

Future EU Forest strategy: Ensuring high-quality management of EU forests and woodlands

- supporting well-balanced sustainable forest management and responsible owners
- reinforcing disaster resilience and early warning mechanisms to prevent forest fires
- promoting sustainable forestry globally and tackling imports of illegally-felled wood

EU should promote forest management models that seek to ensure their environmental, but also societal and economic sustainability, the Agriculture Committee said on Monday.

In a draft non-legislative resolution, adopted by 36 votes in favour to eight against, with four abstention, MEPs stress that EU needs an ambitious, independent and self-standing post-2020 Forest Strategy to give full and real political support to the forestry sector. The new strategy, which is due to be revealed by the Commission at the beginning of 2021, should ensure the continuity of the multifunctional role played by forests and should be aligned with the European Green Deal and the related Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies, they say.

Sustainable but also balanced forest management

The sustainable forest management (SFM) should be strengthened but in a balanced manner to improve forests' ecological status and increase their adaptability to changing climate conditions, MEPs say. They want to make nature conservation part of the sustainable forest management, without enlarging protected areas, and include sustainable forest management in the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) strategic plans.

Forest owners who apply sustainable forest management principles and thus help to maintain current levels of employment in forest-related sectors should get better support from EU and national budgets and from private sector financing, MEPs say, and add that a new specific aid should also go to Natura 2000 areas. They also want fair compensations for economic losses

caused by protection measures.

Only sustainable forest management, which places equal focus on the social, environmental and economic benefits of the forest, combined with adequate funding and compensation mechanisms, can increase resilience and adaptive capacity of forests and help the forest sector stay economically viable and environmentally sound, MEPs say.

Draughts, floods, storms, forest fires: Increasing resilience of EU forests

To be better prepared and if possible prevent all kind of disasters, such as fires, droughts, floods, storms, pest infestations, diseases and erosion, MEPs want to reinforce the European disaster resilience and early warning tools. They call for concrete and effective actions to lessen the detrimental impact of climate change on spread of forest fires and insist on proper funding for research and innovation to make forests more climate-resistant. Forest owners should be getting more support for applying prevention measures and restoring affected forest areas, and the EU and its member states should set up an emergency mechanism to deal with crises, they add.

Wider use of wood as a renewable raw material

The use of wood as a sustainable construction material should be promoted more to help the EU move towards a more sustainable economy, MEP say, and call on the Commission to explore market-based mechanisms to incentivise a substitution from fossil to renewable raw material. They also want to increase funding for research into sustainable use of renewable raw materials, such as leftovers at the end of the wood value chain, instead of fossil fuels.

Protection of primary forests and fight against illegal logging

The adopted text insists on a protection of primary forests and calls on the Commission to introduce an EU-wide definition of old growth forests to this end. MEPs also urge the Commission and EU member states to do more and quickly to stop illegal logging, including penalising breaches of EU law and reviewing existing national and EU legislation on the matter.

Promoting sustainable forestry globally

The future EU forest strategy should promote sustainable forest management principles worldwide with a view to stopping deforestation and supporting legal and sustainable production and supply chains, MEPs say. They also push for better traceability of imported products, stricter application of EU rules to prevent the entry of illegally-felled wood and a proper certification system.

Quote

“The negotiations were complex, but we managed to create a very constructive compromise package. Generally speaking, I am quite happy with the result. The positions of the Environment and Industry committees were also taken into account in the negotiations”, said rapporteur [Petri Sarvamaa \(EPP, FI\)](#).

“The Agriculture Committee sends a clear and factual message: the role of sustainable forestry must be seen as an integral part of achieving the EU's climate and environmental goals. Forest productivity and natural values are not mutually exclusive,” Mr Sarvamaa added.

Next steps

The text approved by the Agriculture Committee will now be scrutinised by the whole Parliament. MEPs will vote on the draft non-legislative resolution during one of the next plenary sessions, most probably still in October.

Background

Forests and other wooded areas currently cover around 43% of the surface of the EU, reaching at least 182 million hectares and comprise 5% of the world's total forests. Half of the Natura 2000 network is made of forest areas (around 37.5 million hectares) and 23% of all forests in Europe are within Natura 2000 sites.

Around 60% of EU forests are privately owned, with a high proportion of small size forest holdings (less than 3ha), and 40% are publicly owned. Over 60% of the productive forests in the EU are certified according to sustainable forest management voluntary standards. The share of the round wood stemming from certified forests processed by the wood-based industries is reaching 50% in the EU and the sector employs at least 500,000 people directly and 2.6 million indirectly in the EU.

Forests absorb over 10% of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions.

Further information

[Draft report and amendments before the vote \(see point 3\)](#)

[Results of the vote on amendments](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development](#)

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