

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2014/2223(INI)	Procedure completed
New EU forest strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector		
Subject 3.10.11 Forestry policy 3.70.01 Protection of natural resources: fauna, flora, nature, wildlife, countryside; biodiversity		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Agriculture and Rural Development		05/11/2014
		 KÖSTINGER Elisabeth	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 NOICHL Maria	
		 MCINTYRE Anthea	
		 MÜLLER Ulrike	
		 ERIKSSON Peter	
		 D'AMATO Rosa	
		Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion
	 Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (Associated committee)		12/11/2014
		 GAMBUS MILLET Francisco de Paula	
	 Industry, Research and Energy		07/11/2014
		 GRÓBARCZYK Marek Józef	
European Commission	Commission DG Agriculture and Rural Development	Commissioner HOGAN Phil	

Key events			
20/09/2013	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2013)0659	Summary

17/12/2014	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
17/12/2014	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
24/03/2015	Vote in committee		
07/04/2015	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0126/2015	Summary
27/04/2015	Debate in Parliament		
28/04/2015	Results of vote in Parliament		
28/04/2015	Decision by Parliament	T8-0109/2015	Summary
28/04/2015	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2014/2223(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AGRI/8/02176

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2013)0659	20/09/2013	EC	Summary
Committee draft report		PE544.341	10/12/2014	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE546.840	30/01/2015	EP	
Committee opinion	ENVI	PE544.461	25/02/2015	EP	
Committee opinion	ITRE	PE544.346	26/02/2015	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0126/2015	07/04/2015	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0109/2015	28/04/2015	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2015)461	22/09/2015	EC	

New EU forest strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector

PURPOSE: to present a new EU Strategy for forests and the forest-based sector.

BACKGROUND: covering over 40% of the EUs land area, forests are an essential resource for improving the quality of life and creating employment, particularly in rural areas, whilst protecting ecosystems and ensuring ecological gains for all.

While the Treaty on the Functioning the EU makes no reference to specific provisions for an EU forest policy, the EU has a long history of contributing through its policies to implementing sustainable forest management and to Member States decisions on forests.

The current Strategy dates from 1998. Based on cooperation between EU and Member States, (subsidiarity and shared responsibility), it established a framework for forest-related actions that support sustainable forest management. The [Forest Action Plan 2007-2011](#) was an important instrument for implementing the strategy.

Over the last 15 years, significant societal and political changes have influenced the way EU society looks at forests and forestry. The overall situation is characterised by growing demands on and threats to forests.

A new framework is needed to:

- ensure that the multifunctional potential of EU forests is managed in a sustainable and balanced way, enabling our forests vital ecosystem services to function correctly ;
- satisfy the growing demand for raw material for existing and new products (e.g. green chemicals or textile fibres) and for renewable energy ;
- respond to the challenges and opportunities that forest-based industries face ;
- protect forests and biodiversity from the significant effects of storms and fires, increasingly scarce water resources, and pests.

CONTENT: the Commission presents a strategy aiming to put forests and the forest sector at the heart of the path towards a green economy and to value the benefits that forests can sustainably deliver, while ensuring their protection.

The new strategy has been formulated by the Commission with close cooperation with Member States. It revolves around eight areas for action :

- support rural development, particularly through the use of rural development funds to ensure the sustainable management of forests ;
- foster the competitiveness and sustainability of the EUs forest-based industries, bio-energy and the wider green economy ;
- maintain and enhance the resilience of forests regarding climate change, including through fire prevention and other adaptive solutions (e.g. appropriate species, plant varieties, etc.) ;
- protect forests and enhance ecosystem services: the strategy supports the use of Forest Management Plans which are at the core of both the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy and EU Rural Development funding;
- improve the knowledge base on forests to better understand the complex environmental and societal challenges facing the forest sector ;
- stimulate innovation across the forest sector through EU framework programmes for research and development ;
- work to manage forests coherently and better understand them through improving coordination with policies relating to forests, cooperation regarding forest governance and communication with respect to the public;
- ensure consistency between EU and Member State policies and commitments on forest-related issues at international level.

A review will be carried out by 2018 to assess progress in implementing the strategy.

New EU forest strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted the own-initiative report by Elisabeth KÖSTINGER (PPE, AT) on A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector.

The Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety exercised its prerogative as an associated committee in line with [Article 54 of the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament](#), was also consulted for an opinion on this report.

Members welcomed the Commission communication on a new EU forest strategy and the accompanying working documents, and stressed that an EU forest strategy must i) focus on the sustainable management of forests and their multifunctional role from the economic, social and environmental viewpoints and ii) must ensure better coordination and communication of Community policies directly or indirectly linked to forestry.

The parliamentary committee oppose any attempt to make forestry a matter of EU policy and demand that the sectors local and regional basis and the competence of the Member States in this be respected.

The report stresses the important role of the sustainable production and use of timber for the development of sustainable economic models and the creation of green jobs. It calls on the Commission to analyse the difficulties in the downstream supply chain related to increased demand from third countries, particularly for roundwoods, and to support this sector.

Given that around 60% of the EUs forests are private, with about 16 million private forest owners, Members underline the importance of ownership and property rights and supports all measures enabling stakeholder groups to participate in a dialogue on reinforcing and implementing sustainable forest management and improve the exchange of information.

