

FOREST EUROPE FACTS

Sustainable Forest Management and Policy Tools

FOREST EUROPE, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, provides a regional policy framework for forests and forestry in Europe. Common principles, criteria and guidelines for sustainable forest management in the pan-European region have been developed. Political commitments and concrete actions have established solid ground for growth and diversity in today's forests. Forests cover 45 percent of Europe's land area and they continue to expand. Europe's forests represent 25 per cent of global forest resources.

The pan-European policies and tool for sustainable forest management were developed in a transparent way, with broad participation from signatory countries and observer organizations throughout the European region. The policies and tools represent consensus and form a useful reference for national and global dialogue on forests, and contribute to the promotion of sustainable forest management of all types of forests globally.

Forests provide significant environmental, economical and social benefits. They produce raw material for renewable and environmentally friendly products and are important for the climate, carbon cycle, biological diversity and water balance. Woodlands provide protective services making them essential for mitigating natural disasters like floods, droughts and avalanches. Forests are important for economic welfare and rural development providing employment for 4.3 million people in forestry and forest based enterprises in Europe. Forest-derived recreation is of increasing importance for Europe's growing urban population.

Common understanding generates growth and diversity

FOREST EUROPE's concept for sustainable forest management includes guidelines and criteria to secure the optimal balance of forest-related goods and services. Sustainable forest management is an efficient tool for countries and local communities to achieve the appropriate balance across society's many needs.



A series of FOREST EUROPE ministerial conferences has made political commitments to sustainable forest management and to promote its effective implementation. The countries in Europe have pledged to use FOREST EUROPE instruments to implement sustainable forest management. These instruments include policy and operational level guidelines, as well as principles for developing, implementing and evaluating national forest programmes.

Collaboration between Europe's forest ministers within FOREST EUROPE has resulted in a common understanding of sustainable forest management. Participating countries have agreed on a joint definition which reads:

The stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems.

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.



C&I for sustainable forest management

FOREST EUROPE has developed and adopted six criteria and a set of associated indicators for sustainable forest management. They provide guidance for developing policies and help assess progress on sustainable forest management. Similar criteria have been developed in other regional and international processes, all in line with the seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management agreed by the United Nations.

The associated indicators are used to assess progress in sustainable forest management at international level and in individual countries. The progress made and the positive effects of sustainable forest management on our environment and society are already evident. FOREST EUROPE's report "State of Europe's Forest" regularly reports on the situation in the pan-European region.

Increasingly, national forest programmes are acknowledged and used across Europe to govern the diversity of forest-related issues in a more open and adaptive manner.

FOREST EUROPE countries are pursuing sustainable forest management through creating new policy instruments and adjusting existing ones. Sustainable forest management is integrated in legal and regulatory frameworks when revised, in financial support measures, through cross-sectoral cooperation, and by communication and dialogue with the public.

The pan-European criteria describe the different elements and goals as follows:

1. Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of forest resources and their contribution to global carbon cycles;
2. Maintenance of forest ecosystems' health and vitality;
3. Maintenance and encouragement of productive functions of forests (wood and non-wood);
4. Maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of biological diversity in forest ecosystems;
5. Maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of protective functions in forest management (notably soil and water); and
6. Maintenance of other socio-economic functions and conditions.

They describe the different aspects of sustainable forest management in Europe. The fulfillment of the criteria can be evaluated through a set of 35 quantitative indicators. Besides these criteria the status and changes in policies, institutions and instruments related to sustainable forest management is assessed through a set of 17 qualitative indicators.

More information:
http://www.foresteuropa.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.

Spain currently holds the chairmanship of FOREST EUROPE until the next Ministerial Conference.

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