of good practices with Member States which have already implemented such reforms at national level;

51. Underlines that the Member States have competence and a central role in the preparation and implementation of the post-2020 EU Forest Strategy; calls on the Commission's Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) to support Member States in this task; stresses the importance of the exchange of information and the parallel involvement of relevant stakeholders, such as forest owners and managers, in the Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry and Cork, and of maintaining its regular meetings and increasing coordination and synergies with the SFC; urges the Commission to involve Parliament in the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy at least on an annual basis; calls for the strengthening of the role of the SFC in order to ensure coordination among relevant stakeholders and policies at EU level; in addition, stresses that local and regional authorities have a key role to play in strengthening the sustainable use of forests and, in particular, the rural economy; highlights the importance of strengthened cooperation between Member States in order to enhance the benefits of the new EU Forest Strategy; furthermore, calls on the Commission and its Directorates-General with forest-related competences to work strategically to ensure coherence in any forestry-related work and enhance the sustainable management of forests;
52. Urges the Member States to prioritise continuing high-quality vocational training in eco-construction and timber-related trades, and to provide the necessary public expenditure and investment in the field in order to anticipate the future needs of the EU's timber industry;
53. Recalls the pledge of the Commission concerning zero tolerance of non-compliance; stresses that a number of infringement cases currently open against Member States address irreplaceable values of European forest ecosystems, and urges the Commission to swiftly act in these cases;
54. Urges the Commission, in coordination with the Member States' labour inspection services, to verify that the machinery placed on the market and used by the timber industry complies with Directive 2006/42/EC on machinery and that it is equipped with a sawdust extraction and collection system;
55. Is convinced that the EU Forest Strategy should promote and support the sharing of best practices as regards the implementation of SFM, vocational training for forest workers and managers, results in the forest sector and improved cooperation among Member States regarding cross-border actions and information sharing, in order to ensure the growth of healthy European forests; furthermore, stresses the need for improved communication regarding the importance of sustainable management of forest areas, together with the possibility of extending, implementing and coordinating information campaigns on the multifunctional nature of forests and the many economic, social and

environmental benefits provided by forest management at all relevant levels of the EU, in order to make all citizens aware of the richness of this heritage and of the need to manage, maintain and sustainably use our resources to avoid any conflicts in society;

56. Encourages the Member States to urge their respective forestry stakeholders to reach out to a broader segment of the population through educational tools and programmes, both for students and for people of other age groups, stressing the importance of forests both for human-led activities and for preserving biodiversity and varied ecosystems;
57. Notes that digitalisation and sustainable technologies play a key role in providing added value in the further development of the forest-based sector; calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage knowledge and technology transfer and sharing of best practices, on, for example, sustainable and active forest management;
58. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Forests, forestry and the whole forest-based sector play an important role in providing sustainable solutions to many challenges of our time. Forests and other wooded land cover at least 43% of the surface of the EU, and the forest sector employs at least 500 000 European citizens directly and 2,6 million indirectly. In addition, 60% of the EU-forests are privately owned. Furthermore, European forests are extremely diverse in terms of size, structure, biodiversity and management approaches.

The global policy environment has changed enormously since the previous EU Forest Strategy in 2013, and this change greatly influences different EU policies. EU's internal and international commitments, such as the zero-emission society, the European Green Deal, the UN SDGs, the Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement and others will be impossible to achieve without climate benefits of forests and the forest-based sector and other ecosystem services provided by forests.

In addition, we need to remember that forest policy remains mainly at Member States' competence. The TFEU makes no reference to specific provisions for an EU forest policy, and the EU has a long history of contributing through its policies to implementing sustainable forest management and to Member States' decisions on forests. The growing number of national and EU policies affect directly or indirectly forests and their management in the EU. This creates a complex and fragmented EU policy environment for forests and their management, which needs to be more coherent and better coordinated, benefitting all pillars of sustainability.

Therefore, we need a strong, holistic and independent EU Forest Strategy post-2020. It should mainstream a holistic approach on sustainable forest management (SFM), which builds on the economic, social and environmental sustainability in a balanced way and ensures the continuity of the multifunctional role of forests. The EU Forest Strategy should be an integral and independent part of the upcoming European Green Deal, and not subordinate to any other sectoral strategy.

The new EU Forest Strategy should include instruments that foster its role as an efficient policy coordination tool for different forest-related EU policies and their implementation in a way that takes into consideration the entire forest-based value chain. It should create coherence and synergies with other sectors that influence the sector. The EU Forest Strategy should also be a bridge between the EU sectoral and Member States' national forest policies, and it should ensure that the forest-based sector's expertise is involved from the early stages of policy formulation, which would result in coherent and consistent forest-related policies. In addition, the EU should actively influence the global policy environment, by taking actions to halt global deforestation and encouraging not only reforestation and afforestation but also sustainable management of forest resources.

Furthermore, forests, the forest-based sector and the bioeconomy have a crucial role in meeting the goals of the European Green Deal and therefore EU's climate, energy and environmental objectives. Meeting these goals will never be possible without multifunctional, healthy forests and sustainable forest management with viable industries. It is important to prevent the rural exodus and attract industries to invest in Europe and build business ecosystems that sustainably use available local resources and offer jobs to local people. In this

respect, the EU Forest Strategy should play a key role in ensuring also availability of raw materials to the industries.

Decreasing the dependency of fossil-based raw materials and energy would lead to increased opportunities especially in the rural areas. Forests should not only be considered as CO₂ sinks and thereby reducing other sectors' contribution in minimising their emissions. The importance of moving away from fossil-based society should be highlighted.

Climate change mitigation has to be addressed as one important service that forests and the forest sector have to offer. In addition, adapting to climate change has become increasingly important in order to ensure appropriate prevention measures of natural disturbances. The bark beetle epidemics, drought and forest fires have to be tackled and prevented.

The environmental, economic and social aspects of forests and forest management have to be fostered in a balanced manner while strengthening the crucial overall climate benefits stemming from forests and the forest-based value chain, namely fostered CO₂ sequestration, carbon storage in wood-based products and substitution of fossil-based raw materials and energy. The research efforts need to be strengthened as regards the latter.

Forests and the forest-based sector significantly contribute to the development of local, circular bioeconomies in the EU. In 2010, the bioeconomy represented a market estimated to be worth over EUR 2 trillion, providing 20 million jobs and accounting for 9 % of total employment in the EU. The uptake of the circular bioeconomy must be promoted via strong research and innovation policies. Every euro invested in bioeconomy research and innovation under Horizon 2020 will generate about EUR 10 in added value.

The importance of resilient and healthy forest ecosystems including fauna and flora should be underlined, in order to maintain and enhance delivery of multiple ecosystem services forests provide such as biodiversity, clean air, water, healthy soils, wood and non-wood raw-materials.

In addition, the Natura 2000 sites provide the society with multiple ecosystem services, including raw materials. However, the management of these areas require sufficient financial resources.

Furthermore, afforestation and reforestation are suitable tools in enhancing forest cover in the EU, especially in abandoned lands, close to urban and peri-urban areas as well as in mountainous areas. We have to highlight the importance of protective functions of forests as well as active and sustainable forest management in these areas to enhance health and resilience of the ecosystems, and to adapt the species composition to regional and climatic conditions.

The crucial importance of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), financing forestry measures and the research framework programmes for the livelihoods and development of bioeconomy in rural areas has to be pointed out. Farmers and forest owners are key actors in rural areas. In addition, the role of forestry, agro-forestry and forest-based industries in the Rural Development Programme of the 2014-2020 CAP has been extremely important. We must encourage its recognition in the CAP 2021-2027 and in the implementation of the European Green Deal as well.

Properly funded high-quality research, innovation, collection of information, maintenance and development of databases, best practices and knowledge sharing are of utmost importance for the future of EU's multifunctional forests and for the entire forest-based value-chain, in light of the increasing demands being placed upon them and the needs to meet the multiple opportunities and challenges the society is facing.

Forests provide e.g. recreational values and forest-related activities such as harvesting of non-wood forest products e.g. mushrooms and soft fruits. We should point out the opportunities in enhancing biomass removals as forest fire prevention and biodiversity enhancement via grazing but also note that wildlife grazing might have a negative impact on survival of seedlings.

The European society is becoming increasingly disconnected from forests and forestry, and therefore the importance of sustainable forest management should be promoted. Taking into account the SFM's vital role in delivering the multiple benefits forests provide to society, there is a strong need to inform public on the economic, social, and environmental, as well as cultural and historical role of forests and their management as part of our natural heritage.

