

## **P6\_TA(2006)0068**

### **EU forestry strategy**

#### **European Parliament resolution on the implementation of a European Union forestry strategy (2005/2054(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its resolution of 30 January 1997 on the European Union's forestry strategy<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 18 November 1998 on a forestry strategy for the European Union (COM(1998)0649),
- having regard to the Council resolution of 15 December 1998 on a forestry strategy for the European Union<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the Court of Auditors' Special Report No 14/2000 on greening the CAP<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament, entitled 'Reporting on the implementation of the EU forestry strategy' (COM(2005)0084) and the attached staff working document on actions and activities implemented in the context of the EU forestry strategy in the period 1999-2004,
- having regard to the Court of Auditors' Special Report No 9/2004 on forestry measures within rural development policy<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of 30 May 2005 on the EU forest action plan,
- having regard to the study of 21 June 2005, called for by its committee responsible and drawn up by the Office National des Forêts (ONF, France), entitled 'European Forestry Strategy: outlook',
- having regard to the draft opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 12 September 2005 entitled 'Report on the implementation of the EU forestry strategy',
- having regard to the preliminary draft opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 4 August 2005 on the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament - Reporting on the implementation of the EU forestry strategy,
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 55, 24.2.1997, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 56, 26.2.1999, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 353, 8.12.2000, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 67, 18.3.2005, p. 1.

the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A6-0015/2006),

***Fundamental aspects***

- A. whereas the fundamental principles of the EU forestry strategy, i.e. sustainable forest management and preserving and strengthening the multifunctional role played by forests and by the wildlife that lives there, including their contribution to biodiversity, on the basis of the subsidiarity principle, are not being called into question by the drafting of the 'EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management' proposed by the Commission; whereas EU forestry strategy is a dynamic process open to the integration of fresh elements; whereas the EU action plan should be seen as a complementary instrument which will help ensure better coordination between the objectives and measures in the various fields of action,
- B. whereas, when it combines economic growth with important environmental values, such as sustaining the protective functions and biodiversity of forests, and rural development, forestry makes a particularly clear contribution to the attainment of several of the Lisbon and Göteborg objectives,
- C. whereas, even though neither the Treaty establishing the European Community nor the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe provide a legal basis for a common forestry policy, the influence of a wide range of Community policies over forests has consistently grown,
- D. whereas in some cases the Member States use widely differing definitions of forests, which means that it is only partially possible to assess Community measures relevant to forests,
- E. whereas the basic perspective for all decision-making affecting European forests must be that European forests differ substantially from each other and face different environmental challenges,

*Strategy element 1: Active participation in international processes relevant to forestry*

- F. whereas the Member States have responded to the Council's call for a European forestry strategy by actively participating in all international processes related to the forest sector,
- G. stressing the importance of intact forest ecosystems for the preservation of biodiversity in accordance with commitments under international agreements; noting that examples of such commitments include the Biodiversity Convention (Rio, 1992) and the goal of halting the decline in the number of species by 2010 (EU meetings in Göteborg, 2001; Johannesburg 2002); being convinced that, in order to successfully fulfil these commitments, it is of the greatest importance to earmark sufficient areas as nature reserves and to gear silvicultural methods, in conjunction with landscape planning, more fully to biological preconditions.

*Strategy element 2: Implementation of national forestry programmes in order to comply with international commitments entered into*

- H. whereas national and subnational forest programmes (NFPs) represent the key instrument for implementing the objectives of the EU forestry strategy and are designed to ensure coordination and coherence between national political guidelines and international commitments,

*Strategy element 3: Improving coordination, communication and cooperation in all fields of policy of relevance to forestry*

- I. whereas nothing has changed with regard to the fundamental need, already highlighted in 1998, for better coordination, communication and cooperation in all Community policy sectors which are relevant to the forestry sector (agricultural, environmental, energy, research, industrial, internal market, trade and development policy) within the Commission, between the Commission and the Member States and among the Member States,

*Strategy element 4: Promoting sustainable forest management as part of policy on conserving and developing rural areas*

