

EN
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Answer given by Mr Hogan
on behalf of the European Commission
(4.9.2018)

Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)¹ provides for a number of measures that Member States and Regions can include in their Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020 to support the sustainable management of forests according to their needs and priorities and in line with the EU Forest Strategy. It is up to each Member State and Region to allocate, within the overall EAFRD envelope 2014-2020, the budgetary resources to each measure, including to afforestation, according to the need assessment and the strategy established in their Rural Development Programmes.

Paulownia tomentosa is an alien tree (native to China), used mostly as an ornamental tree in the EU. In some regions, it is considered as an invasive species, potentially posing a risk to native vegetation. A number of Member States do not recognise it as a forest species, making it ineligible for afforestation.

Due to its fast growth, *Paulownia plantations*, where legal, may not be considered a forest, but tree plantations for industrial use or short rotation coppice. Short rotation coppice is considered as a perennial agricultural crop and, thus, the support for the establishment of this system can be provided through the farm investment measure under rural development programmes, while tree plantations for industrial use, not covering fast-growing trees for energy production, can be supported through the afforestation measure. Concerning afforestation, the tree species planted shall be adapted to the environmental and climatic conditions of the area and shall comply with minimum environmental requirements, as defined by Article 6 of Regulation 807/2014², as well as national legislation.

¹ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013

² OJ L 227, 31.07.2014