

FOREST EUROPE FACTS

European Forests Contribute to Mitigating Climate Change and Protecting Biodiversity



Forests, sustainable forest management and wood products can play significant roles in mitigating climate change, and policies are becoming more oriented toward and adapting to biodiversity protection.

FOREST EUROPE pays special attention to existing life forms in European forests, the ecological roles they perform and the genetic diversity they contain and the way they are managed. New pressures in the twenty-first century demand a more balanced approach in order to conserve biological diversity.

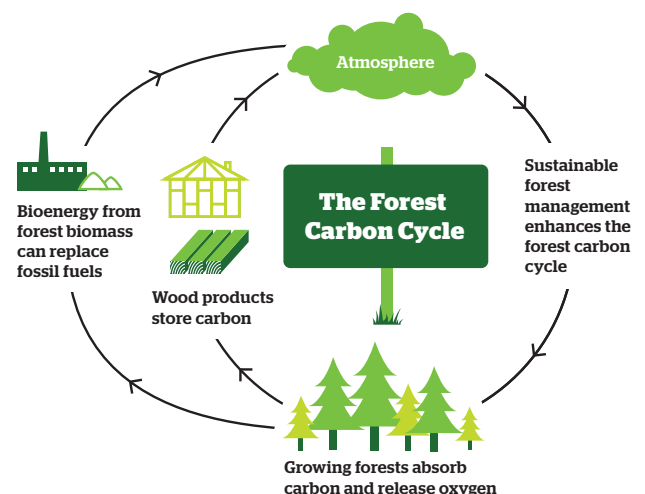
Sustainable forest management and climate change

Sustainably managed forests and forest products play a vital role in mitigating climate change. Forests sequester carbon and wood products store carbon throughout their lifespan. Forest products are a viable substitute for products with higher greenhouse gas emissions, for example wood-based bioenergy replacing fossil fuels and wood replacing energy-intensive materials like cement or steel in constructions. FOREST EUROPE policies and tools aim to strengthen the contributions by forests in combating climate change.

Wood products and bioenergy from forests can play a major role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. More wood is needed to satisfy society's growing need for renewable materials and energy. All wood production should be based on sustainability principles.

In the global climate negotiations the need to reduce de-forestation and degradation of forests in developing countries, so called REDD activities, have received substantial attention. This is logical, given that approximately 20 % of total global annual greenhouse gas emissions result from de-forestation and forest degradation. The situation for European forests is different because in Europe both the forest area and the wood resources continue to grow. Through sustainable forest management, Europe's forests can be part of the solution to climate change.

Since its inception in 1990, FOREST EUROPE has developed policy tools for promoting and implementing sustainable forest management in the pan-European region. Promoting the role of forests and sustainable forest management in combating the negative effects of climate change through both mitigation and adaptation measures are central tasks. The sustainable forest management concept and its tools are essential for ensuring adaptation of forests to climate change, as well as optimising the contribution of forests and the forest sector to climate change mitigation. FOREST EUROPE adopted in 2008 the pan-European Guidelines for Afforestation and Reforestation with a special focus on the provisions of the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change).



The Forest Carbon Cycle

FOREST EUROPE develops common strategies for its 46 participating countries and the European Union on how to protect and sustainably manage forests. It aims at maximising the contribution of Europe's forests to the ecological, social and economic well-being of the continent and across the globe.



Sustainable forest management and biodiversity protection

Over the years, sustainable forest management practices in European countries have been implemented to promote the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity. These forest practices are based on the guidelines developed by FOREST EUROPE.

Protected areas are one of the oldest instruments for protecting natural resources. They help to maintain and enhance biodiversity, as well as to conserve landscape and provide recreation opportunities. In Europe the area of protected areas is expanding.

Approximately, about 10 percent of its forests, without Russian Federation which has 17 million of hectares of protected forests, are preserved with the main objective of conserving biodiversity, and about 9 percent with the main objective of protecting landscape and specific natural elements; both accounts for an area of 39 million hectares. The strictness of and measures for protection varies considerably among countries.

For instance the area of single forests trees species is decreasing across Europe, natural regeneration is increasing; and deadwood components and important vulnerable small biotopes are kept in forests managed for wood production. Besides, the share of introduced trees species remains stable and invasive trees occupies a small percentage of forests area. In several countries, long-term monitoring has indicated that adoption of new forest management measures has reduced the decline of threatened species.

Forest management is also focused in the conservation of genetic resources since genetic diversity ensures that forest trees can survive, adapt and evolve under changing environmental conditions.



FOREST EUROPE Signatory Countries

More information and detailed data can be found in the report State of Europe's Forests 2011 on the FOREST EUROPE website: www.foresteurope.org and http://www.foresteurope.org/eng/State_of_Europes_Forests_Report_2011/Report/

FOREST EUROPE - The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe

FOREST EUROPE is the pan-European policy process for the sustainable management of the continent's forests. It develops common strategies for its 46 participating countries and the European Union on how to protect and sustainably manage forests. More than 40 international organisations and countries from other regions are observers. Founded in 1990, the continuous cooperation of FOREST EUROPE has led to achievements such as the guidelines and criteria for sustainable forest management.

With the Oslo Ministerial Decision 'European Forests 2020', FOREST EUROPE has adopted a new mission and vision for forest in Europe, where they contribute effectively to sustainable development, through ensuring human well-being, a healthy environment and economic development in Europe and across the globe. Moreover, ministers took a historical decision and launched negotiations on a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe.

High-priority topics are to step up efforts and further consolidate the pan-European policies and tools for sustainable forest management, improve the basis for forest monitoring and harmonized reporting systems, strength efforts for good governance and forest law enforcement, develop a common approach to valuation of forest ecosystem services and foster its use, and negotiate a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe.

FOREST EUROPE

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