- J. whereas rural development policy is the main instrument for implementing the forestry strategy at Community level, which can also be seen from the fact that EUR 4.8 billion was made available for forestry measures in the context of rural development policy between 2000 and 2006, half of which was used for the afforestation of farmland and half for other forest-management measures,

*Strategy element 5: Protecting Europe's forests*

- K. whereas forest management must be economically, ecologically, socially and culturally sustainable and whereas protecting forests, monitoring forest health, restoring damaged forests and safeguarding the environmental benefits, in particular regulation of the water cycle, are key elements of sustainable forest management; whereas a key aim with regard to forests is preserving forest health and vitality by protecting them against forest fires and atmospheric pollution, as well as against soil and water pollution and other damage caused by disease, pests and erosion,
- L. in the hope that biodiversity in forest areas can be guaranteed and calling for the regulation and sustainable use of the wildlife which naturally colonises such habitats to be such as to secure the long-term presence of those species, with due regard for the balance between forests and game,
- M. whereas, the fire-prevention measures provided for in rural development policy are proving insufficient to tackle the phenomenon of forest fires, which is the main cause of forest deterioration in the European Union and one of the reasons for the accelerated desertification affecting many European regions; also regretting the lack of coordination between programmes implemented at regional or national level, coordination of which should be stepped up by drawing up a set of strategic Community guidelines with a view to dovetailing the preventive measures taken by different national and/or local government authorities; whereas the Commission should recommend to each region that it draw up a comprehensive strategy to combat forest fires and that they work together with the Member States; whereas such a preventive strategy must address the relationship between agriculture and the forest environment, the risks in the area and the preventive

measures to address these risks,

- N. drawing attention to the regions repeatedly affected by large-scale forest fires and expressing its solidarity with those regions; whereas it is important, however, to note that there are considerable differences between the Member States in relation to problems with forest fires and the conditions under which they can be fought; whereas experience shows that local involvement and local engagement is crucial to successfully preventing and fighting forest fires and changing forestry practices away from fire-prone monocultures, especially of eucalyptus,
- O. whereas the new financial instrument for the environment (LIFE+) is vital in order to protect all Europe's forests through measures to monitor and avert the contributory factors involved in their deterioration, including fires,

*Strategy element 6: Protecting tropical forests*

- P. whereas illegal logging of tropical timber causes serious ecological, economic and social damage not only in the countries of origin but also in countries in temperate zones, since it gives rise to significant distortions on the market for wood products,
- Q. welcoming the Commission's FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) action plan which was set up to combat the problems associated with illegal logging; whereas illegal logging creates serious environmental and social problems as well as an imbalance of trade in timber and financial losses for the forest industry; whereas, in order to make progress in combating trade in illegally logged timber, it is of crucial importance that the factors underlying the problem, such as lack of clarity about ownership, corruption and poverty, are eliminated and furthermore, that there should be serious sanctions and punishments for people and businesses that deal in illegally logged timber,
- R. whereas much of the wood imported into the European Union comes in the form of processed products, some of which are derived from wood which has been sourced illegally; whereas the Commission, in order to facilitate prohibition of such illegally-sourced imports, should consider modifying the Community Customs Code and non-preferential rules of origin applying to timber to the effect that the last country in which the processing of products made out of extractive natural resources takes place should be obliged to prove the origin and the legality of the raw materials,

*Strategy element 7: Mitigating climate change and contributing to sustainable energy supplies*

- S. whereas, since carbon is stored in biomass and soil, forests fulfil an important function as carbon sink in the carbon cycle of the earth; whereas the guarantee of their regeneration, the preservation of their productivity and the intensified use of carbon-neutral forest products ensure and extend the carbon cycle; whereas forests provide renewable and carbon-neutral energy and contribute to the sustainable energy-mix of the EU and forests and their products thus contribute towards slowing down global warming and the greenhouse effect and fulfilling the EU's environmental objectives (e.g. the Kyoto Protocol),
- T. whereas strengthening the use of renewable energies based on forestry products will also

help to offset the European Union's energy deficit and boost the production of energy crops as a substitute or alternative for areas producing surpluses or affected by specific Common Organisation of the Market (COM) reforms,

*Strategy element 8: Promoting competitiveness, employment and income in the forest-based sector*

- U. whereas the forestry sector and wood industry has not been given a sufficiently high profile in Community economic development policy up to now and is still seen as a subsidiary area, even though this sector creates a large number of jobs, achieves a significant turnover and has an extremely positive impact on the viability of rural areas,
- V. whereas forests not only provide environmental benefits of prime importance for the quality of life, but also agri-forestry products which are of major economic importance,
- W. whereas the Commission recognises the multifunctional role of forests, but whereas in the majority of cases that role, measured against the potential it offers, is not reflected in the economy of the areas concerned or in the income of their inhabitants,
- X. whereas, therefore, good conditions for forestry and strong awareness of the various simultaneous goals of forest management are important if the Union is to achieve several of its environmental objectives,

*Strategy element 9: Promoting forest-related research and development*

- Y. whereas the forestry sector can meet the challenges facing it in terms of competitiveness and sustainable development only if it succeeds in developing new and innovative concepts and technologies for its activities, and only if it is protected from the imposition of conditions, more onerous than the general obligations attaching to ownership, hindering its economic effectiveness,
- Z. stressing the importance of diverse research in the wood sector for the attainment of the European Union's objectives regarding competitiveness and the environment; observing that, as a raw material, wood has many properties, such as its chemical content, which have previously remained unexploited and that adequate resources should be invested in research into and in the development of market applications for such properties; whereas increasing the use of wood, for example in the construction, paper, packaging and energy sectors, can contribute to replacing the use of non-renewable natural resources,
- AA. whereas new ways of preventing and extinguishing fires using satellites and other state-of-the-art technology should be developed and researched and used not only in forests, but also to provide civil protection for the general public,

*Strategy element 10: Promoting sustainable forest management by means of training and further training programmes*

- AB. whereas to date the forest-based sector has hardly been taken into account in European training and further training programmes,

*Strategy element 11: Promoting sustainable forest management by means of information*

*and communication strategies*

AC. whereas, hitherto, the EU's forestry strategy has taken far too little advantage of the European Union's potential for supporting sustainable forest management by means of information and communication strategies,

***Fundamental aspects***

1. Endorses the Commission's view that the further development of Community policies due to the decisions taken at the Lisbon (2000) and Göteborg (2001) European Councils, the 6th Environment Action Programme (2002), the CAP reform (2003) and enlargement (2004) suggests that the European Forestry Strategy should be more integrated into European policies as a whole and that Member States should cooperate in this field; supports therefore the Commission's proposal to draw up an 'EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management', which should operate for a five-year period; stresses that the drafting of the action plan should be closely coordinated with Member States and regions and carried out in consultation with the relevant stakeholder organisations; considers that the European Forestry Strategy has created the reference framework for forestry-related policies, initiatives and measures and influences the way in which forestry issues are now discussed and that the changes described in the policy context make a more coherent, active approach to managing the Community's forestry resources necessary;
2. Considers that, in view of the many effects of the Community's sectoral policies on forests and in view of the Lisbon and Göteborg Strategies, the Commission and Council should have an objective report drawn up to examine the scope for creating a separate legal basis for forests in the EC Treaty or in a future draft Constitution; calls for the subsidiarity principle to be taken into account to a special degree in all legal acts affecting forests, as long as the European Union lacks a separate legal basis for forests;
3. Calls on the Member States and Commission to seek to arrive at a mutual understanding and uniform interpretation of the concept 'forest' so as to make it easier than hitherto to assess Community forestry measures;

*Strategy element 1: Active participation in international processes relevant to forestry*

4. Welcomes the fact that, thanks to a dynamic dialogue within the framework of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), the Member States and the Commission have arrived at a common vision of sustainable forest management, and proposes that this should be taken into account more fully in the political decision-making process;
5. Welcomes the Member States' active involvement in all international processes with a bearing on the forestry sector and points out that at the Johannesburg World Development Summit in 2002 it was stressed that sustainable forestry is one tool for turning the other millennium goals into reality; furthermore stresses the fact that the governments of the participating countries committed themselves to a binding action plan with many forestry-related elements;
6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, in connection with the Sixth Session of

the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) in February 2006, to implement the Council conclusions of 26 April 2005, from which it follows that a legally binding instrument is the best means of ensuring sustainable forest management in its environmental and social dimensions;

7. Stresses that the European Union should take a coordinated and congruent approach in international and Community environmental policy, in which the multifunctional role of forests is taken into account and respected; considers, in this connection, that those concerned should be fully involved and an open information policy should be followed;

*Strategy element 2: Implementation of national forestry programmes in order to comply with international commitments*

8. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to apply the approach developed at the MCPFE as a uniform instrument for national forestry programmes and to adopt assessment criteria in order to facilitate an evaluation of the attainment of objectives;

*Strategy element 3: Improving coordination, communication and cooperation in all fields of policy of relevance to forestry*

9. Considers that, despite the progress made by setting up an inter-departmental working party at the Commission (the Inter-Service Group on Forestry), it is essential for the coordination between the various Directorates-General concerned with forestry issues to be further improved; proposes that, in addition to the existing horizontal integration of the Commission departments responsible for forestry issues, consideration should be given to vertical integration over all levels of work of Commission departments, with a basis in the Secretariat; suggests that a structural unit within the Commission Secretariat be designated to coordinate forestry-related policies;

10. Proposes that the Standing Forestry Committee be strengthened by extending its remit and giving it a practical dimension, for instance in the context of the establishment and evaluation of the action plans and the evaluation of the national forestry programmes;

*Strategy element 4: Promoting sustainable forest management as part of policy on conserving and developing rural areas*

11. Considers, furthermore, that effective monitoring systems should be established for forestry measures to be implemented by Member States with cofinancing from the European Union pursuant to Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999<sup>5</sup> on support for rural development, in which connection the recommendations of the Court of Auditors concerning the implementation of the Forestry Strategy should be acted upon;
12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take increased account of the objectives and measures of the EU forestry strategy and the EU action plan for sustainable forest management when drawing up their corresponding rural development programmes;

*Strategy element 5: Protecting Europe's forests*

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<sup>5</sup> OJ L 160, 26.6.1999, p. 80.

13. Calls on the Commission and Member States to include in the EU action plan for sustainable forest management effective measures to avert dangers and cope with serious disasters (fires, storms, insect infestations and drought); reminds the Member States to implement the measures to prevent forest fires provided for in rural development programmes;
14. Stresses that the EU action plan for sustainable forest management, in terms of the multifunctional role of forests, must pay more attention to protecting the soil, water and air and also biodiversity and typical forest landscapes;
15. Considers that in mountain areas endeavours should be made to encourage the separation between forests and grazing land and to introduce the requirement to use paths (not least for safety reasons in general), because a lack of separation between forests and grazing land and too much pedestrian traffic causes substantial erosion damage;
16. Calls for a recommendation to be drawn up addressed to the Member States and aimed at suggesting an integrated approach to protecting forests against fires, with measures such as the harvesting and utilisation of residual forest biomass, a temporary ban on changes in the use of burnt land to prevent speculation following fires, and the creation of special prosecution services for environmental offences;
17. Calls, with a view to the next financial programming period, for the Member States and European regions to revise their fire-fighting and fire-prevention measures so as to update and revitalise the measures in force, whose application is proving inadequate in many cases;
18. Stresses that reforestation is a vital instrument in combating desertification; points out that reforestation with native species helps to maintain biodiversity, reduces the risk of fire and may help to protect and link up areas bordering sites listed in the Natura 2000 network, thereby enabling the spread of biodiversity;

*Strategy element 6: Protecting tropical forests*

19. Supports the current FLEGT initiatives to combat illegal logging and enforce international agreements;

*Strategy element 7: Mitigating climate change and contributing to sustainable energy supplies*

20. Considers it vital that the importance of forests and forestry products in mitigating climate change should be recognised and that the European Union should promote research, activities to promote the image of wood and exchanges of information in this field; calls on the Commission and the Member States, as part of the EU's forest strategy, to explore concepts which will optimise the contribution of the forestry sector to combating climate change, against the backdrop of its competitiveness;
21. Urges the European Union to promote the use of wood as a renewable resource and the use of forest industry products as environmentally friendly;

22. Calls for biomass, particularly from wood, to be fully included in political measures to develop renewable energy sources (cooling, heating and power (CHP), biofuels); asks the Member States to assess the possibilities of tax concessions for wood-based heating;

*Strategy element 8: Promoting competitiveness, employment and income in the forest-based sector*

23. Stresses the conclusions of the Commission's analysis of the competitiveness of forestry in the European Union, according to which it is desirable to promote the coordination of policy on forestry and the rest of the wood/paper production chain; welcomes the fact that incentives to encourage voluntary mergers between smaller forestry businesses have been provided at national and Community level; also points out that if private forestry organisations were strengthened, this would help private forest owners, in particular, in developing their own sustainable forest management;
24. Calls on the Commission to support the Member States' efforts to mobilise wood resources in forests and to overcome the structural disadvantages of smaller forestry undertakings in relation to the utilisation and marketing of their forestry products, in order to ensure the Community's long-term self-supply with regard to wood and wood products; considers, in particular, that certain obstacles to the use of wood should be removed and consideration should be given to the rules and standards governing research and development in relation to innovative uses of wood and measures to boost the skills profile; emphasises the sources of income, only partly used hitherto, offered by non-wood forest products such as cork, mushrooms and berries and the provision of services such as nature tourism and hunting, whereby game management plays a role which should not be neglected in the context of income diversification in some of the Member States within the meaning of Article 33, indents 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 and 11 of Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999;
25. Calls on the Commission and Member States to include in the EU action plan for sustainable forest management effective measures to avert dangers and cope with serious disasters (fires, storms, insect infestations); reminds the Member States to implement the measures to prevent forest fires provided for in rural development programmes and considers it vital that the EU action plan for sustainable forest management should cover the whole value chain from forests to wood and forest industry products;
26. Calls on the Commission to take account of the economic potential for afforestation of each region's native species, as well as the potential of natural forests and all the environmental products and benefits they provide for rural areas; considers that, to this end, a study should be made of the necessary measures to support producers;
27. Calls on the Commission to draw up the necessary studies on the fiscal measures which may be taken by the individual Member States with a view to applying positive differentiation with regard to taxation for producers who have fewer negative impacts on the environment; takes the view that the implementation of measures aimed at the prevention of fires and desertification, afforestation with native species, the promotion of biodiversity, the sustainable management of natural forests and the fostering of environmental benefits such as protection for water systems and the combating of erosion represent positive externalities which such producers provide to society and for which they should be duly compensated;

28. Considers that the provision of support, particularly to promote environmental conservation measures and rural areas, should not be made dependent on the form of ownership of the forests concerned, and that all forests should be treated equally;

*Strategy element 9: Promoting forest-related research and development*

29. Calls for an increase in promotion of forest-related research and development work and more recognition of the multifunctional role played by forests, particularly with regard to the sustainable development of biodiversity, by including key forestry research projects in the 7th Framework Programme or in the corresponding programmes in the Member States, and by supporting the forests/wood/paper technology platform which has already been launched;

*Strategy element 10: Promoting sustainable forest management by means of training and further training programmes*

30. Calls on the Member States, in particular, to ensure that European training and further training programmes (Leonardo, Erasmus, etc.) provided by the European Union are put to more use than hitherto in the forest-based sector;
31. Underlines that the support of forest owners in terms of education, capacity building, information activity and advisory services will be a prerequisite for the sustainable use of forests in the context of rural development;

*Strategy element 11: Promoting sustainable forest management by means of information and communication strategies*

32. Welcomes the efforts of European forestry undertakings to give consumers assurances concerning sustainable forest management which takes account of the multifunctional role of forests, notably by means of certified wood products; considers the FSC and PEFC certification systems to be equally suitable for this purpose; calls for mutual recognition of the two certification initiatives to be promoted;

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33. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.