A New EU Forest Strategy for 2030 – Sustainable Forest Management in Europe

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The European Parliament adopted by 417 votes to 144, with 67 abstentions, a resolution on a new EU Forest Strategy for 2030 – Sustainable Forest Management in Europe.

The EU is home to approximately 5 % of the world's total forest area, with forests accounting for 43 % of the EU's land area. Forest ownership across Europe is diverse in terms of size and ownership structure, leading to a great diversity of management models. About 60 % of the EU's forests are owned by 16 million private forest owners, of whom a significant share are small-holders, while approximately 40 % of the EU's forests are under different forms of public ownership.

Parliament welcomed the new EU Forest Strategy and its ambition to increase the balanced contribution of multifunctional forests to the targets of the Green Deal and its EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, particularly the goals of creating sustainable green growth and green jobs, and of achieving a carbon-neutral, environmentally sustainable and fully circular economy within planetary boundaries and climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest.

The resolution stated that, in line with sustainable forest management and to increase the quality and diversity of forest ecosystems, the maintenance, protection, strengthening, restoration and sustainable use of healthy and resilient forests are fundamental goals of the EU Forest Strategy and of all actors in forestry and the forest-based value chain, using timber as a versatile, renewable raw material to maximise self-sufficiency in the EU.

Despite the continuously growing cover and volume of forests in the EU, Parliament stressed the urgent need to **protect and increase forest and ecosystem resilience**, including through measures to increase the capacity to adapt to climate change, and to reduce pressures where feasible, while taking into consideration the characteristics of the forest.

Fostering a balanced multifunctionality

Members emphasised that wood is the only significant natural renewable resource that has the potential to replace some very energy-intensive materials, such as cement and plastics, and will be in greater demand in the future. They stressed the need **to reduce the EU's consumption** in general and welcomed the establishment of a methodology to quantify the climate benefits of wood construction.

Stressing that the increasing demand for wood as a raw material, especially wood for use as an energy source, poses major challenges in the context of political crises, such as the war in Ukraine, Parliament called on the Commission and the Members States to **assess dependencies on imports** of timber from Russia in the light of the legitimate sanctions following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and to develop sustainable strategies to mitigate disruptions where necessary, while avoiding at EU level the conversion of agricultural land suitable for food production.

Reforestation, afforestation and sustainable management

Underlining the multifaceted role of forests and the importance of healthy, ecologically resilient forest ecosystems that provide a multitude of services to society, such as the conservation of biodiversity and the provision of renewable raw materials, helping to create jobs and boost economic growth in rural areas,

Parliament welcomed the reforestation and afforestation roadmap for planting at least **3 billion additional trees in the EU by 2030**. It called on the Commission and the Member States to pay special attention to planting suitable trees in areas with degraded land and those affected by desertification.

Wildfires

Parliament noted with great concern that large-scale and more intense wildfires are an increasing challenge across the EU. It underlined the need for more resources for and the development of science-based fire management and capacity-building support through advisory services to tackle the effects of climate change in forests. It also highlighted the importance of further developing and making full use of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in relation to forest fires and other natural disasters.

Noting that **multi-age, multi-species forests** with continuous cover are more resilient to climate impacts such as fire, drought and unseasonal weather events, Parliament insisted that **monocultures**, which are less resilient to pests and diseases, **should not be supported by EU funds**.

In addition, Parliament recalled the significant deficit in the **mapping of primary and old-growth forests** and the urgent need to complete the framework to ensure comprehensive and harmonised mapping, based on clear operational criteria and definitions.

Enabling forests and forest managers to deliver on multiple goals

The CAP and the European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD) are the main sources of support for forestry measures, accounting for 90 % of EU's total finance for forestry. The resolution noted that between 2014 and 2020, the Member States only spent 49 % of the available funds, that the Commission has identified administrative burden, insufficient attractiveness of the premiums and a lack of advisory services as reasons for this low usage and that this should be taken into account when adapting the new CAP strategic plans. Member States should eliminate the administrative burden in order to make the use of the EAFRD for forestry measures more efficient.