The Commission should give the Member States a central role through Commission's Standing Forestry Committee when preparing and implementing the post-2020 EU Forest Strategy, and involve in parallel the relevant stakeholders through Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry and Cork. The Commission should also involve the Parliament annually in the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy.

To conclude, we need an ambitious and strong EU Forest Strategy post-2020 to secure a coordinated and holistic approach to forests, forest-based sector and multiple services they provide. Forests and the forest-based sector have potential to provide an increasing contribution to the climate, environment, people and bio-based circular economy with their front running digital solutions and sustainable technologies. We need long-term investments in sustainable forest management in order to make sure that forests remain not only economically viable but also make a significant contribution towards achieving the many goals of the EU, including the European Green Deal and transition to circular bioeconomy. Attracting forest-based investments in Europe and facilitation of the inter-linkages with other sectors have to be taken into consideration in the EU Forest Strategy. Furthermore, the crucial role and potential of wood-based materials in sectors such as e.g. construction, textiles, chemicals and packaging in substituting fossil-based alternatives has to be pointed out. In addition, we need evidence-based decision-making as it comes to EU-policies related to forests.

23.6.2020

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

for the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

on the European Forest Strategy - The Way Forward
(2019/2157(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Jessica Polfjård

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- having regard to the report on stepping up EU action to protect and restore the world's forests, which is currently being discussed in the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety,
- A. whereas forests and other wooded land have grown substantially in the EU between 1990 and 2015 as a result of targeted programmes and natural growth, covering 43 % of the EU's territory, equivalent to 182 million hectares, and accounting for 5 % of the world's total forests; whereas forest areas make up half of the Natura 2000 network; whereas some Member States, with more than half of their territories covered by forests, are dependent on forestry; whereas 60 % of forests in the EU are privately owned, mostly by small-scale owners with less than 3 hectares of forest; whereas forests host a significant part of Europe's terrestrial biodiversity;
- B. whereas the EU has committed to the Aichi Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity, such as target 7 requiring that by 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, thus ensuring conservation of biodiversity, but the EU is not set to achieve these targets;
- C. whereas forests are circular ecosystems founded on full recycling of matter and nutrients within; whereas any form of active management is based on exploitation of resources from this ecosystem, which inevitably and negatively affects its functioning, structure and biodiversity;
- D. whereas many aspects of forests and forestry are regulated under EU legislation such as the Birds and Habitats Directives, the common agricultural policy (CAP), the Land Use,

Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation, the Renewable Energy Directive and the Timber Regulation;

- E. whereas, according to the European Environment Agency’s report on ‘The European Environment – state and outlook 2020’, long-term trends in bird populations, including common forest birds, demonstrate that Europe has experienced a massive decline in biodiversity, with intensive forest management being identified as one of the drivers¹; whereas, according to the same report, Europe is facing environmental challenges of an unprecedented scale and urgency; whereas urgent action is needed over the next 10 years to address the alarming rate of biodiversity loss, the increasing impacts of climate change and the overconsumption of natural resources;
- F. whereas, unlike younger, managed forests, large trees and intact, older forests provide essential habitat and are essential stocks of carbon that cannot be replaced for at least 100-150 years if harvested; whereas old forests continue to remove and store carbon from the atmosphere, including through forest soil; whereas primary forests have almost disappeared in the EU;
- G. whereas the Commission’s 2018 report on progress in the implementation of the current EU forest strategy states that the implementation of the EU biodiversity policy remains a major challenge and that ‘reports on conservation of forest habitats and species show no improvement so far’; whereas, for the period 2007-2012, Member States reported that only 26 % of forest species and 15 % of forest habitats of European interest, as listed in the Habitats Directive, were in ‘favourable conservation status’; whereas the quality of forests in the EU has been declining for a long time; whereas illegal logging is still unresolved in some Member States;
- H. whereas, in accordance with Article 4 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the environment is a shared competence between the Union and its Member States; whereas Article 191 of the TFEU provides that EU policy on the environment shall, *inter alia*, aim for a high level of protection; whereas the Court of Justice has ruled that forests are part of the EU’s natural heritage and are thus covered by Article 191²;
- I. whereas Parliament declared a climate and environment emergency on 28 November 2019;
- J. whereas forests are an integral part of sustainable development; whereas in order to help tackle biodiversity loss and climate crises, it is essential that forests are protected, restored and managed in such a way as to maximise their capacity for carbon storage and biodiversity protection; whereas intact ecosystems have greater capability than degraded ones to overcome environmental stressors, including changes to climate, as they have inherent properties that enable them to maximise their adaptive capacity; whereas, unlike younger and managed forests, large trees and intact, older forests provide essential habitat and more carbon dioxide (CO₂) storage; whereas

¹ European Environment Agency report on ‘The European Environment – state and outlook 2020’, page 83.

² Judgment of the Court (Fifth Chamber) of 25 February 1999 in joined cases C-164/97 and C-165/97, *European Parliament v Council of the European Union*, ECLI:EU:C:1999:99, paragraph 16.

interconnected forest habitats and forest corridors are key to securing the survival of endangered flora and fauna;

- K. whereas forests and forest areas have a multifunctional role as they are circular ecosystems, founded on full recycling of matter and nutrients, and are crucial for regulating the water cycle, including as water retention to prevent flooding, absorbing CO₂, storing carbon, hosting terrestrial biodiversity, and providing close-to-nature recreation and well-being possibilities, as well as contributing to economic growth and employment in rural and urban areas, where the EU forestry sector is an important pillar employing more than 3 million people; whereas these jobs are dependent on resilient forest ecosystems in the long term;
- L. whereas the EU has committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including goal 15, which is to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss;
- M. whereas forests contribute effectively to territorial balance, economic growth and employment in rural and urban areas, and help maintain the competitiveness of the forestry sector; whereas a balanced approach to all forest functions is key to ensuring consistency between forest-related policies; whereas it is important to underline the continuous efforts undertaken by forest owners and managers to ensure sustainable forest development, and the importance of further enhancing their potential to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal and the development of the bio-economy while guaranteeing ecosystem services and biodiversity; whereas EU forest owners and managers have a long tradition of and experience in managing multifunctional forests; whereas, however, owing to current challenges, a good knowledge of forest ecology is required, including in tackling natural disturbances;
- N. whereas global demand for authentic wild nature is growing, and public support for strict protection of forest ecosystems has increased significantly;
- O. whereas genetic variety in forests is essential for adapting to changing environmental conditions such as climate change and for restoring biodiversity;
- P. whereas the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Land Use finds that commercial forestry has contributed to increasing net greenhouse gas emissions, loss of natural ecosystems, and declining biodiversity;
- Q. whereas Europe's forests are of immense value in terms of climate mitigation, since forest ecosystems absorb and store around 10 % of Europe's greenhouse gas emissions, and there is potential to increase that capacity; whereas forests also provide a renewable and climate-friendly raw material that acts as a substitute for energy-intensive materials and fossil fuels; whereas, however, the principle of 'cascading' should be recognised and used as a beneficial way of improving resource efficiency in the new forest strategy; whereas forests store and absorb about 2.5 times more CO₂ in soils than in tree biomass; and whereas forests disturbed by fires and logging have seen soil loss as high as 26.6 %; highlights therefore the importance of complex forest ecosystems and of mature forests;

- R. whereas ‘proforestation’ is the practice of letting forests grow to their maximum ecological capacity to store carbon and reach their full biodiversity potential;
- S. whereas, in order to preserve the full scale of forest biodiversity and functionality and respect the need for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, with the LULUCF Regulation recognising that a carbon pool of deadwood in the forest is analogous to long-lived harvested wood products, as its carbon does not undergo instantaneous oxidisation and provides crucial microhabitats on which a number of species, including protected ones, are dependent, it is crucially important to protect a proportion of forest areas from any form of active human intervention; whereas new climate change adaptation and mitigation options have arisen, including proforestation³ and close-to-nature forestry;
- T. whereas, according to the IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of 2019, nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history and 1 million animal and plant species are at risk of extinction;
- U. whereas the CAP is the main source of EU funds for forest management;
- V. whereas plantations are often monocultures, which contain less biodiversity than natural and semi-natural forests, and are less resilient to climate change, thus leading to more carbon losses due to natural disturbances;
- W. whereas different types of cutting have different impacts on forests’ carbon dioxide storage capacities, soil quality and conservation status; whereas clear-cutting of large areas is the most damaging method, since it removes much of the organic matter and roots from the soil, causes the release of carbon stored in the soil (which is around 2.5 times as much as that stored in tree biomass) and significantly damages the complex structure of the forest and its dependent ecosystems;
- X. whereas bioenergy subsidies lead to worsening of the ratio of wood use between material and energy use, and at the same time to an artificial increase in the supply of biomass⁴, thus lowering the capacity of forests to sequester carbon;
- Y. whereas subsidies for various renewable energy sources help kickstart the sector; whereas the solar and wind energy sectors and related technologies can sustain themselves without subsidies after initial scaling up; whereas, however, this is not true for bioenergy, which is a sector that runs only thanks to subsidies;
- Z. whereas data available on forests at EU level is incomplete and of varying quality, which hampers EU and Member State coordination of forest management and conservation;

³ ‘Proforestation: growing existing forests intact to their ecological potential’, as in William R. Moomaw, ‘2019: Intact Forests in the United States: Proforestation Mitigates Climate Change and Serves the Greatest Good’, in *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change*.

