

## **EUSTAFOR Position Paper<sup>1</sup> Sustainable Forest Management Guarantees an Active Protection of Forests by Balancing Ecological, Social and Economic Interests**

**Brussels, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

***EUSTAFOR's 28 members (state forest organizations managing state forests), representing 30% of the EU forest area, are committed to sustainable forest management and working with existing certification schemes. The members' total harvest is approx. 115 million m<sup>3</sup> per annum and together the members employ more than 100 000 people.***

EUSTAFOR, European State Forest Association, promotes sustainable forest management (SFM) as a pro-active approach to guarantee stable and healthy forests. SFM is much broader, however, than what is presented in the green paper. From our point of view the green paper considers forests and forestry from one perspective only (climate change), in spite of presenting a more complete picture in the beginning of the paper. However, forestry, as an operation, has many aspects and multiple objectives and includes the sensitive balance of all interests in multifunctional forestry, of which forest protection is one part, and one part only, of SFM.

The sustainable management of forests needs to be based on local/regional/national conditions and possibilities as well as on national legislation, in line with the subsidiarity principle. SFM is a tool which has proved to work well in different geographical areas and under varying conditions. It is important to support and promote the SFM concept in its real meaning.

It is also important to increase the understanding of sustainable forest management and its essential contribution to a greener economy and green growth.

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<sup>1</sup> Any statement in this document is to be considered as a reflection of the best available professional expertise and does not necessarily reflect the political commitments of individual member states.



**All different aspects of forests and forestry must be considered together and treated simultaneously.**

From EUSTAFOR's point of view, SFM balances environmental (biodiversity, habitats), social (employment, social values) and economic interests (production of renewable products).

From an EU institutional approach, forestry must be considered in a coordinated, strategic manner and not broken down into several separate isolated items or diffuse responsibilities. It is of utmost importance to strengthen the coordination by DG Agriculture and the Standing Forestry Committee and to look into the institutional structure.

**EUSTAFOR supports the Forest Europe process.**

To further strengthen forestry within the EU, the Forest Europe (former MCPFE) principles and the definition of SFM and its criteria and indicators should be used. It would simplify the work and minimize confusion if these principles were always used as a basis. New criteria could be added to the Forest Europe process to cover the challenges created by, for example, climate change.

EUSTAFOR is in favor of a common European framework based on Forest Europe, including extending outside the EU, thereby creating stable and long term conditions for forestry. We support the process of exploring the possibilities for a legally binding agreement (LBA). The practical implementation of SFM is today already handled through voluntary certification schemes (e.g. FSC and PEFC) based on Forest Europe criteria.

Principles, definitions, criteria and indicators should be included in the work already being done within the European Union in a much more obvious manner than today (after all, the EU has agreed on and signed the MCPFE resolutions), and of course this should be the starting point in any discussion on sustainability, criteria and similar matters.

**European State Forest Association**

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### **Bring together existing directives and policies.**

One way to better coordinate forestry issues could be by bringing together the current EU Forest Strategy with the EU Forest Action Plan and other existing forestry-related directives, into one “framework,” and adding the elements from the Forest Europe process (mentioned above). When brought together, existing directives should be reviewed and checked for overlapping or contradictions, as was done when the framework directive on water was created, without adding any new legislation.

We also believe there is a need for developing a new revised EU forest strategy, to enable adjustments to new challenges and to establish a clear strategy for the future.

### **Maintaining forest functions.**

Overall it is of great importance to keep and even increase the productivity of Europe’s forest in a sustainable way, because it is through the growth of our forests that we can counteract climate change, produce increased amounts of biofuel and obtain more products to substitute for less environmentally friendly ones.

European State Forest organizations are ready to address challenges posed by climate change, for example by adapting forest management. For that purpose, member organizations are cooperating to jointly develop guidelines for forest management in order to combat and adapt to climate change. The report will be presented at the end of the year, but most of its content has already been shared with the Standing Forestry Committees Working Group on Climate Change.

In order to encourage carbon sequestration, there is also a need to find ways to pay forest owners for ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration.

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## **The EU has important roles in research, communication and combatting the trans-national spread of pests.**

Still more research and risk assessment is needed regarding forest adaptation to climate change. If we adapt forests and forestry in the wrong way, it could lead to negative effects and become very costly.

Cooperation between member states, exchanges of experience (the EU could take initiatives for seminars), and EU investments in knowledge and research, including the development of tools to evaluate possibilities and risks, are necessary to ensure that the preparation and adaptation of forests to climate change occurs in the best possible way. The Forest Technology Platform (FTP) should be integrated into development and research discussions.

We also believe that the EU has an important role in combatting the trans-national spread of different pests and we support the continued development of the presented road map for those questions. It is necessary to make funds available for supporting member states for their struggle to stop the spread of pests to other member states.

It is also necessary to specifically consider the problems arising from natural hazards, such as storms, bark beetle attacks and forest fires, when they influence larger areas.

We also see an important role for the EU in ensuring that the upcoming legislation on illegal logging does not hurt the competitiveness of the forestry sector.

## **Use and support existing gene conservation and breeding programs**

The existing gene pool should be saved through national gene banks and breeding programs, making material available for future climates and, at the same time, improving resistance to pests and selecting for increased growth. This type of program already exists in several member states, for example EUFORGEN and national tree-breeding programs.

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Continued funding is required at the EU level for research and development of technology and bio-technology to speed up the response from breeding programs.

**Develop existing inventory systems, analyze and continue work relative to harmonization.**

We believe that national inventories should form the basis of a European system and that no new system should be created. Rather, the monitoring/inventory work carried out within Forest Europe and FAO/UNECE should be supported and developed where necessary. In this way, the same information can be used several times, making comparable information available for all of Europe, and not only just within the union.

It is necessary to have a clear picture of what information is needed and for what purpose. Usually member states have a need for more detailed information when compared to EU needs.

When evaluating what information is needed, we believe it is important to try and foresee future policy issues, to receive timely information about them as needed, rather than to collect information on a broad and somewhat random basis just in case it might come in handy at a later date.

There is a need for harmonization of definitions and variables. In spite of attempts having already been made, we believe that an analysis should be undertaken as to why we have not succeeded in harmonizing, and that an action plan should be developed in order to solve this problem. Funds should be specifically allocated for this purpose.

EUSTAFOR is willing to continuously participate in discussions on how to sustainably protect our forests through SFM.

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