



Confédération Européenne des Propriétaires Forestiers  
Confederation of European Forest Owners  
Zentralverband der Europäischen Waldbesitzer

Liaison Office in Brussels  
European Forestry House  
66 Rue du Luxembourg  
B-1000 Bruxelles  
Tel. +32 2 2190231  
Fax +32 2 2192191

Head Office in Luxembourg  
6 Rue des Foyers  
L-1537 Luxembourg  
Contact Office in Budapest  
Benczur u. 34  
H-1068 Budapest

[www.cepf-eu.org](http://www.cepf-eu.org)

3<sup>rd</sup> of June 2010, Brussels

## Stakeholder session on Forest Protection at the Green Week 2010

*By Philipp Freiherr zu Guttenberg, CEPF Board Member*

In the light of the ongoing debate on tackling climate change, the upcoming International Year of the Forest and the international Year of Biodiversity, our forests are once again in the limelight of the global and European stage.

The growing demands on our forests and their owners legitimately leave a big question mark about the change in forest functions in the future – in other words, can the forest fulfil all demands and requirements and yet be sustainable?

With this question mark in mind, allow me to look at the current role of forests for the European society, the challenges ahead and, most importantly, the conflicts in future policy making and offering possible solutions.

When we talk about forests in Europe, we talk about people. Our forests are a resource. No more, no less. The appearance and also functions of European forests are defined by or are the results of our history and their owners. Private or public!

Allow me to elaborate on the forest functions:

European Forests offer a livelihood and source of income for more than 16 Million forest owners. They provide employment to over 4 Million people including the Forest related industry and generate a turnover of over €400 billion.

This value-added-chain includes not only the classical wood based Industry, such as sawmills, pulp and paper or pellet industry, to name but a few, it also includes the countless locally wood based businesses such as carpenters, turners, joiners, cabinet makers, an so on...

Forestry and its downstream Industry stands for the security of millions of jobs, income and the preservation of the rural areas. In Germany, 100 m<sup>3</sup> of wood equals 1 job.

How does the wider society profit from our forests?

Forests, or more precisely, SFM also guarantees the physical protection from natural disasters, such as erosions, avalanches or floods. In the Alpine regions, SFM prevents society from spending billions of Euro each year on protecting people and their infrastructure.

We forest owners often have lively discussions with the tourist industry. Tourism today claims 100% of our area for the purpose of recreation or lifestyle consumption. In other words: less than 3% of our society provides important goods for the general public – mostly free of charge. Sport, tourism and some economically motivated environmental protection schemes, consume on and claim nearly 100% of our property for themselves. In Germany, the provision of this service to society amounts to ca. €18 per hectare. A burden borne by the forest owners without compensation. Still, recreation is and will be one very important forest function for society. The beauty of our landscapes in the rural areas of Europe is the direct results of generations of forest owners managing their livelihood. Thus SFM lies also at the core of the recreational industry in Europe – again, the economic impact lies in the hundreds of billion € a year.



Confédération Européenne des Propriétaires Forestiers  
Confederation of European Forest Owners  
Zentralverband der Europäischen Waldbesitzer

Liaison Office in Brussels  
European Forestry House  
66 Rue du Luxembourg  
B-1000 Bruxelles  
Tel. +32 2 2190231  
Fax +32 2 2192191

Head Office in Luxembourg  
6 Rue des Foyers  
L-1537 Luxembourg  
Contact Office in Budapest  
Benczur u. 34  
H-1068 Budapest

[www.cepf-eu.org](http://www.cepf-eu.org)

Allow me to touch on the subject of biodiversity. First again a few facts: Despite many attempts to claim that our forests are degrading or even disappearing, the opposite is true: Only 60% of the annual increment is harvested and 2/3 of European forests are classed as seminatural. Furthermore, the European forests are constantly increasing by a vast area each year. There are more than 70,000 protected areas and 30% of the Nature 2000-network are within forests. As usual, Germany is always more thorough and efficient and has dedicated 68% of our forest into varying degrees of protection schemes. Why – well it is simple.

They are protected, not because one suspects imminent danger to the environment.

Nor does one disagree with our traditional methods of management.

These areas are now protected, because sustainable forest management rendered valuable results to the environment and society or sustained valuable goods.

Biodiversity is our lifeline. We as forest owner subscribed to it and could congratulate ourselves that our work through generations is finally rewarded by recognising the benefits of sustainable Forestry to society and biodiversity. The effects from this reward, however, are unfortunately quite different.

So far to some of the important forest functions today. Our forests also offer protection from soil erosion, wind, they purify our water, they give coastal protection, are part of our culture and national identity. The socio-economic values are immeasurable.

If we wonder about the role of our forests in the future with a possible change in forest functions, we first have to ask a series of questions: why? What are the challenges for society in the future? Why should we possibly change our way of thinking, our way of living?

In the years to come, I do not see any new emerging issues. During the past decades, they have already been identified: Climate change, the loss of biodiversity, energy, resource scarcity, water, poverty, governance issues, and so on. We already know them and our homework so far is everything but satisfactory.

The main, if not the most important issue for the years to come and future generations, is that of Climate Change.

Anything new has to be dealt with or will be the direct result of it.

In the light of the recent scientific findings as well as the already witnessed impacts of Climate Change, the sustainable and prudent use of our resources does not tolerate any further delay.

Forestry, their owners as well as all forest functions to society will be directly affected by a changing climate.

European Policy makers have long recognized the fact, that our precious resource and sustainable forest management in particular can offer a humble, yet vital part to the solution. Recognising and promoting SFM is also ensuring the continuation of the multiple and important forest functions.

At this moment we have to concede to the fact, that our ambitious goals for 2020, be it economical, ecological, concerning energy or else, are unlikely to be reached.