⁴ Joint Research Centre of the European Commission report of 2018 entitled ‘Biomass production, supply, uses and flows in the European Union’: ‘Indeed, targets for renewable energy set by the EU have resulted in a surge in the consumption of woody biomass.’. Estimates for energy use of wood: 42 % (2005), 43 % (2010), 48 % currently, while energy uses are likely underreported.

- AA. whereas rampant deforestation is one of the factors that have created a ‘perfect storm’ for the spillover of diseases from wildlife to people⁵;
- AB. whereas the EU has a responsibility to ensure that our consumption patterns and imports from third countries do not contribute to deforestation or forest degradation, nor to the conversion or degradation of other natural ecosystems, in other parts of the world;
1. Welcomes the Commission’s decision to introduce a new forest strategy; stresses the need for the forest strategy to observe the principle of subsidiarity; stresses the need for the forest strategy to recognise the EU’s competences in the area of protection of the environment, including forests; recalls that, under Article 191 of the TFEU, EU policy on the environment must contribute, among other objectives, to the pursuit of preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment and to prudent and rational utilisation of natural resources; recalls that several pieces of EU legislation affect forests and forest management; emphasises, in this regard, the need for a holistic and consistent forest strategy that enhances the multifunctional role of forests and the forest-based sector in the EU and that promotes the far-reaching societal, economic and environmental benefits of forests with full respect for the EU’s climate and environmental objectives; emphasises the need for clear prioritisation with climate and biodiversity protection as central and interconnected objectives in the new EU forest strategy; underlines the urgent need to prevent and manage natural disturbances; highlights that the forest strategy should be consistent with the European Green Deal and aligned with the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy;
 2. Observes that, according to the European Environment Agency, urban woods also make a by no means insignificant contribution to combating climate change and its impact on health, and draws attention to their particularly vital function for town- and city-dwellers as places of recreation and as natural surroundings; stresses that, in addition to woods in rural areas, urban woodlands and the interaction of woods and trees with urban and periurban areas, as well as understanding of their function for these communities, should be evaluated, particularly with reference to the persistent droughts;
 3. Emphasises the need for a holistic and consistent forest strategy that enhances the multifunctional role and sustainability of forests and the forest-based sector in the EU and promotes the far-reaching environmental, societal, economic and cultural benefits of forests; emphasises, in that connection, that urgent action needs to be taken as a priority to prevent and manage the natural challenges and existing pressures that forests face, and to tackle deforestation;
 4. Underlines that the new forest strategy should serve as a central policy instrument in the EU for efficient coordination of forest-related policies and initiatives as part of the European Green Deal; calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider introducing targets for forest cover with a view to sustainably increasing current levels while endorsing the 2030 targets on protected areas, including forests, and restoration in

⁵ IPBES Expert Guest Article entitled ‘COVID-19 Stimulus Measures Must Save Lives, Protect Livelihoods, and Safeguard Nature to Reduce the Risk of Future Pandemics’, by Professors Josef Settele, Sandra Díaz and Eduardo Brondizio and Dr Peter Daszak, 27 April 2020.

line with the EU's biodiversity strategy and Parliament's calls⁶ for curbing deforestation and improving the quality of existing forests and woodland; considers that the forest strategy should include adequate instruments to reach these goals;

5. Stresses that forests make up almost half of the total surface area of Natura 2000 sites (i.e. 37.5 million hectares) and that 23 % of all forests in Europe are within these sites, for which forests are of crucial importance⁷; in this context, underlines the urgent need to honour the Commission's pledge to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to non-compliance with environmental legislation and in particular to prioritise effective enforcement of EU nature legislation, including adequate management plans for Natura 2000 sites, and to assess whether sufficient funds have been provided for the protection of forests in Natura 2000 sites, including through the pursuit of infringements procedures; points out, in that connection, that there are five major challenges when it comes to the implementation of Natura 2000 in forests:

- (1) the balance between conserving biodiversity and timber production,
- (2) integrating conservation and the requirements of local stakeholders,
- (3) climate change,
- (4) the lack of funding, and
- (5) conflict with other sectoral policies;

with that in mind, calls on the Commission and the Member States:

- (1) to improve communication and transparency,
- (2) to place more emphasis on the science behind conservation when drawing up management strategies and in responding to climate change,
- (3) to involve the general public more in formulating and implementing policy,
- (4) to put in place an effective funding strategy,
- (5) to establish an integrated European land-use and conservation policy, and
- (6) to improve knowledge about the implementation of Natura 2000 in forests, and about the effects of Natura 2000 on biodiversity, forest management and other uses of land throughout the EU;

6. Notes that safeguarding and sustainably managing our forests makes a core contribution to our general well-being and should not be subject to competition law; recalls that forests are a home for public-interest activities in the field of leisure and health, as well as education;
7. Observes that, with reference to the multifunctional role of forests, all aspects need to be promoted: the protective function of forests as a habitat for countless animal and plant species, the utility function of forests as sources of wood and other products, and the protective function of forests for flora and fauna; stresses that the ecological, economic and social functions of forests must be considered in conjunction with one

⁶ European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2020 on the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0015.

⁷ European Environment Agency, 'European Forest Ecosystems – State and Trends', 2016.

another;

8. Take the view that it is of the utmost importance that access to EU support for forests be simplified and red tape cut, taking into account the difficulties faced by small and medium-sized land owners and even by some public entities;
9. Stresses that there are diverging views on the CO₂ absorption capacities of different kinds of forests, and that scientific research indicates that resilient, healthy and biodiverse forests absorb more CO₂ than intensively harvested forests; urges, therefore, that the new forest strategy should promote sustainable forest management; recalls that the EU and its Member States have committed to apply the definition and principles of sustainable forest management (SFM)⁸; notes, however, that the Commission is developing an EU-level definition of sustainable forest management, which should be based on the highest sustainability standards, with protection of biodiversity and valuable carbon sinks as central elements; highlights the overall climate benefits stemming from forests and the forest-based value chain, namely improved CO₂ sequestration, carbon storage and sustainable substitution of fossil-based raw materials and energy; recognises that sustainable forest management must ensure the protection of European forest biodiversity; notes that forest protection and production do not necessarily act in contradiction, but could in some cases be compatible with one another and have a positive result in terms of climate protection;
10. Stresses that under some circumstances there are trade-offs between protecting the climate and protecting biodiversity in the bio-economy sector, and particularly in forestry, which plays a central role in the transition towards a climate-neutral economy; expresses its concern that this trade-off has not been sufficiently addressed in recent policy discussions; calls on all stakeholders to develop a coherent approach to bring together biodiversity protection and climate protection in a thriving forest-based sector and bio-economy;
11. Notes that although best-preserved forests, from which no products are extracted, are few, they should be given the attention they deserve, as they make a contribution to knowledge, health and ecotourism that we cannot deny to future generations; stresses that Natura 2000, as the European ecological habitat conservation network, should play a crucial role in the European forest strategy; is of the opinion that Natura 2000 should be key in guaranteeing the protection and conservation of forests;
12. Stresses the importance and the vital role of the forestry and wood clusters for the protection of the climate; stresses that forestry and forestry services, as well as downstream processing operations, generate substantial economic activity, particularly in rural, structurally disadvantaged regions, thanks to their demand for further goods and services from other sectors;
13. Stresses the need for Member States to share good practices with regard to forest management and planning; also draws attention to the importance of establishing European guidelines, linked to the pre-established objectives in the European Green Deal, with a view to providing the Member States with guidance on forestry

