

FOREST EUROPE

Special Issue: *Forests and Climate Change*
December 2008

The MCPFE Newsletter of the Liaison Unit Oslo

Sustainable forest management contributing to climate change mitigation

Forests, sustainable forest management and forest products play a vital role in climate change mitigation. Growing forests sequester carbon and wood products continue to store carbon through their life time. Forest products can substitute material with higher greenhouse gas emissions, and wood is an important source of renewable energy.

The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) has since 1990 developed policy tools for promoting and implementing sustainable forest management in the pan-European region. The role of forests and sustainable forest management related to climate change has been a central topic from the beginning.

Climate change and sustainable forest management was a major topic at the last Ministerial Conference convened in 2007. The ministers responsible for forests in Europe committed themselves to ensuring that forests and their sustainable management play an active role in combating the negative effects of climate change through both mitigation and adaptation measures. They agreed on the need to enhance the use of wood as a renewable raw material and source of energy from sustainably managed forests. Furthermore, they stressed the role of forest ecosystems and forest-based products in long term carbon sequestration as a contribution to climate change mitigation in the context of the post-2012 climate regime.

Guidelines for Afforestation and Reforestation

To promote the role of sustainable forest management in climate change mitigation, the MCPFE adopted the "Pan-European Guidelines for Afforestation and Reforestation with a special focus on the provisions of the UNFCCC" in November 2008. The guidelines have been prepared for consideration in afforestation and reforestation programmes that aim inter alia at carbon sequestration and reduction of CO₂ emissions including woody biomass production. They form a set of recommendations for use by national authorities and other relevant bodies and stakeholders.

The guidelines were developed in cooperation with the Environment for Europe/Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy.

Forest Day 2 Poznan - 6 December, 2008

Side event: *The Importance of Forests in Mitigating Climate Change*

The State Forests Poland and the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) will convene a side event at Forest Day 2, in Poznan, Poland. Participants will learn about policy means and instruments, which are essential for optimising the contribution of forests and the forest sector in climate change mitigation. National and pan-European achievements in implementing sustainable forest management related to climate change mitigation will be demonstrated. Practical examples of forest management practices implemented by the Polish State Forests will be showcased. Examples will also be given of regional cooperation on forests in Europe performed within the frame of the MCPFE and the outcomes of the 5th MCPFE Conference, held in 2007 in Warsaw, Poland.

Date: 6 December, 2008

Time: 14:30-16:00

Venue: Adam Mickiewicz University,
Collegium Minus, Lubrański Room
Wieniawskiego 1 Street, Poznan

European Forest Facts

Twenty-five percent of the world's forests, more than 1 billion hectares, are in Europe. The area is increasing due to planting of new forests and natural expansion of forests into former agricultural land. According to the MCPFE report "State of Europe's Forests 2007", the growing stock of forests is 112 billion cubic metres and continues growing. Forest biomass in Europe currently stores 53 gigatonnes of carbon, an increase of 2 billion tonnes since 1990. Further, substantial amounts of carbon are stored in forest litter and soils, and in wood based products.

Pan-European policy tools for sustainable forest management

The MCPFE was the first regional policy process which developed and politically endorsed criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. The six pan-European criteria describe different aspects of sustainable forest management, and the associated indicators allow evaluation of progress towards sustainable forest management at the national scale. Among the six criteria for sustainable forest management, Criterion 1 deals with maintenance and appropriate enhancement of forest resources and their contribution to global carbon cycles.

The MCPFE agreed in 1993 that in Europe sustainable forest management means 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 fulfill, 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". The MCPFE has also developed policy guidelines for sustainable forest management, incorporating forest protection, avoidance of forest degradation, afforestation and reforestation. To further promote sustainable forest management, the MCPFE has developed "Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management", providing practical guidelines at the field level.

An MCPFE working group is currently analysing the applicability of the existing MCPFE tools for sustainable forest management in response to new developments, among others, increasing demands for renewable energy. The working group is expected to present recommendations on potential revisions of or additions to the existing MCPFE tools by June 2009.

The MCPFE guidelines and tools for sustainable forest management are the result of regional political consensus. These policy tools deal with all dimensions of sustainable forest management. They can play a major role in optimising the contribution of forests and the forest sector in climate change mitigation. They can serve as models for other regions and for addressing emerging topics. The sustainable forest management concept and its tools can facilitate and assist development and implementation of forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives, and are relevant in developing policies aimed at reducing emissions through land use, land-use change and forestry activities (LULUCF) and from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD) under the UNFCCC process.

Organisation

The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) provides a regional policy framework on forests and forestry in Europe. MCPFE signatories consist of forty-six European countries and the European Community. More than forty organisations and countries from other regions are observers. Stakeholder involvement is encouraged through multi-stakeholder dialogues at the ministerial conferences and broad participation in activities between the conferences. Through five ministerial conferences the European countries have agreed upon priorities on a broad range of forest policy issues in the pan-European region. Forests and climate change have been on the agenda since 1990, and were at the top of the agenda at the latest Ministerial Conference in Warsaw, Poland, in 2007. Norway holds the chairmanship until the next Ministerial Conference.

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