CEPF Feedback on the European Commission Roadmap
European climate law – achieving climate neutrality by 2050

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges in this millennium and the paths towards reaching the carbon neutrality objective are therefore essential to organise. In this respect, the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF) welcomes the European Commission initiative to propose a European Climate law.

The EU forest sector is one of the most essential actors to achieve this aim. Sustainable and active forest management provides three main climate benefits: CO_2 sequestration in resilient, growing forests; carbon storage in wood products; and substitution with a renewable and climate-friendly raw material which replaces fossil-based materials and fuels.

Continuous management of EU forest in a sustainable and active way and creation of more forests (afforestation) within the EU will contribute to enhancing the absorption of CO_2 from the atmosphere. At the same time, replacing fossil-based products and energy with wood will contribute to reduce the release of CO_2 emissions to the atmosphere, while ensuring that forests continue to grow and provide many other services. The reorientation towards a fossil free circular bio-based economy, moving away from the fossil-based economy, is indispensable. The forest-based sector actors, including European forest owners, are ready to become the most competitive, innovative and sustainable provider of net-zero carbon solution for a climate neutral Europe.

In the EU, since the last decades, we have witnessed a steady growth of the forest area, growing wood stock and carbon stock. Natural forest expansion following structural changes in agriculture, afforestation, an increase of forest areas actively managed, wider use of modern forest management practices, and harvesting levels lower than the annual increment are among the reasons for this increase. Over the last years, we have also witnessed a growing number of natural disturbances which have dramatically affected EU forests and are projected to further increase (e.g. fires, droughts, floods, storms, insects' outbreaks etc…). A solution to counteract this most serious threat on EU forests, is sustainable forest management which creates synergies between climate change mitigation and adaptation needs. Therefore, regarding EU forests, the new EU Climate Law should be closely linked to the future New EU Climate Adaptation strategy in order to adapt forest management practices to make forests more resilient to changing climatic conditions and to have higher carbon sequestration and as a result to provide more raw material to substitute carbon intensive material and energy.

The future EU Climate Law should also highlight the role of Research and Innovation policy which is a key enabler to allow the forest sector to continue to deliver on the many societal expectations, including climate change mitigation. More information about the R&I priorities identified by the Forest-based sector is available in the Strategic Research Agenda of the Forest-based sector Technology Platform (FTP).

European forest owners are of the views that the future EU climate law should acknowledge the crucial role of forest management and wood in achieving 2050 carbon neutrality goal. To this aim, it should build on the holistic concept of sustainable forestry and multifunctional forests in order to link the climate change mitigation benefit with the other ecosystem services that forests can provide thanks to the

involvement of local actors in rural areas. Thus, a strong reference should be established with the EU Forest Strategy post-2020, which should ensure consistency between forest-related policies. This will allow to take an integrated approach since the Green Deal is an opportunity to use and consolidate the full, long term contribution of EU forests to climate change mitigation but also to several other Sustainable Development Goals. CEPF is looking forward to further collaborate and contribute to the next steps of those processes.