⁸ Provided in Forest Europe Helsinki Resolution H1 of 1993.

management, maintenance and planning;

14. Stresses that protection and proforestation, as well as reforestation and afforestation with location and environment appropriate tree species, should be the focus of the future EU forestry strategy; notes that close-to-nature management practices are the best able to achieve these goals;
15. Stresses that according to research⁹ old-growth forests continue to accumulate carbon, contrary to the view that they are carbon neutral or even sources of CO₂;
16. Stresses that no substitution effect of forest-based products can compensate for the loss of old-growth and primary forests, which are recognised as irreplaceable¹⁰ and should be protected through legal and incentivising instruments targeting their complexity, connectivity and representativeness¹¹;
17. Calls for strict protection of the EU's primary and old-growth forests as part of the EU forest strategy;
18. Recalls that about 60 % of the EU's forests are privately owned and that about two-thirds of private forest owners own less than 3 hectares of forest; stresses that all measures must duly take this into account and hence must be designed in a way that they are accessible to and can be practically implemented by small-scale forest owners; recalls that the Commission has identified administrative burden and forest ownership structure as limiting factors for the uptake of certain measures¹²;
19. Reiterates the fact that conservation of high-carbon ecosystems, including forests, represents a response option with an immediate impact on climate change, unlike afforestation, reforestation and restoration, which take more time to deliver¹³; calls for policy actions in the EU to be guided by this principle;
20. Stresses that the continuing decline in biodiversity has had negative consequences for the delivery of many ecosystem services over the last few decades; notes that these declines have occurred in part because of intensive agriculture and forestry practices; underlines that the continuing decline in regulating services can have detrimental consequences for quality of life¹⁴;

⁹ S. Luyssaert et al., 2008: 'Old-growth forests as global carbon sinks'. In *Nature*.

¹⁰ Commission communication of 23 July 2019 entitled 'Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests' (COM(2019)0352).

¹¹ European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2020 on the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0015), the exact reading of paragraph 52.

¹² Commission report of 7 December 2018 entitled 'Progress in the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy – A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest sector' (COM(2018)0811), p.3.

¹³ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2019: 'Climate Change and Land Report-Summary for Policymakers'.

¹⁴ Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (2018): Summary for policymakers of the regional assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services for Europe and Central Asia of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. M. Fischer, M. Rounsevell, A. Torre-Marín Rando, A. Mader, A. Church, M. Elbakidze, V. Elias, T. Hahn, P.A. Harrison, J.

21. Recognises that climate change is altering the growth capacity of forests, and increasing the frequency and seriousness of drought, floods, and fires, as well as fostering the development of new pests and diseases which affect forests; notes that intact ecosystems have greater capability than degraded ones to overcome environmental stressors, including changes to climate, as they have inherent properties that enable them to maximise their adaptive capacity;
22. Calls for Member States to ensure that forests above 10 hectares have forest management plans comprising carbon storage and biodiversity considerations and, where applicable, comply with Natura 2000 objectives;
23. Recalls the letter from more than 700 scientists calling for a scientifically sound revision of the Renewable Energy Directive, in particular excluding certain types of woody biomass from counting towards the target and removing its eligibility for support;
24. Highlights that large-scale intensive bioenergy plantations, including monocultures, and especially those replacing natural forests and subsistence farmland, have negative impacts on biodiversity;
25. Emphasises the role forests can play in substituting fossil-based materials with bio-based products; believes that the new forest strategy should reflect the importance of the role played by European forests and the EU's circular sustainable bio-economy in reaching climate neutrality by 2050 and that measures to this end should be included; stresses that these measures should make use of the full potential of substitution-effects; stresses, however, that measures in the new forest strategy concerning the bio-economy and use of wood biomass should duly take into account their crucial role in carbon storage, biodiversity protection and the provision of other ecosystem services and the impacts on the conservation of forest ecosystems and on CO₂ sequestration in a resource efficient manner;
26. Points out that in the report on progress in the implementation of the EU forest strategy, it is noted that despite the action taken so far, the implementation of the EU biodiversity policy remains a major challenge¹⁵, and that the reports on the conservation of forest habitats and species show little improvement so far; calls on the Commission to integrate in the new forest strategy as a key component the protection and restoration of forest ecosystems and biodiversity;
27. Notes with concern that 15 % of forest habitats and 26 % of forest species were found to be in favourable conservation status in 2015¹⁶; recalls target 3b of the EU biodiversity strategy, which seeks to bring about a measurable improvement in the conservation status of species and habitats that depend on, or are affected by, forestry and in the provision of related ecosystem services; deplores the fact that, according to the mid-

Hauck, B. Martín-López, I. Ring, C. Sandström, I. Sousa Pinto, P. Visconti, N.E. Zimmermann and M. Christie (eds.). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany.

¹⁵ Commission report of 7 December 2018 entitled 'Progress in the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy – A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest sector' (COM(2018)0811), p.3.

¹⁶ European Environment Agency briefing of 27 November 2019, 'Forest dynamics in Europe and their ecological consequences'. Last modified on 10 December 2019.

term review of the biodiversity strategy, no significant progress towards the target has been made¹⁷;

28. Stresses the need to reduce the EU's consumption in general, and also of wood and wood-based products, by promoting a more circular economy and prioritising the most efficient use of wood, which allows for the locking-in of carbon over the long-term and minimises the generation of waste;
29. Takes the view that the EU's forest strategy should help to reverse the trend of native species increasingly being overlooked in favour of fast-growing alien species, such as the eucalyptus;
30. Emphasises the importance of vocational training and retraining programmes for forestry specialists in the use of new technologies and their adaptation to ongoing change, including the creation of a communication platform for the exchange of good practices, and considers it important to involve forest owners and managers in this process and to encourage them to follow sustainable forest conservation and biodiversity promotion practices;
31. Calls for the new forest strategy to help ensure that forest management practices avoid any fragmentation of forest ecosystems into smaller parts, with a particular focus on primary forests, since many species, including larger mammals, rely on interconnected, intact forest habitats for survival; calls for the forest strategy to prioritise the re-connection of already fragmented forests through the restoration of forest corridors appropriate to local conditions and biodiversity;
32. Takes the view that information on forest resources and forests' condition is essential to ensuring that decisions taken on forests are as socio-economically and ecologically beneficial as possible, at all levels;
33. Stresses the particular importance of the Carpathian region and notes that EU accession to the Carpathian convention would help provide support to the region, which holds irreplaceable natural values in continental Europe;
34. Notes with concern that, at EU level, reported data¹⁸ indicate that energy accounts for 48 % of total use of woody biomass; reiterates that next to natural carbon sequestration and biodiversity protection *in situ*, to be coherent with our biodiversity and climate goals, use of harvested wood should be leaning towards material use;
35. Highlights the value and the potential of newly established and traditional extensive agroforestry systems for agricultural production, diversification, including for the purpose of the bioeconomy, carbon sequestration, prevention of desertification, and potential to decrease pressure on forest ecosystems; regrets that the rules stemming from the reforms of the CAP have systematically led to the degradation of agroforestry systems and in many cases have hampered their restoration, regeneration and

¹⁷ Commission report of 2 October 2015 entitled 'The mid-term review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020' (COM(2015)0478).

