



**Joint Statement
of the European forest and forest-based sector
on the new EU Forest Strategy**

Europe's forests and forest industries
"Owned and Managed in Europe, Sourced from Europe, Made in Europe, Adding
value in Europe, recycled in Europe"

General principles

1. The main principles of the current EU Forest Strategy from 1998, such as Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), subsidiarity and forestry as subject to open markets are still valid. However, new challenges and developments like climate change, the loss of biodiversity, the need for raw material and sustainable energy supply, international trade and globalisation and new markets need to be addressed in a coordinated manner.
2. SFM is the most developed policy concept that addresses forests and forestry in Europe in a multifunctional way and there is a long tradition of developing and implementing SFM in European forests.
3. Multifunctional and sustainable forestry and a competitive and innovative forest-based sector have great potentials to contribute to meeting the objective of the EU 2020 Strategy and 2020 targets as formulated by the climate and energy package as well as the EU Low-Carbon Economy Roadmap 2050.
4. The new EU Forest Strategy should strive for long-term answers, providing a statement/guidance that is positive, enabling a strong framework to better facilitate and coordinate the actions necessary at both the EU and the Member States levels in order to trigger the full sector potential.
5. The role of the new EU Forest Strategy should be to enable and facilitate the provision of concrete responses from European forests and the forest-based sector to the societal demands and challenges formulated by other policies.
6. Within the EU financial instruments, such as those provided by the Rural Development policy and/or LIFE+, funding should be granted to support the delivery of forest goods and services, including the ecosystem services. Member States should be urged to take full advantage of such funding opportunities.

The EU Forest Strategy should set the benchmarks at EU level on:

1. Social benefits (including human health and other benefits to society)
 - The EU Forest Strategy should recognise the diversity of forest ownership across the European Union. Forest owners and managers should not only be seen as mere stakeholders, but rather as crucial resource holders, who own and manage EU forests according to the principles of SFM.
 - The EU Forest Strategy should promote the socio-economic benefits of the forest, wood and paper chain, i.e. their contribution to European economic growth, society's well-being and jobs creation.
2. Forest protection (against biotic and abiotic threats)

- The EU Forest Strategy should create the conditions and coordinate actions with a view to prevent as much as possible any damage to the forest, both of abiotic (fires, floods...) and biotic origin.
 - When it is necessary to combat abiotic and biotic risks, the EU Forest Strategy should organise European solidarity to address them in the most coordinated and effective manner.
 - The EU Forest Strategy should also study the impacts of climate change on forests with a view to anticipate potential changes and improve the resilience of forest ecosystems.
3. Ecosystem services and biodiversity
- Forest management and biodiversity protection must be handled within the same multifunctional approach that integrates production and conservation functions, as defined by the concept of SFM. Similarly, innovative protection measures - such as voluntary forest protection schemes - should be further developed and enhanced.
 - The EU Forest Strategy should give a significant impetus to enhance the systems of valuation and marketing of forest ecosystem services, such as biodiversity, water purification and management, soil protection and other protective functions.
4. Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- The EU Forest Strategy should clearly acknowledge that forests are a relevant part of the solution to mitigate climate change. The main elements to implement Europe's strategy for climate change mitigation are the increase of forest resources and their availability through afforestation, active and sustainable forest management, and the increased production and use of wood, maximizing the storage and substitution effects.
 - The EU Forest Strategy should provide the framework for concrete actions at national and regional level on risk management, which include prevention, mitigation and adaptation measures.
5. Green Economy
- A green economy can be implemented only with sustainably managed natural resources, allowing legal and sustainable harvesting and ensuring sufficient raw material supplies to the industry and other users.
 - The domestic sustainable and legal production and supply of wood and wood products should be clearly promoted by the EU Forest Strategy. Furthermore, competitive downstream industries, which refine wood to a variety of added-value products, are needed. The generation and maintenance of green jobs and income, rural development, long-term economic viability and competitiveness of the entire sector, require an active and sustainable management of our forests, as well as a stronger promotion of the use of wood.
 - The EU Forest Strategy must ensure continuous technological and economic development of the European forest-based industries throughout the value chains by avoiding the gradual shift of production to low-cost countries. In order to secure adequate raw material supplies for each part of the value chain (sawn goods production, panel production, pulp and paper production, furniture, bioenergy and fiber production) it is absolutely necessary that Europe's renewable forest resources are processed into high-value products within Europe and not sent outside Europe for further processing.

