



Family forests owners in combating climate change

CEPF is the umbrella organisation of the national forest owners associations in 24 European countries. 60% of the forest area of the European Union is managed by private forest owners. These forests offer/contain immense potential in mitigating climate change.

The negotiations towards a new agreement on climate change in frame of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) put forestry at the heart of the climate change agenda. Forestry as a sector can be heavily impacted by the effects of climate change. First and foremost, however, forestry should be considered as the sector, which offers the most potential in mitigating climate change.

International and national forest policies must reflect the different circumstances, on the one hand the need to halt deforestation, on the other the potential to increase forest growth and harvest levels. Policies should be based on respect for those who live from their forests.

For European forest owners, sustainable forest management is the foundation to ensure healthy and productive forests and offer an economically, environmentally and socially effective means for addressing climate change globally.

In Europe more forest grows than is harvested. Forest provides a wide range of products and ecosystem services that enrich our lives and the environment in many ways. At the same time, Europe's forests are producing an increasing amount of renewable, reliable raw material for building, energy, paper, furniture and countless other everyday uses. The amount of wood in Europe's forests is growing by over 760 million cubic metres per year. At the same time they absorb the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide. Sustainable forest management guarantees all this. Only two-thirds of this increase is harvested at present.

The forest sector's effect on the carbon balance can be illustrated with the three S – principle: Sustainably managed forests are carbon sinks, *sequestering* more and more carbon in the forest biomass and in the soil and thus contributing to mitigate climate change. Carbon is also *stored* in wood, which can then *substitute* other, more harmful products with wood-based .

European forest owners are ready to meet the challenges and contribute to countermeasures against climate change as a part of the solution.

The positive contribution of Europe's forests and forest sector should be recognised and encouraged, in order to enable its active participation to the implementation of the UNFCCC as a whole and the follow-up process of the Kyoto Protocol in particular. Sufficient policies and instruments both on global and European levels should take into account:



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- adequate recognition and increased awareness of the positive role, which forests and forest products play in mitigating climate change,
- acknowledgment of principles of sustainable forest management as defined by the MCPFE process as part of global and regional strategies to mitigate climate change,
- supportive policies to enhance the contribution of family forest owners to sustainable forest management and harvest of wood, as a carbon neutral activity with positive climatic effect,
- promotion of increased use of wood and bio energy as an important way to mitigate climate change in replacing fossil fuel -based materials and energy,
- effective market mechanisms to ensure the competitiveness of the forest sector ,
- effective policies to ensure security of property ownership and land tenure,
- inclusion of the carbon sink in forests and forest products in the emission trading scheme on a national or regional level,
- respect of individual property rights,
- development of an accounting system, which takes into consideration the increase of carbon in forests and in forest products in the long-term,
- encouraging efficient use and improved mobilization of natural resources, including forest products, such as wood and biomass,
- respect the forest owners right to manage his forest in a flexible way in the context of sustainable forest management.

The changing climate and its consequences for the multifunctional management of forests pose a new set of challenges to forest owners and managers.

The conditions for forest management are affected by factors, which are beyond the influence of forest owners and managers. This proposes serious threats for the long and medium term planning security.

The Kyoto Protocol recognised the fact that forests should be included in a global strategy to combat climate change. Though its provision for forest related measures are rather limited, especially for European forestry. Also the benefits of wood-based products are not fully yet taken into account. In addition, current negotiations on post 2012 arrangements focused on reducing deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) as leading causes of global warming. These account for about 20 % of the world's greenhouse gas emission. This approach might lead to a one-sided focus on increased carbon storages in the forest, thus neglecting the use of timber.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation should be seen as offering new opportunities to financing to advance the SFM and to further develop its potential as an instrument for sustainable development and its ability to deliver co-benefits for present and future generations.