¹⁸ Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, 2018: 'Biomass production, supply, uses and flows in the European Union'.

rejuvenation; notes with concern the current large-scale die-off of iconic Mediterranean high-nature value agroforestry systems and urgently calls for changes to the rules in order to facilitate the regeneration and restoration of existing agroforestry systems, and the establishment of new ones;

36. Notes that research and technology have come a long way since the forest strategy was introduced in 2013; stresses the importance of encouraging further research into, *inter alia*, forest ecosystems, biodiversity, sustainable substitution of fossil-based raw materials and energies, carbon storage, wood-based products, and sustainable forest management practices, in forestry and bio-based products; believes that EU funds for research should be further directed towards this; calls on the Commission and the Member States to also fund research and continue to gather data on innovative methods of protecting and building the resilience of forests such as introducing resilient species; stresses that more research and funding would make a positive contribution to climate change mitigation, safeguarding forest ecosystems, and boosting biodiversity, sustainable economic growth, and employment, especially in rural areas;
37. Calls for the introduction of a coordinated electronic timber track and trace system and for support for the development of automated tools for timber circulation analysis and monitoring at all stages of its transformation and integration with related government and commercial record keeping, reporting, permits issuance, and agreements registration systems;
38. Emphasises that local and regional authorities have a key role to play in ensuring the long-term sustainability of forests, as they could play a part in regional-level sustainable development plans, the development of long-life-cycle carbon-absorbing forestry products and the promotion of SME entrepreneurial spirit in the forestry sector;
39. Calls for continued funding for research in soils and their role in forests climate change resilience and adaptation, biodiversity protection and enhancement, as well as the provision of other ecosystem services;
40. Considers it essential to preserve endemic genetic resources and select those elements of the existing gene pool that are best adapted to expected growing conditions in the future;
41. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to create economic and policy instruments that will allow more forest to grow to their ecological potential and absorb carbon dioxide;
42. Stresses the importance of the existence of scientific evidence with regard to the EU's forestry policies;
43. Proposes updating the rules on reporting and accounting for LULUCF in order to incentivise choice of non-intervention in the accounting category of managed forest land in areas of old-growth forests, for example by excluding respective removals from the limitations posed by the regulation;
44. Stresses the importance of other forest-related activities, specifically the harvesting of non-wood forest products, such as mushrooms and soft fruit, along with grazing and

beekeeping;

45. Considers that strictly protected areas in non-intervention management regimes should be part of the EU forest strategy and of local development strategies based on low impact natural tourism and provisioning of non-productive ecosystem services;
46. Calls for the Commission to uphold the principle of ‘do no harm’ laid down in the Green Deal communication (COM(2019)0640) and to revise all relevant legislation to reflect the latest science in relation to forest ecosystems, different carbon pools and their true value for climate change mitigation and adaptation, including the crucial role of their biodiversity in this adaptation;
47. Recalls the need to protect forests from growing threats and to reconcile their productive and protective functions, taking into account that drought, fires, storms and pests are expected to damage forests more frequently and more severely as a result of climate change;
48. Expresses its concern over the health and resilience of forests in many parts of Europe; underlines that the new forest strategy should take into account that a diverse forest, reflecting the composition that is natural to the region, is generally more resilient than a mono-culture forest; highlights the need to strengthen and make full use of EU mechanisms to tackle the transboundary pressures on forests; recalls that according to the EEA¹⁹ the main sources of pressure on forests in the EU are increased land use, expanding urban areas and climate change; emphasises that these ecosystems are increasingly prone to natural disturbances such as storms, fires, droughts, invasive species, pests, insect infestation and diseases, all amplifying vulnerability to climate change; calls on the Commission to facilitate a platform for exchange of best practices to combat this;
49. Points out that air pollution has a significant impact not only on human health but also on the environment; invites the Commission to explore the impacts of air pollution on forests and forest biodiversity in its upcoming zero-pollution action plan;
50. Welcomes the launch in February 2020 of the Forest Information System for Europe (FISE), which provides European data infrastructure in the area of forests; calls on the Member States to fully engage in sharing data and working towards a harmonised data framework on the state of forests in Europe; calls on the work of the FISE to be completed in a timely manner on all five priority themes: forest basic data, bio-economy, nature and biodiversity, climate change mitigation, and forest health and resilience;
51. Stresses that the EU forest strategy should have as one of its objectives achieving a substantial increase in the proportion of forest species and habitats in favourable conservation status; calls on the strategy to include ambitious measures to this effect;
52. Recognises that the EU forest strategy should take into consideration the high economic, social and cultural value of forests; points out that different economic

¹⁹ European Environment Agency, ‘Forest dynamics in Europe and their ecological consequences’, 27 November 2018.

activities related to forests can have varying disruptive effects on forest ecosystems; stresses that the new EU forest strategy should encourage only that kind of economic activity that respects sustainable boundaries of forest ecosystems;

53. Strongly encourages the limiting of the harvesting method of clear cutting and advocates increasing the use of continuous growing; recognises that clear cutting of a forest releases the majority of the residual carbon stock from the ground of the area into the atmosphere; stresses the need to promote alternative and less invasive methods of harvesting wood;
54. Welcomes the fact that, as announced in the European Green Deal, the new forest strategy will have as its key objectives effective afforestation, forest preservation and restoration; highlights that the carbon capture potential of forest ecosystems continues to increase into the maturity of the forest ecosystem and that natural forests offer important benefits; stresses that priority should be given to the protection and restoration of existing forests, in particular old-growth forests;
55. Stresses the need for the EU to do more to stop clear-cutting and illegal logging practices; notes that, despite the EU Timber Regulation, illegal logging still takes place in some Member States; urges the Commission and the Member States to take urgent action on these issues through close monitoring and through the enforcement of existing EU laws and calls on the Commission to swiftly pursue infringement procedures when breaches occur as well as to follow through on illegal logging cases through organisms such as the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF); calls on the Commission to finalise, without delay, the fitness check of EU rules against illegal logging;
56. Recalls that most of the EU's forests are managed²⁰, including the majority of old-growth forests; stresses that an EU forest strategy with a long-term planning is needed to improve the proportion of old-growth forests; invites the Commission to propose a long-term EU forest strategy for the improvement of the proportion of old-growth forest;
57. Calls on the Commission to explore the potential of developing a legislative framework on an EU certification scheme for locally produced wood that is based on the highest sustainability standards;
58. Points out that there is scope for improvement in the uptake of rural development funds by Member States, especially in the programmes related to improving forest biodiversity; calls on the Member States to use the available support measures for the conservation of forests and biodiversity; highlights also the importance of ensuring sufficient resources for the implementation of the new EU forest strategy;
59. Calls on the Commission to restart the negotiations for an international legally binding forest convention, which would contribute to the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests and would provide for their multiple and complementary functions and uses, including action towards reforestation, afforestation

²⁰ Naudts, K., Chen, Y., et al., 'Europe's forest management did not mitigate climate warming'. In Science, 5 February 2016: Vol. 351, Issue 6273, pp. 597-600.

and forest conservation, while taking into account social, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual needs of present and future generations, and recognising the vital role of all types of forests in maintaining the ecological processes and balance, and supporting the identity, culture and rights of indigenous people, their communities and other communities and forest dwellers;

60. Expresses its concern about the biodiversity loss occurring in the EU, which is something that needs to be stopped by the EU forest strategy; recalls that the loss of biodiversity is an internal problem for the EU; notes that the strategy should protect the last fragments of mature forests in the EU owing to their importance as biodiversity reservoirs and as a way to increase forest resilience; emphasises that the strategy should promote a zero-impact silviculture on soil and landscapes;
61. Notes that, despite the establishment of the Forest Information System for Europe, the available data on forests in the EU, and in particular on their ecological status, is incomplete, difficult to aggregate and not backed by remote sensing; calls for significant investment by the Commission and the Member States in the further development of the Forest Information System for Europe and the implementation of a Pan-European remote sensing programme;
62. Notes that accomplishing a unified information system on EU forests has been a long-lasting and not fully achieved endeavour up to now; stresses that in order to address present data gaps, synergies must be sought between authorities and relevant organisations, going beyond project-bound limitations – this includes data availability, harmonised methodologies and supporting financial and capacity resources;
63. Emphasises that the new forest strategy should, at both EU and Member State level, incentivise growth in the circular bio-economy and acknowledge that forest-based value chains are key in achieving this growth; considers that it should also encourage a widening of the circular bio-economy through further integration between forest-based value chains and other sectors and value chains that need to decarbonise;
64. Notes that 90 % of EU funding for forests comes from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD); is concerned about the envisaged cuts to the budget of the EAFRD; calls on decision-makers to avoid, if possible, any cuts to the support for the forest sector in order to comply with the objectives under the European Green Deal;
65. Calls on the Commission to include in the new EU forest strategy binding targets for the protection and restoration of forest ecosystems, especially native European forests, in order to increase the EU's international credibility in this area, among other objectives, and recommends supporting Member States in protecting native European forests;
66. Highlights the role of forests in increasing resilience towards adverse impacts from climate change; points to the need for concrete and effective actions in climate adaptation strategies and plans, incorporating the synergies between mitigation and adaptation;
67. Calls on the Commission to address the issue of urban forest development in the EU forest strategy; welcomes in this context the fact that many urban centres in Europe have signed up to the Tree Cities of the World programme of the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations (FAO); calls on the Commission to promote cooperation and the exchange of best practices among European towns and cities on the subject of boosting urban forestry;