6. Bioenergy
 - As part of the European-wide renewable energy solution, the use of woody biomass and by-products for energy production should be encouraged wherever it is sustainable and makes economic sense. Hence, the challenge, on the national and European level as well as on the company level is to be able to determine the most optimal way of utilizing this precious raw material in the most sustainable and economical way.
 - The increased need for the sustainable production and mobilisation of biomass should be clearly acknowledged in the EU Forest Strategy.
7. Forest information and monitoring
 - Harmonisation and streamlining of forest-related monitoring, assessment and reporting has been an issue on the agenda for several years already. Although good progress has partly been made, further improvements are still needed, in particular as new policy developments emerge with new specific information requirements (see e.g. reporting on LULUCF, or renewable energy).
 - Considering the wide spectrum of information collected and provided, a clear lack of forest-related socio-economic data has been identified. To better profile and communicate the socio-economic relevance of the forest and forest-based sector, more and better information is needed.
 - Therefore the EU Forest Strategy should refer to the pan-European C&I for SFM, as defined and developed by the Forest Europe process, as a common basis for both data collection and reporting on SFM within the EU, and the development of further SFM indicators at the MS level if needed.
8. Research and Innovation
 - To further strengthen and develop the forest and forest-based sector, research, innovation and technological development is indispensable. The EU Forest Strategy should secure access to relevant EU funding opportunities for the sector, notably in the Horizon 2020 framework programme, and in the relevant European Innovation Partnerships (EIP on raw materials, EIP on water, EIP on agriculture...) and Public-Private Partnerships (BRIDGE).
9. Coordination, cooperation and communication
 - The new EU Forest Strategy should rearrange the forest-related institutional set-up both in the EU and in the Commission. The objectives and roles of existing bodies (Inter-Service Group on Forestry, Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) and its ad hoc Working Groups, Council Working Party, Advisory Group Forestry and Cork (AGFC) and other relevant Working Groups and Committees) should be reviewed in order to enable efficient and effective co-ordination and information flows within the Commission, among the EU institutions and between the EU and its MS.
 - The EU Forest Strategy should help to enhance the use of EU forest expert bodies in policy formulation. Stakeholder participation and involvement in all EU forest-related policy processes is a prerequisite of successful implementation of the EU Forest Strategy. Considering this, but also considering the increasing influence from other sector policies on the forest sector, the role and functioning of the AGFC needs to be improved. More regular meetings, with improved meeting structures, which enable the formulation of joint concrete messages from this group, are needed.

- The EU Forest Strategy should help in better communicating and promoting the multiple benefits and solutions forest and the forest-based sector provide, hence strengthening their visibility and acceptance by decision makers and the public at large.
10. International pillar (including Pan-European, global)
- The EU Forest Strategy should maintain linkages between the EU and the international level. In this context the Strategy needs to make reference to, for example, the recently agreed RIO+20 objectives.
 - The Strategy should be an instrument that links EU policy making with the pan-European level. The new EU Forest Strategy should enable and facilitate the delivery of input by the EU and its MS to forest policy making at a regional level, in particular as concerns the on-going negotiations on the Legally Binding Agreement (LBA) on forests in Europe. Moreover, the EU Forest Strategy should be a vehicle for the translation and implementation of the provisions of such a legally binding agreement at the EU level.

Implementation

1. The EU Forest Strategy should become the reference for all forest-related EU policies. The EU Forest Strategy should provide the guiding principles and framework to better coordinate other sectoral policies influencing/defining forest management.
2. The EU Forest Strategy should provide a strong framework for joint action at EU level, leaving enough flexibility and rights to the MS, but at the same time urging them to commit and work together.
3. The definition of SFM as well as the guidelines, the criteria and indicators for SFM, as defined and developed by the Forest Europe process, should be clearly acknowledged by EU Forest Strategy. In this way the meaning and value of these well developed, accepted and in several MS well-implemented tools would be strengthened.
4. An added value of the new EU Forest Strategy can only be recognised by successful implementation of its sound commitments. For this reason, it is essential that the interested stakeholders strongly co-operate with the relevant European Institutions in order to provide essential information on forestry and related sectors, including a request to develop new statistics on wood waste flows in Europe and/or the UNECE/FAO regions.
5. An operational element (preferably an Action Plan on forestry and forest-based sector) should be an integral part of the New EU Forest Strategy, consisting of actions oriented towards reaching the objectives and targets of the Strategy.

For further information:

Confederation of European Forest Owners - CEPF
 European State Forest Association - EUSTAFOR
 European Confederation of Woodworking Industries - CEI-Bois
 Confederation of European Paper Industries - CEPI