

# Forest policy: implementation of the European Union's forestry strategy

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This Communication presents an EU Forest Action Plan. It has been prepared in close cooperation with the Member States and in consultation with stakeholders. It takes into account the report by the European Parliament (please refer to the previous summary) on implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy and related reports by the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The Commission Staff Working Document attached to the Communication provides a review of the preparatory process.

**Overall principles:** The overall objective of the EU Forest Action Plan is to support sustainable forest management and the multifunctional role of forests. It is based on the following principles:

- national forest programmes as a suitable framework for implementing international forest-related commitments;
- the increasing importance of global and cross-sectoral issues in forest policy, calling for improved coherence and coordination;
- the need to enhance the competitiveness of the EU forest sector and good governance of EU forests;
- respect for the principle of subsidiarity.

Recognising the wide range of natural, social, economic and cultural conditions and differences in ownership regimes of EU forests, the Action Plan acknowledges the need for specific approaches and actions for different types of forests. It emphasizes the important role played by forest owners in the sustainable management of forests in the EU.

**Objectives:** Multifunctional forestry delivers economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits. It supplies renewable raw materials and plays an important role in the economic development, and employment of Europe, in particular of rural areas. Forests make a positive contribution to the quality of life, providing a pleasant living environment, opportunities for recreation and preventive healthcare, while maintaining and enhancing environmental amenities and ecological values. Forests are to maintain the spiritual and cultural heritage they contain. The five-year Action Plan (2007–2011) consists of a set of **18 key actions**, which the Commission proposes to implement jointly with the Member States. It also points out additional actions that can be carried out by the Member States according to their specific conditions and priorities, with support from existing Community instruments, although implementation may also require national instruments.

The Action Plan has four main objectives:

- improving long-term competitiveness: key actions include examining the effects of globalisation on the economic viability and competitiveness of EU forestry, encouraging research and technological development to enhance the competitiveness of the forest sector, and promoting the use of forest biomass for energy generation;

- improving and protecting the environment: key actions include facilitating EU compliance with the obligations on climate change mitigation of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol and contributing towards achieving the revised Community biodiversity objectives for 2010 and beyond;
- contributing to the quality of life: key actions include encouraging environmental education and information and Maintain and enhance the protective functions of forests;
- fostering coordination and communication: key actions include strengthening the role of the Standing Forestry Committee and strengthening coordination between policy areas in forest-related matters.

A mid-term evaluation will take place in 2009 and a final evaluation will be carried out in 2012. A report on implementation of the Action Plan will be presented to the Council and the European Parliament in 2012.