68. Expresses deep concern that in parts of the EU there is a lack of implementation of existing forestry-related EU legislation; calls on the Commission and the Member States to fully implement existing legislation and strengthen the implementation of sustainable and active forest management;
69. Notes that the implementation of adapted forest management plans takes place at Member State level and requires increased cooperation between forest and environmental authorities, NGOs, local communities and forest owners;
70. Calls on the Member States to ensure that the National Strategic Plans under the CAP will incentivise forest managers to preserve, grow and manage forests sustainably;
71. Draws attention to the need to develop and introduce plans to tackle invasive species, equipped with specific human, technical and financial resources for that purpose;
72. Calls for trade agreements to take account of the principle of sustainability with regard to timber imports, and for penalties to be applied in the event of infringements;
73. Notes that multi-age, multi-species forests which are managed according to biodiversity protection criteria are more resilient to climate impacts such as fires, droughts, and unseasonal weather events, and as such are an important investment for the future, not only for communities and nature, but also for forest economies; insists that monocultures, which are less resilient to pests and diseases, as well as to droughts, wind, storms and fires, should not be supported by EU funds;
74. Stresses that it is only by encompassing the entire forest-based value chains that the new forest strategy can achieve policy impact; notes that forest-based value chains already play a vital role today for the European economy and will be essential in building a green-growth strategy through the European Green Deal; stresses that a new forest strategy must support competitive and sustainable EU forest-based value chains domestically as well as globally;
75. Emphasises the therapeutic function of forests, which have direct positive consequences for human health and people's quality of life; stresses that forests also contribute to the socio-economic development of Europe's rural territories, including the distribution of income to the most depopulated areas in the EU thanks to ecotourism, which is one of the most popular modalities within the tourism industry;
76. Reiterates its call²¹ for consistent forest-related policies which combat biodiversity loss and climate-change impacts, and which lead to an increase in the EU's natural sinks while protecting, conserving and enhancing biodiversity;
77. Calls on the Commission to include the need for support to forest owners, including

²¹ European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2020 on the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0015.

financial support, in the new EU forest strategy; considers that such support should be made subject to the application of sustainable forest management; notes that, in order to ensure continued investment in modern technologies, in environmental and climate measures that reinforce the multifunctional role played by forests, with a specific financial instrument for the management of areas in the Natura 2000 network, and in creating decent working conditions, this financial support should be the result of a robust combination of financial instruments, national funding and private-sector financing; calls on the Commission to establish and finance a European Afforestation and Reforestation Programme using global navigation satellite system (GNSS) information, dedicated to increasing forest area, tackling land degradation, increasing air quality in urban areas and ensuring that forests retain their composition of natural species;

78. Regrets that the current usage of forest management plans has varied considerably among the Member States; urges the Commission therefore to strengthen the use of forest management plans, including through the creation of common guidelines for their establishment and implementation; calls on the Member States to reinforce the use of forest management plans and to closely monitor their implementation while respecting the proportionality and subsidiarity principles; stresses that a platform is needed in order to find solutions for the many challenges related to forests and forest management at EU level; considers that forest management models must incorporate the criterion of environmental, societal and economic sustainability, which means that the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands are such that they maintain their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant environmental, economic and social functions at local, national and global levels, and do not cause damage to other ecosystems²²; calls on the Commission to develop a common and sufficiently detailed definition of close-to-nature forestry, building on the ongoing experiences of integrating biodiversity considerations into forest management;
79. Stresses that forest fires are a regular occurrence, and are both a cause and a consequence of climate change; notes that storms, forest fires and pests can be mitigated using improved and more active forest management and forestry techniques through, for example, grazing and agroforestry practices, which should be supported within the framework of the CAP;
80. Highlights the need for effective conservation and strict protection of primary and old-growth forests, taking into account their unique characteristics; notes that there is no EU definition of old-growth forests and calls on the Commission to introduce a definition in the future EU forestry strategy, taking into consideration the different characteristics of forests and the need for effective conservation, and in particular of primary and old-growth forests; notes with concern that data on primary forests remains incomplete, but according to available information, only 46 % of mapped primary forests in Europe have the highest status of protection, 24 % are afforded a status of national parks and 11 % remain unprotected²³; calls on the Commission to propose without delay a

²² Resolution H1, General Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Forests in Europe, Second Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, 16-17 June 1993, Helsinki.

²³ Sabatini, F.M., Burrascano, S., et al., 'Where are Europe's last primary forests?'. In *Diversity and Distributions*, first published on 24 May 2018: Volume 24, Issue 10, October 2018, pp. 1426-1439, figure 3.

comprehensive definition of primary forests and work to improve data collection on primary forests;

81. Highlights the importance of environmental defenders in common efforts to protect and restore EU forests; calls for a zero-tolerance approach to attacks or harassment against them;
82. Considers that overdue steps are needed to introduce an EU disaster-prevention approach, which should be provided with appropriate financial resources from the EU budget;
83. Takes the view that education plays an essential role in sustainable forest management, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to support training focusing on forests, both in the EU and in third countries, including providing stipends and arranging academic exchange programmes;
84. Recalls its support for a European legal framework based on mandatory due diligence to regulate access to the EU market only to products and commodities that do not contribute to deforestation or forest degradation, nor to the conversion or degradation of other natural ecosystems; believes that such framework should apply to all economic actors, including financial actors, both upstream and downstream of the supply chain, and should also ensure the absence of related human rights violations; urges the Commission to adopt this proposal without delay;
85. Calls on the Commission to address the concerns of professionals in the field regarding the Renewable Energy Directive, in particular the issue of categorising all types of biomass as renewable energy sources, *inter alia* in relation to the high level of wood pellet imports into the EU and the potential risks that these imports pose to forests in third countries, and to continue to promote other sustainable forms of renewable energy;
86. Stresses that tree planting schemes must be an adjunct to restoring natural forests as the wrong tree in the wrong place can intensify forest fires and actually release more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere; notes that forest-restoration schemes must increase their carbon sequestration potential to meet global climate commitments;
87. Takes the view that a system monitoring pest outbreaks in the EU may be needed to obtain the full picture with regard to the condition of forests and their impact on forest biodiversity, given the expected impact of climate change on distribution of harmful organisms;
88. Takes the view that urgent action should be taken to prevent the introduction through international trade of new pests and diseases and their respective vectors;
89. Believes that, taking into account legislation on invasive alien species and the potential repercussions that these species may have on forests, the Commission should propose new complementary financial tools to help affected areas tackle invasive species, and in particular persistent and new alien species;
90. Considers that more attention should be paid to the problem of diseases, such as oak decline, that affect trees, which are in decline around the world as a result of pests,

diseases and climate change; draws attention to oak decline, which is ravaging cork-oak plantations in Portugal, France and Spain and is also affecting special protection areas (SPAs) and biosphere reserves; believes that the Commission should have included in the strategy effective measures and specific resources for tackling tree diseases.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	22.6.2020
Result of final vote	+: 55 -: 13 0: 8
Members present for the final vote	Nikos Androulakis, Bartosz Arłukowicz, Margrete Auken, Simona Baldassarre, Marek Paweł Balt, Traian Băsescu, Aurelia Beigneux, Sergio Berlato, Alexander Bernhuber, Simona Bonafè, Delara Burkhardt, Pascal Canfin, Sara Cerdas, Mohammed Chahim, Tudor Ciuhodaru, Nathalie Colin-Oesterlé, Miriam Dalli, Esther de Lange, Christian Doleschal, Marco Dreosto, Bas Eickhout, Agnès Evren, Pietro Fiocchi, Catherine Griset, Jytte Guteland, Teuvo Hakkarainen, Anja Hazekamp, Martin Hojsik, Pär Holmgren, Jan Huitema, Adam Jarubas, Petros Kokkalis, Ewa Kopacz, Peter Liese, Sylvia Limmer, Javi López, César Luena, Fulvio Martusciello, Liudas Mažylis, Joëlle Mélin, Tilly Metz, Silvia Modig, Dolors Montserrat, Alessandra Moretti, Dan-Ștefan Motreanu, Ville Niinistö, Ljudmila Novak, Grace O’Sullivan, Jutta Paulus, Jessica Polfjård, Luisa Regimenti, Frédérique Ries, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Sándor Rónai, Rob Rooken, Silvia Sardone, Christine Schneider, Linea Søgaaard-Lidell, Nicolae Ștefănuță, Nils Torvalds, Edina Tóth, Véronique Trillet-Lenoir, Petar Vitanov, Alexandr Vondra, Mick Wallace, Pernille Weiss, Michal Wiezik, Tiemo Wölken, Anna Zalewska
Substitutes present for the final vote	Margarita de la Pisa Carrión, João Ferreira, Billy Kelleher, Ulrike Müller, Piernicola Pedicini, Christel Schaldemose, Andrey Slabakov

