



European Green Deal: Commission proposes new strategy to protect and restore EU forests

Brussels, 16 July 2021

Today, the European Commission adopted the [New EU Forest Strategy for 2030](#), a flagship initiative of the [European Green Deal](#) that builds on the EU [Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#). The strategy contributes to the [package of measures](#) proposed to achieve greenhouse gas emission reductions of at least 55% by 2030 and climate neutrality in 2050 in the EU. It also helps the EU deliver on its commitment to enhance carbon removals by natural sinks as per the [Climate Law](#). By addressing the social, economic and environmental aspects all together, the Forest Strategy aims at ensuring the multifunctionality of EU forests and highlights the pivotal role played by foresters.

Forests are an essential ally in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss. They function as carbon sinks and help us reduce the impacts of climate change, for example by cooling down cities, protecting us from heavy flooding, and reducing drought impact. Unfortunately, Europe's forests suffer from many different pressures, including climate change.

Protection, restoration and sustainable management of forests

The Forest Strategy sets a vision and concrete actions for increasing the quantity and quality of forests in the EU and strengthening their protection, restoration and resilience. The proposed actions will increase carbon sequestration through enhanced sinks and stocks thus contributing to climate change mitigation. The Strategy commits to strictly protecting primary and old-growth forests, restoring degraded forests, and ensuring they are managed sustainably – in a way that preserves the vital ecosystem services that forests provide and on which society depends.

The Strategy promotes the most climate and biodiversity friendly forest management practices, emphasises the need to keep the use of woody biomass within sustainability boundaries, and encourages resource-efficient wood use in line with the cascade principle.

Ensuring the multifunctionality of EU forests

The Strategy also foresees the development of payment schemes to forest owners and managers for providing alternative ecosystems services, e.g. through keeping parts of their forests intact. The new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), amongst others, will be an opportunity for more targeted support to foresters and to the sustainable development of forests. The new governance structure for forests will create a more inclusive space for Member States, forest owners and managers, industry, academia and civil society to discuss about the future of forests in the EU and help maintain these valuable assets for the generations to come.

Finally, the Forest Strategy announces a legal proposal to step up forest monitoring, reporting and data collection in the EU. Harmonised EU data collection, combined with strategic planning at Member States' level, will provide a comprehensive picture of the state, the evolution and the envisaged future developments of forests in the EU. This is paramount to making sure that forests can deliver on their multiple functions for climate, biodiversity and economy.

The strategy is accompanied by a [Roadmap](#) for planting three billion additional trees across Europe by 2030 in full respect of ecological principles – the right tree in the right place for the right purpose.

Members of the College said:

Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal, Frans **Timmermans**, said: *"Forests provide a home to most of the biodiversity we find on Earth. For our water to be clean, and our soils to be rich, we need healthy forests. Europe's forests are at risk. That is why we will work to protect and restore them, to improve forest management, and to support foresters and forest caretakers. In the end, we are all part of nature. What we do to fight the climate and biodiversity crisis, we do for our own health and future."*

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 recognises this multifunctionality and shows how environmental ambition can go hand-in-hand with economic prosperity. Through this Strategy, and with support from the new common agricultural policy, our forests and our foresters will breathe life into a sustainable, prosperous, and climate neutral Europe."

Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, said: "European forests are a valuable natural heritage that cannot be taken for granted. Protecting, restoring and building up the resilience of European forests is not only essential to fight the climate and biodiversity crises, but also to preserve the socio-economic functions of forests. The huge involvement in public consultations shows that Europeans care about the future of our forests, so we must change the way we protect, manage and grow our forests that it would bring real benefits for all."

Background

Forests are an essential ally in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss thanks to their function as carbon sinks as well as their ability to reduce the impacts of climate change, for example by cooling down cities, protecting us from heavy flooding, and reducing drought impact. They are also valuable ecosystems, home to a major part of Europe's biodiversity. Their ecosystem services contribute to our health and well-being through water regulation, food, medicines and materials provision, disaster risk reduction and control, soil stabilisation and erosion control, air and water purification. Forests are a place for recreation, relaxation and learning, as well as part of livelihoods.

For More Information

[New EU Forest Strategy for 2030](#)

[Questions and Answers on the New EU Forest Strategy for 2030](#)

[Nature and Forests Factsheet](#)

[Factsheet – 3 billion additional trees](#)

[3 billion trees website](#)

[European Green Deal: Commission proposes transformation of EU economy and society to meet climate ambitions](#)

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