Also, or in particular respect to our forests, we have dug ourselves a nice big hole.

Whilst on one hand, we are trying to push the utilization of wood for substituting CO2 intensive materials and for replacing fossil fuel consumption, conservation issues are further restricting the prudent use of our forest resources.

This predicament is yet to intensify in the future.



Confédération Européenne des Propriétaires Forestiers  
Confederation of European Forest Owners  
Zentralverband der Europäischen Waldbesitzer

Liaison Office in Brussels

European Forestry House  
66 Rue du Luxembourg  
B-1000 Bruxelles  
Tel. +32 2 2190231  
Fax +32 2 2192191

[www.cepf-eu.org](http://www.cepf-eu.org)

Head Office in Luxembourg

6 Rue des Foyers  
L-1537 Luxembourg

Contact Office in Budapest

Benczur u. 34  
H-1068 Budapest

The current countless forest and forest related policies, be it on a Global or especially on a European level, are insufficient to encompass all requirements for our resources and fail to offer a widely accepted path to meet future challenges.

In order to achieve this, a clear and open process of prioritising on the highest level is indispensable.

We cannot afford policies that blank out the economic and social needs of society and forest owners, let alone those that impinge on property rights. Nor can we longer afford policies which are counterproductive to reaching realistic biodiversity targets or securing future water quality, to name but a few.

Without this process of prioritising and setting a European comprehensive, integrative and coherent strategy for the use of our natural resources, we cannot meet our global challenges.

The static protection or set aside of forests as demanded in the current wilderness schemes or others are counterproductive to meeting our goals. So are further restrictions on forest use beyond the current legislation. We simply cannot afford them. Some might accept the re-nunciation of millions of tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> as a substitution in the material and energetic use for feigned environmental reasons.... If so, they also have to say yes to an increased use of nuclear or fossil energy, the intensification of unsustainable forestry in sensitive areas outside Europe, a further increase of food scarcity, the loss of countless jobs and income in the rural areas, and other imponderabilia. I don't.

We all have a global responsibility and we have to be aware of the opportunity costs. Additional restrictions on forest management will go at the expenses of the necessary flexibility for our biggest challenge, the fight against global climate change:

Ladies and gentlemen, climate change will force us to a change in paradigms in a frequency and speed like never before. Therefore, we simply cannot afford rigid ideologies in our forests which, at the same time, are not willing to take over economic risks. The responsibility and financial risk still lie with the owners. With regards to management decisions that shape the forest and economic environment for a hundred years to come, it is thus indispensable to maintain the greatest possible flexibility in forest management, of course in constant dialogue with other stakeholder groups and under the existing laws.

We all know: SFM can and has to make an important contribution to climate protection. But: Climate, biodiversity and economic efficiency taking into account the other forest functions have in the past, only be complied with healthy, sustainably managed forests. This mustn't change in the future.

So what do we do? Can we maintain the current forest functions and meet our goals at the same time?

What we need is a real integrative forest strategy. Without the dialogue, full cooperation and, in the end, of a strong alliance between politics, administration, nature conservation and forestry all efforts are condemned to failure.

In a crucial time when Europe should be leading the world in setting up targets and measures to secure the large increase in renewable energy use and combating climate change, there are currently many conflicting policies, which hamper the progress of meeting our future goals.

On Eu-level, the consolidation of conflicting interests in forest policy is needed more than ever.

The Commission's answer to this apparent lack of a coherent policy instrument is the current Green Paper on Forest Protection and Information. Although the implications of developing such an initiative to the forest sector is yet unrevealed, the paper undoubtedly opens a new political pathway in the EU forest policy. The debate on a legal framework on forests in the pan-European region launched by the intergovernmental process (MCPFE/Forest Europe) must, however, also be considered in further course of action.



Confédération Européenne des Propriétaires Forestiers  
Confederation of European Forest Owners  
Zentralverband der Europäischen Waldbesitzer

Liaison Office in Brussels  
European Forestry House  
66 Rue du Luxembourg  
B-1000 Bruxelles  
Tel. +32 2 2190231  
Fax +32 2 2192191

Head Office in Luxembourg  
6 Rue des Foyers  
L-1537 Luxembourg  
Contact Office in Budapest  
Benczur u. 34  
H-1068 Budapest

[www.cepf-eu.org](http://www.cepf-eu.org)

The forest sector undoubtedly needs stronger political recognition and integrity within the EU. Recognising the concept of sustainable forest management as such, could give guidance to other forest related policies and processes, such as United Nations conventions on climate change and biological diversity.

We share the same desire to maintain healthy and resilient forests because they are key to maintaining integrity of biodiversity, carbon sequestration and productive capacity, on which the livelihood of forest owners and the wellbeing of society depends.

Further political work, however, cannot happen without consulting the people with a direct connection to forests. Economic sustainability allows the forest owners taking all other aspects of sustainability into consideration. They go hand in hand. It is in the owners' best interest to take good care of the forests and thus provide ecosystem services. Healthy forests maintain prosperity in every way.

The development of EU economic instruments to promote and compensate the provision of ecosystem services, including the conservation of biodiversity, should be at the core of this debate.

The production of a variety of services from our forests, in particular wood itself - the most promising and multifunctional natural resource - has never been more crucial. These and other values have to be adequately recognised while shaping the future of the European Union.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are facing monumental challenges which will also make us to overcome mental barriers. Sustainability in our actions and thoughts is indispensable.

However, one last issue must not be forgotten: Property rights, intellectually and in rem are the basis of Sustainability. Property is the basic compelling requirement. Stewardship, responsibility as well as personal freedom arises from it as its highest commodity. It is the *conditio sine qua non* for the free development for every single one of us.

If we preserve those pillars of our society and courageously face our challenges together, I also have confidence in handing over an environment worth living in.