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

55	+
GUE/NGL	Silvia Modig
NI	Piernicola Pedicini
PPE	Bartosz Arłukowicz, Traian Băsescu, Alexander Bernhuber, Nathalie Colin-Oesterlé, Christian Doleschal, Agnès Evren, Adam Jarubas, Ewa Kopacz, Esther De Lange, Peter Liese, Fulvio Martusciello, Liudas Mažylis, Dolores Montserrat, Dan-Ștefan Motreanu, Ljudmila Novak, Jessica Polfjård, Christine Schneider, Edina Tóth, Pernille Weiss, Michal Wiezik
RENEW	Pascal Canfin, Martin Hojsík, Jan Huitema, Billy Kelleher, Frédérique Ries, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Linea Sogaard-Lidell, Nicolae Ștefănuță, Nils Torvalds, Véronique Trillet-Lenoir
S&D	Nikos Androulakis, Marek Balt, Simona Bonafè, Delara Burkhardt, Sara Cerdas, Mohammed Chahim, Tudor Ciuhodaru, Miriam Dalli, Jytte Guteland, Javi López, César Luena, Alessandra Moretti, Sándor Rónai, Christel Schaldemose, Petar Vitanov, Tiemo Wölken
VERTS/ALE	Margrete Auken, Bas Eickhout, Pär Holmgren, Tilly Metz, Ville Niinistö, Grace O'sullivan, Jutta Paulus

13	-
ECR	Sergio Berlato, Pietro Fiocchi, Rob Rooker, Andrey Slabakov, Alexandr Vondra, Anna Zalewska
ID	Simona Baldassarre, Marco Dreosto, Teuvo Hakkarainen, Sylvia Limmer, Luisa Regimenti, Silvia Sardone
GUE	Mick Wallace

8	0
ECR	Margarita De La Pisa Carrión
GUE	João Ferreira, Anja Hazekamp, Petros Kokkalis
ID	Aurelia Beigneux, Catherine Griset, Joëlle Mélin
RENEW	Ulrike Müller

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

3.6.2020

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY

for the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

on the European Forest Strategy - The Way Forward
(2019/2157(INI))

Rapporteur: Mauri Pekkarinen

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy calls on the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the Commission's decision to prepare a new EU forest strategy; believes that the European forest strategy will be an essential element in achieving the European Green Deal; underlines that there is no specific legal basis for a common EU forest policy, as forest policy is primarily a competence of the Member States; recognises, however, that many EU policies have an impact on forests and the forest-based sector and require coherence and stronger cross-sectoral coordination through the EU forest strategy; notes that a coherent and stable regulatory environment is a prerequisite for encouraging innovation and investment in the forest-based sector;
2. Notes that the European Green Deal, as a new growth strategy for the EU, requires investment to fully support a clean and circular economy; highlights the essential role of sustainable active forest management for achieving climate neutrality by 2050 and in the Union's circular bio-economy; notes, in particular, the great capacity of managed forests to capture carbon dioxide, as well as the potential of forest-based products to substitute fossil fuels and materials; believes that, in this context, the strategy should support innovation throughout the entire value chain, including by means of facilitating the sharing of best practices and by providing a competitive regulatory environment; points out the important role that forests and sustainable forest management play throughout the entire forest and bioeconomy value chain, especially in terms of providing sustainable raw materials to the sector, and in job creation in the Union; stresses that the availability of sustainably sourced raw materials should be ensured and fostered by a supportive and coherent policy framework for the all sectors involved;

3. Stresses the need for the new forest strategy to be based on the three pillars of environmental, economic and social sustainability; emphasises the need for a holistic and consistent forest strategy that enhances and utilises the multifunctional role of forests and the forest-based sector in the EU;
4. Notes that, in the case of managed forests, those forests that are managed sustainably also take account of biodiversity protection and species diversity and can therefore be more resilient to climate impacts such as fires, droughts and unseasonal weather events, and, as such, are an important investment for the future, not only for communities and nature, but also for forest economies;
5. Stresses that, according to scientific research, sustainably managed forests have a higher CO₂ absorption capacity than unmanaged forests; urges therefore that the new forest strategy promote sustainable forest management, including by SMEs;
6. Acknowledges that sustainable and active forest management is mainly driven and sustained by SMEs;
7. Stresses that particular attention should also be paid to job creation in the forest-based industry, as well as to new instruments envisaged to speed up economic recovery in pandemic situations such as that caused by COVID-19;

Forest-based industries

8. Notes that European forest resources are increasing as a result of both natural growth and afforestation; points out that, according to the industry, the extended value chains of forest-based industries, from forestry to the paper industry, have helped create nearly 4 million jobs, providing some 8 % of overall EU added value from the manufacturing industry; recognises, in this context, the positive economic, social and environmental contributions of the forest industry, and believes that the forest strategy should stimulate further investment in innovation and technological advancement;
9. Notes that European forest-based industries help decarbonise Europe by substituting CO₂-intensive raw materials, products and fossil energy with sustainable forest-based renewable alternatives such as bio-based products, for example construction material, new innovative chemicals, plastics, textiles, and packaging materials, as well as sustainably produced biomass, biogas and biofuel, and thus contribute to the goals of the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal;
10. Calls for implementation of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy; encourages the sustainable use of wood as an environmentally friendly raw material; underlines that long-lived wood-based products and wood construction provide an effective way of increasing carbon storage and creating a greenhouse gas substitution effect; stresses the importance of the availability of wood-based raw materials for the forest-based industry, and the need to attract forest-based investments in the EU; stresses the need to prioritise the efficient use of wood;
11. Stresses that wood-based materials must play a crucial role in substituting fossil-based alternatives in industries such as the construction industry, the textile industry, the chemical industry and the packaging industry; stresses that the prioritisation of wood-based alternatives must take into account the whole life cycle of products and their

environmental performance; stresses that there is a continuous need for sustained support for forest-related research and innovation throughout the forest-based value chain, including wood-based products used as substitutes for fossil or carbon-intensive materials;

12. Calls on the Member States to identify the most climate-friendly solutions for building and renovation; calls for the use of wood in the construction industry to be more widely supported; calls on the Commission to include recommendations to this end in its renovation plan to be launched at the end of the year;
13. Recognises, however, that challenges may result from the increasing demand for wood for materials, renewable energy and the bio-economy and calls on the Commission to address these challenges adequately in the future strategy while helping to reach climate neutrality by 2050;
14. Highlights that what the forest-based sector needs first and foremost is a stable long-term policy framework, rather than short-term support measures;
15. Calls for the EU to encourage and ensure that materials of biological origin, including wood waste, return to the value chain by encouraging eco-design and promoting the use of secondary raw materials, including wood, for products before their potential incineration at the end of life;
16. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to introduce policies to promote sustainable and recyclable bio-based products and to support recyclable bio-based products through public procurement and investment support;
17. Stresses that no substitution effect of forest-based products can compensate for the loss of primary forests, which are recognised as irreplaceable and should be protected through legal instruments and incentives;
18. Considers that more efficient use of timber should be prioritised from higher value-added uses in each European industrial sector;

Energy policy

19. Calls on the Member States to ensure the timely and adequate implementation of the revised Renewable Energy Directive (RED II)¹, which was adopted in December 2018 and stipulates strong sustainability criteria for renewable energy sources; notes that in order to ensure the sustainable production of biomass, the revised Renewable Energy Directive sets out sustainability criteria which must be met in order to comply with the EU target for renewable energy and to benefit from support schemes; stresses that the harmonised, EU-wide criteria that have been recently agreed are essential for the smooth functioning of the internal energy market and to avoid distortion of competition;
20. Recalls that the revised Renewable Energy Directive sets out that a risk-based approach should be taken by operators in order to minimise the risk of using unsustainable forest

¹ Directive (EU) 2018/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (OJ L 328, 21.12.2018, p. 82).

biomass for the production of bioenergy;

