



PRESS RELEASE

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European Forest Week: Forests and wood for a healthy environment Sustainable forest management generates multiple benefits

Forests play a key role in mitigating climate change, providing fresh water and protecting the environment. The European Forest Week is devoted to understanding the importance of our forests and the value of using them sustainably. The week was declared by the ministers responsible for forests of 46 European countries. The pan-European initiative takes place 20-24 October 2008 and will be celebrated with activities all over Europe.

Forests cover 44 percent of Europe's land area and they continue to expand. "Those wooded environments provide a wide range of environmental, economical and social benefits", says Arne Ivar Sletnes, Head of the MCPFE Liaison Unit Oslo. Norway is currently holding the chairmanship of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE).

Tackling climate change

Forests help mitigate climate change by constantly absorbing and storing harmful greenhouse gases. Wood products continue to store carbon long after the tree is harvested. Wood can be a substitute for energy-intensive materials and is an important source of renewable energy.

Europe is in the fortunate position of having a huge amount of wood, a renewable resource. The forest area in Europe has increased by 13 million hectares in the past 15 years. That's an area roughly the size of Greece. Sustainable forest management plays a key role in this positive development. The amount of wood in Europe's forest is growing by around 360 million cubic metres per year. Only two-thirds of the annual increase in Europe's forests is harvested.

Forests celebrated all over Europe

"The European Forest Week aims to raise awareness about the contribution of forests in mitigating climate change, providing wood and renewable energy, securing the supply of fresh water and protecting our environment", says Sletnes. The week is jointly organised

by the European Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

A series of events in countries throughout Europe will highlight the importance of our forests and the value of using them sustainably. At regional meetings in Rome politicians, policy-makers and experts from different sectors will discuss possible solutions for the challenges of today's forests.

More information is available at: www.europeanforestweek.org

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