



PRESS RELEASE

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International Day of Forests 2018: European forests can deliver even more benefits to society

On the occasion of the United Nations International Day of Forests and dedicated to “Forests for Sustainable Cities”, representatives of European forest owners, managers and forest-based industries call for more awareness and support to further use the potential of European forests to contribute to a sustainable future.

Forests play a crucial role in providing multiple benefits for citizens. They deliver forest products and many other ecosystem services (recreation, clean air and water, biodiversity, scenic and cultural values...). Wood is a renewable raw material used in construction, furniture, pulp and paper, as well as for energy. It also serves as a substitute for non-renewable raw materials and energy. Moreover, forests contribute to job creation and economic growth.

In this context, EU forests have the potential to keep – and possibly increase – their contribution to these needs in the coming years. On average, 60% of the annual growth of EU forests is harvested, leading to a regular and significant increase in wood resources.

In the current discussion at EU level, several policies (research and innovation, rural development, climate and energy) and strategies (Forest Strategy, Bioeconomy Strategy) provide opportunities to enhance sustainable and multifunctional forest management while supporting the development of innovative bio-based value chains.

Piotr Borkowski, Executive Director of EUSTAFOR, and Fanny-Pomme Langue, Secretary General of CEPF, highlight that *“There is still an important unexploited potential in terms of the wood and non-wood products and services provided by European forests. EU policies should contribute to unlock this potential so as to better meet existing and future demands. However, it should be stressed that sound economic prospects are essential in order for European forests to meet the growing social and environmental demands which are also being made on them”*.

According to **Sylvain Lhôte, Director General of CEPI**, the European association representing the pulp and paper industry, *“The EU should balance its target setting and demand-side approach with measures to increase supply. These measures should secure and improve forest growth and mobilise more wood from European forests for all kinds of uses”*.

Patrizio Antonicoli, Secretary General of CEI-Bois highlights: *“Forests and wood-based products play a central role in climate-change mitigation. This year’s theme of the UN International Day of Forests furthermore offers the opportunity to highlight the high potential contribution of timber building systems and wood construction materials.”*

The undersigned organisations highlight the importance to better acknowledge and coordinate existing EU and national forest-related legislation which is already in place, which safeguard sustainable and multifunctional forestry and which are additionally supported by voluntary systems certification schemes. This is essential in ensuring the long-term competitiveness of the sector.

The International Day of Forests 2018 is taking place at a moment when EU policies have an opportunity to demonstrate how to enhance the potential of European forests and better mobilise their resources to further benefit society. This is an opportunity worth seizing.

For more information

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