

New EU forest strategy: better management can boost rural jobs, say MEPs

The new EU forest strategy must focus on managing forests sustainably, promoting efficient use of the raw materials that they produce, and boosting the competitiveness of forest-related industry so as to create jobs, says a non-legislative resolution voted by Parliament on Tuesday.

"The new EU forest strategy is a much-needed response to growing demands on forests and significant societal and political changes that have affected them over the last 15 years. Forestry has a huge potential to create jobs and spur growth. The new strategy must therefore promote sustainable use of timber and other forest materials without adding red tape for forest owners and the sector", said rapporteur on Parliament's reply to the new EU forest strategy Elisabeth Köstinger (EPP, AT).

Tackle new challenges together

The EU needs a new comprehensive strategy to tackle cross-border challenges such as forest fires, climate change, natural disasters or invasive alien species, but also to strengthen forest-based industries and improve efficient use of raw materials such as timber, cork or textile fibres. This would boost the competitiveness of the EU's forestry, improve its self-sufficiency in wood, cut its trade deficit and boost employment in the sector, says the resolution, which was passed by 566 votes to 66, with 45 abstentions.

Member states to manage, EU to coordinate

MEPs back the European Commission's plan to develop, in close cooperation with EU member states, local authorities and forest owners, an ambitious and objective set of criteria for managing forests sustainably. But they also insist that specific measures must remain a matter for member states. The EU must strive to coordinate its forestry-related policies better, but should not make forestry a matter of EU policy, says the resolution.

Energy policy and fighting climate change

As energy demand grows, forests should play a more important role in the EU's future energy mix, says the resolution. But MEPs also want to clarify the greenhouse impact of various uses of

forest biomass for energy and to identify the uses that can achieve the greatest mitigation benefits.

More support for R&D and young foresters

To create new production niches and ensure smarter use of available resources, MEPs want the Commission and member states to:

- use current EU R&D programmes (such as Horizon 2020) and promote targeted research on cost-effective new timber products,
- focus on long-term data collection within the newly-created European forest information system, so as to better understand forestry trends and also use the Copernicus programme and other EU space initiatives to this end, and
- set up new training programmes for young foresters and use all available EU instruments and funds to attract them into the industry.

Better protecting forests worldwide

MEPs called on the Commission to finalise the review of the effectiveness of the EU Timber Regulation, which aims to combat illegal logging and the placing of illegal timber on the EU market and to develop an action plan to prevent deforestation and forest degradation.

Background

The new EU forest strategy should replace the one in force since 1998.

Forests cover some 40% of the EU land surface and absorb and store around 10 % of EU carbon emissions. About 60% of the EU's forests are private property. The EU forest sector currently employs over 3 million people.

Procedure: Non-legislative resolution

"Forestry has a huge potential to create jobs and growth"

Rapporteur Elisabeth Köstinger (EPP, AT)

Facts

- 40% of the EU land surface is covered by forests
- 10% of EU carbon emissions are absorbed and stored by forests
- 60% of EU's forests are private
- More than 3 million Europeans are employed in the EU forest sector

Further information:

[Adopted text will be available here \(click on 28.04.2015\)](#)

[Video recording of debate on EP Live \(click on 27.04.2015\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[EP Research: A new impulse for EU forests](#)

[Commission's communication on the new EU Forest Strategy](#)

[Audiovisual material for professionals](#)

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