Research and innovation

21. Underlines the essential role of research and innovation in fostering the contribution of the forest and forest-based sector in meeting the challenges of our time; believes that research in forestry and forest-based industry has the potential to deliver positive results in terms of climate change mitigation, growth of sustainable businesses, employment, maintaining long-term forest health, and biodiversity protection, and it should therefore be encouraged; calls for adequate funding for Horizon Europe and for the strengthening and encouragement of new and existing links between research, industry, forestry, agroforestry and society at all levels through specific instruments such as European Partnerships (for example, Circular Bio-based Europe and Build4People);
22. Emphasises the need to take into consideration the links between the forest-based sector and other sectors, as well as the importance of digitalisation and investments in research and innovation in order to create industrial symbiosis;
23. Stresses the importance of encouraging further research in the forest-based industry, noting in particular the role of SMEs in contributing to sustainable forest-based research and innovation;
24. Stresses the importance of education and a skilled, well-trained workforce in the forest-based sector for the successful implementation of sustainable forest management in practice; calls on the Commission and the Member States therefore to continue to implement and strengthen existing European instruments in this regard;

Data – use of satellite services

25. Calls for the EU to create a monitoring network for European forests to collect information at local level (reforestation, temperatures, parasitic diseases, natural disasters) linked to Copernicus earth observation programmes, which can produce reliable forecasts in real time, in order to improve sustainable forest management; calls on the Commission and the Member States to improve the accuracy of forest data to enable direct and comparable information sharing among Member States;
26. Calls for the creation and implementation of a satellite monitoring system to enable the detailed monitoring of forests across the European Union, to achieve improved weather alerts and impact reports, and to feed into National Forest Inventories; stresses, however, that this should not come with an excessive administrative burden for the companies involved, as most of them are SMEs;
27. Highlights that forests in the EU have very different characteristics and therefore need different management approaches; expresses concern about the state of health and resilience of forests in many parts of Europe because of climate change and pest and disease hotbeds in forests; stresses the need to strengthen and make full use of EU mechanisms to monitor, provide information on and tackle the pressures exerted on forest resources by the spread of invasive alien species, pests and diseases; calls on the Commission, in this context, to pay particular attention to those areas that are the most endangered by climate change, including the Mediterranean region.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	28.5.2020
Result of final vote	+: 48 -: 20 0: 10
Members present for the final vote	François Alfonsi, Nicola Beer, François-Xavier Bellamy, Hildegard Bentele, Tom Berendsen, Vasile Blaga, Michael Bloss, Manuel Bompard, Paolo Borchia, Marc Botenga, Markus Buchheit, Klaus Buchner, Martin Buschmann, Cristian-Silviu Buşoi, Jerzy Buzek, Carlo Calenda, Andrea Caroppo, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Ignazio Corrao, Josianne Cutajar, Nicola Danti, Pilar del Castillo Vera, Martina Dlabajová, Christian Ehler, Valter Flego, Niels Fuglsang, Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Claudia Gamon, Jens Geier, Nicolás González Casares, Bart Groothuis, Christophe Grudler, András Gyürk, Henrike Hahn, Robert Hajšel, Ivo Hristov, Ivars Ijabs, Romana Jerković, Eva Kaili, Seán Kelly, Izabela-Helena Kloc, Łukasz Kohut, Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Andrius Kubilius, Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, Thierry Mariani, Marisa Matias, Eva Maydell, Georg Mayer, Joëlle Mélin, Iskra Mihaylova, Dan Nica, Angelika Niebler, Ville Niinistö, Aldo Patriciello, Mauri Pekkarinen, Mikuláš Peksa, Tsvetelina Penkova, Morten Petersen, Markus Pieper, Clara Ponsatí Obiols, Sira Rego, Jérôme Rivière, Robert Roos, Sara Skytvedal, Maria Spyrali, Jessica Stegrud, Beata Szydło, Grzegorz Tobiszowski, Patrizia Toia, Evžen Tošenovský, Marie Toussaint, Isabella Tovaglieri, Henna Virkkunen, Pernille Weiss, Carlos Zorrinho
Substitutes present for the final vote	Jutta Paulus, Edina Tóth

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

48	+
PPE	François-Xavier Bellamy, Hildegard Bentele, Tom Berendsen, Vasile Blaga, Cristian-Silviu Buşoi, Jerzy Buzek, Maria Da Graça Carvalho, Pilar Del Castillo Vera, Christian Ehler, András Gyürk, Seán Kelly, Andrius Kubilius, Eva Maydell, Angelika Niebler, Aldo Patriciello, Markus Pieper, Sara Skyttedal, Maria Spyraiki, Edina Tóth, Henna Virkkunen, Pernille Weiss
Renew	Nicola Beer, Nicola Danti, Martina Dlabajová, Valter Flego, Claudia Gamon, Bart Groothuis, Christophe Grudler, Ivars Ijabs, Iskra Mihaylova, Mauri Pekkarinen, Morten Petersen
S&D	Carlo Calenda, Josianne Cutajar, Niels Fuglsang, Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Jens Geier, Nicolás González Casares, Robert Hajšel, Ivo Hristov, Romana Jerković, Eva Kaili, Łukasz Kohut, Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, Dan Nica, Tsvetelina Penkova, Patrizia Toia, Carlos Zorrinho

20	-
ECR	Robert Roos
GUE/NGL	Manuel Bompard, Marc Botenga, Marisa Matias, Sira Rego
ID	Markus Buchheit, Thierry Mariani, Georg Mayer, Joëlle Mélin, Jérôme Rivière
NI	Martin Buschmann, Ignazio Corrao
Verts/ALE	François Alfonsi, Michael Bloss, Klaus Buchner, Henrike Hahn, Ville Niinistö, Jutta Paulus, Mikuláš Peksa, Marie Toussaint

10	0
ECR	Izabela-Helena Kloc, Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Jessica Stegrud, Beata Szydło, Grzegorz Tobiszowski, Evžen Tošenovský
ID	Paolo Borchia, Andrea Caroppo, Isabella Tovaglieri
NI	Clara Ponsatí Obiols

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	7.9.2020
Result of final vote	+: 36 -: 8 0: 4
Members present for the final vote	Mazaly Aguilar, Clara Aguilera, Atidzhe Alieva-Veli, Álvaro Amaro, Eric Andrieu, Attila Ara-Kovács, Carmen Avram, Adrian-Dragoş Benea, Mara Bizzotto, Daniel Buda, Asger Christensen, Angelo Ciocca, Ivan David, Paolo De Castro, Jérémy Decerle, Salvatore De Meo, Herbert Dorfmann, Luke Ming Flanagan, Cristian Ghinea, Dino Giarrusso, Martin Häusling, Martin Hlaváček, Krzysztof Jurgiel, Jarosław Kalinowski, Elsi Katainen, Gilles Lebreton, Norbert Lins, Chris MacManus, Marlene Mortler, Ulrike Müller, Maria Noichl, Juozas Olekas, Pina Picierno, Maxette Pirbakas, Bronis Ropè, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Anne Sander, Petri Sarvamaa, Simone Schmiedtbauer, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Veronika Vrecionová, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez
Substitutes present for the final vote	Manuel Bompard, Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg, Tilly Metz, Christine Schneider, Marc Tarabella, Thomas Waitz

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

36	+
EPP	Álvaro Amaro, Daniel Buda, Salvatore De Meo, Herbert Dorfmann, Jarosław Kalinowski, Norbert Lins, Marlene Mortler, Anne Sander, Petri Sarvamaa, Simone Schmiedtbauer, Christine Schneider, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez
S&D	Clara Aguilera, Eric Andrieu, Attila Ara-Kovács, Carmen Avram, Adrian-Dragoş Benea, Paolo De Castro, Maria Noichl, Juozas Olekas, Pina Picierno, Marc Tarabella
RENEW	Atidzhe Alieva-Veli, Asger Christensen, Jérémy Decerle, Cristian Ghinea, Martin Hlaváček, Elsi Katainen, Ulrike Müller
ECR	Mazaly Aguilar, Krzysztof Jurgiel, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Veronika Vreconiová
EUL/NGL	Chris MacManus
NI	Dino Giarrusso

9	-
ID	Mara Bizzotto, Angelo Ciocca, Gilles Lebreton, Maxette Pirbakas
GREENS/EFA	Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg, Martin Häusling, Tilly Metz, Bronis Ropé, Thomas Waitz

3	0
ID	Ivan David
EUL.NGL	Manuel Bompard, Luke Ming Flanagan

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention