

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: August 09, 2021

Report Number: E42021-0062

Report Name: European Commission Publishes EU Forest Strategy for 2030

Country: European Union

Post: Brussels USEU

Report Category: Policy and Program Announcements, Wood Products

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Report Highlights:

On July 16, 2021, the European Commission published the EU Forest Strategy for 2030. As part of the European Green Deal, the Strategy aims to contribute to the EU's greenhouse gas emission reduction target of at least 55 percent by 2030. The Strategy calls for better protection of EU forests to combat climate change and biodiversity loss. It also recognizes the importance of wood-based industries for local economies and the forest-based bioeconomy.

On July 16, 2021, the European Commission published the [EU Forest Strategy for 2030](#). The Forest Strategy falls under the European Green Deal and builds on the [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#) with the goal to achieve the Green Deal greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction target of at least 55 percent by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050.

Commenting on the publication of the Strategy, EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski [said](#):

“Forests are the lungs of our earth: they are vital for our climate, biodiversity, soil, and air quality. Forests are also the lungs of our society and economy: they secure livelihoods in rural areas, provide essential products for our citizens, and hold a deep social value through their nature. The new Forest Strategy recognizes this multifunctionality and shows how environmental ambition can go hand-in-hand with economic prosperity.”

The Forest Strategy has six main objectives:

1. Support the socio-economic functions of forests for thriving rural areas and boosting the forest-based bioeconomy within sustainability boundaries;
2. Protect, restore, and enlarge the EU’s forests to combat climate change, reverse biodiversity loss, and ensure resilience in multifunctional forest ecosystems;
3. Conduct strategic forest monitoring, reporting, and data collection;
4. Strengthen the research and innovation agenda to improve our knowledge of forests;
5. Establish an inclusive and coherent EU forest governance framework;
6. Step up implementation and enforcement of existing EU laws.

While forestry policy remains a competence of the EU Member States, the European Commission has a variety of shared competencies that address forest concerns, including climate, environment, and agriculture. Member States and the European Parliament remain mindful of the principle of EU *subsidiarity*¹ in EU forest policy.

Supporting the socio-economic functions of forests for thriving rural areas and boosting the forest-based bioeconomy within sustainability boundaries

The Commission recognizes the multiple socio-economic functions and benefits of forests and forestry-based economic sectors that provide jobs and industrial growth opportunities.

The Commission notes that sustainable raw wood and non-wood materials and products are key in the EU’s transition to a sustainable climate-neutral economy. The Commission therefore wants to promote the use of wood products to shift the construction sector from a source of GHG emissions into a carbon sink. To do so, the Commission announced that it will establish a standard methodology to quantify the climate benefits of wood and construction products and other building materials.

¹ Specifically, it is the principle whereby the EU does not take action (except in the areas that fall within its exclusive competence), unless it is more effective than action taken at national, regional, or local level. It is closely linked to the principle of proportionality, which requires that any action by the EU should not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the aims of the various EU Treaties.

The Commission also recognizes the role of sustainable wood-based resources for bioenergy to achieve GHG reduction targets for 2030 and 2050. According to the Strategy, biomass needs to be used efficiently, in line with the “cascading principle.” It should also take into account the overall availability of wood within sustainability boundaries, avoiding undue distortive effects on raw material markets to minimize the use of quality roundwood for energy. The cascading principle was established by Directive 2008/98/EC and calls for woody biomass to be used according to its highest economic and environmental added value in the following order of priorities: 1) wood-based products; 2) extending their service life; 3) re-use; 4) recycling; 5) bio-energy; and 6) disposal. However, the Commission proposes to adopt a delegated act² on how to apply the cascading principle for biomass as part of its review of the Renewable Energy Directive that was launched on July 14, 2021.

Protecting, restoring and enlarging EU’s forests to combat climate change, reverse biodiversity loss, and ensure resilient and multifunctional forest ecosystems

The Strategy aims to make EU forests more resilient to climate change and reverse biodiversity loss. To do so, the Commission wants to improve management approaches and the protection and restoration of forest biodiversity.

As a first step, the Commission proposes to map the primary and old-growth forests and establish a protection regime for these forests. In addition, the Commission will work with Member States and stakeholders to agree, by the end of 2021, on a common definition for primary and old-growth forests and policy and enforcement mechanisms for forest protection. To promote resiliency, the Commission will also revise EU legislation on forest reproductive material with measures to promote the production of forest reproductive material suitable for future climatic conditions. The Commission calls for research and innovation, the testing and selecting of species, and suitable provenances for future conditions to be enhanced.

Strategic forest monitoring, reporting, and data collection

The Strategy recognizes that information on the status of forests in the EU is incomplete. Since 2007, there has been no EU-wide comprehensive reporting requirements for Member States. To address this issue, the Commission will put forward a legislative proposal for *EU Forest Observation, Reporting, and Data Collection* to ensure a coordinated EU forest monitoring, data collection, and reporting system. As part of this, Member States competent authorities would prepare Strategic Plans for Forests for forests and the forest-based sector. This proposal is expected for the first quarter of 2023.

A strong research and innovation agenda to improve our knowledge on forests

The Commission presents research and innovation as key drivers in achieving the goals of the Forest Strategy. To strengthen research and innovation at the EU level, the Commission proposes to set up a Research and Innovation partnership on forestry, including designated centers for testing and demonstrating solutions. The Commission also wants to engage citizens and civil society in monitoring forest biodiversity through a dedicated citizen’s science program for forests.

² Delegated acts are non-legislative acts adopted by the European Commission to amend or supplement legislation. A delegated act adopted by the Commission can only enter into force if no objection is raised by the Council or the Parliament.

Attachments:

No Attachments.