

Press release – Future EU Forest strategy: High-quality management of EU forests and woodlands



The Commission's post-2020 EU Forest Strategy, due out at the beginning of 2021, should be independent and self-standing, properly aligned with the European Green Deal, and ensure that forests can continue to play a multifunctional role, MEPs say in a non-legislative resolution adopted by 462 votes in favour to 176 against, with 59 abstention.

Keeping the sector economically viable and environmentally sound

Sustainable forest management (SFM) should make forests more adaptable to changing climate conditions and promote their environmental, but also societal and economic sustainability, MEPs say. Forest owners who apply SFM principles should get better financial support including new specific aid for Natura 2000 areas and receive fair compensation for economic losses caused by putting in place protection measures.

Disasters: EU forests need to be more resilient

The new strategy, MEPs say, should help to bolster European disaster resilience and early warning tools to increase prevention and preparedness e.g. for fires, floods or pest infestations. They call for the impact of climate change on forest fires to be effectively mitigated and insist on proper funding for research and innovation to make forests more climate-resistant. Forest owners should receive more support for applying preventive measures, dealing with crises and restoring affected forest areas, e.g. through a new EU emergency mechanism, they add.

Build with wood and fight illegal logging

MEPs also push for wood to be promoted more widely as a sustainable construction and renewable raw material, call for the fight against illegal logging to be stepped up, demand that imported products should be easier to trace and insist that EU should do more to promote sustainable forestry globally.

Quote

“Forests are of enormous importance to all of us. We must therefore accept nothing less than an ambitious and self-standing EU strategy that strikes a balance between the economic, ecological and social sustainability of our forests and woodlands, fosters their resilience and helps us move towards a circular economy”, said rapporteur [Petri Sarvamaa \(EPP, FI\)](#).

Background

Forests and other wooded areas currently cover around 43% of the EU’s surface, reaching at least 182 million hectares and comprising 5% of the world’s total forests. In Europe, 23% of all forests are within Natura 2000 sites. Forests absorb over 10% of the EU’s greenhouse gas emissions.

Around 60% of EU forests are privately owned, and a large proportion are small size forest holdings (less than three hectares). Over 60% of the productive forests in the EU are certified to fulfil sustainable forest management voluntary standards. The sector employs at least 500,000 people directly and 2.6 million indirectly in the EU.