Resource efficiency timber as a sustainable raw material (sustainable forest management): the report stresses that both the use of timber as a renewable raw material and sustainable forest management have an important role to play in the achievement of the EUs socio-political goals such as the energy transition, climate mitigation and adaptation to it. Lack of active forest management would be inimical to these goals.

Members support the resource-efficient use of timber as a renewable, versatile raw material with limited availability, and oppose legally binding rules for prioritising the uses of wood.

The report supports the Commissions intention to develop, together with the Member States and stakeholders, an ambitious, objective and demonstrable set of criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of forests. They underline that these criteria should be aligned with the requirements of Forest Europe towards a European Forest Convention as a binding framework for sustainable forest management and for improving the balance of interests in forest policy. They call on the Member States and the Commission to make all necessary efforts to resume these negotiations and drive them forward to a successful conclusion.

Members consider that forest management plans can be important strategic instruments for the implementation of sustainable forest management in European forests. The Member States, in line with the subsidiarity and proportionality principles, are called on to monitor and promote the implementation of the forest management plans without creating unnecessary administrative burdens. The forest management plans and the management plans under Natura 2000 should remain separate.

Research and development education and training: the report stresses the significant role that the bioeconomy plays in terms of achieving the Commissions new priorities of growth, employment and investment. The bioeconomy represented in 2009 a market estimated to be worth over EUR 2 trillion, providing 20 million jobs and accounting for 9 % of total employment in the EU.

The Commission is called on: i) to assess, from the point of view of forestry and wood working priorities, the European R&D programmes (Horizon 2020) and the programme for the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME); ii) to develop new instruments for the forest-based sector; and iii) to promote targeted research into cost-effective solutions for new and innovative timber products to support the development of the sustainable wood-based bioeconomy.

Members called on the Commission and the Member States to devise measures and, where possible, to use existing European instruments to support generation renewal and compensate for the skilled workforce shortage in the forests.

In addition, they judge it important: i) to promote the sustainable use of forest products in the construction sector, including application to the construction of more affordable houses built from sustainably sourced raw materials; ii) to encourage scientific research work oriented towards rational use of biomass.

Global challenges - environment and climate change: the Commission and the Member States are called on to take specific action with a view to achieving Aichi Target 5, under which the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, should be at least halved by 2020 and where feasible brought close to zero.

Members expressed serious concern at the pace of world deforestation, particularly in developing countries. They called on the Commission to develop an action plan on deforestation and forest degradation. They take the view that certain issues affect the forestry industry at global level, particularly illegal felling, and therefore calls on the Commission to reinforce support for the forestry industry among the associated international bodies.

New EU forest strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector

The European Parliament adopted by 566 votes to 66, with 45 abstentions, a resolution on a new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector.

The resolution welcomed the Commission communication on a new EU forest strategy and the accompanying working documents, and stressed that an EU forest strategy must i) focus on the sustainable management of forests and their multifunctional role from the economic, social and environmental viewpoints and ii) must ensure better coordination and communication of Community policies directly or indirectly linked to forestry.

Recalling that the Member States decide policy approaches in this area, Parliament opposed to any attempt to make forestry a matter of EU policy. It demands that the sectors local and regional basis and the competence of the Member States in this be respected.

The resolution stressed the important role of the sustainable production and use of timber for the development of sustainable economic models and the creation of green jobs. It called on the Commission to analyse the difficulties in the downstream supply chain related to increased demand from third countries, particularly for roundwoods, and to support this sector.

Parliament underlined the possibility for Member States and regions i) to use funding available in their respective rural development programmes, ii) to support sustainable forest management and to stimulate agroforestry, iii) to provide public environmental goods such as the production of oxygen, reducing the level of CO₂ and the crop protection against the effects of climate change.

Given that around 60% of the EUs forests are private, with about 16 million private forest owners, Members underlined the importance of ownership and property rights and supported all measures enabling stakeholder groups to participate in a dialogue on reinforcing and implementing sustainable forest management and improve the exchange of information.

Resource efficiency timber as a sustainable raw material (sustainable forest management): the resolution stressed that both the use of timber as a renewable raw material and sustainable forest management have an important role to play in the achievement of the EUs socio-political goals such as the energy transition, climate mitigation and adaptation to it. Lack of active forest management would be inimical to these goals.

Parliament supported the Commissions intention to develop, together with the Member States and stakeholders, an ambitious, objective and demonstrable set of criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of forests. In this context, they called on the Member States and the Commission to make all necessary efforts to resume these negotiations (already well advanced) within the requirements of Forest Europe towards a European Forest Convention as a binding framework for sustainable forest management and for improving the balance of interests in forest policy.

In line with the subsidiarity and proportionality principles, the Member States are called on to monitor and promote the implementation of the forest management plans without creating unnecessary administrative burdens.

Research and development education and training: Parliament stressed the significant role that the bioeconomy plays in terms of achieving the Commissions new priorities of growth, employment and investment. The bioeconomy represented in 2009 a market estimated to be worth over EUR 2 trillion, providing 20 million jobs and accounting for 9% of total employment in the EU.

The Commission is called on:

- to assess, from the point of view of forestry and wood working priorities, the European R&D programmes (Horizon 2020) and the programme for the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME);
- to develop new instruments for the forest-based sector;
- to promote targeted research into cost-effective solutions for new and innovative timber products to support the development of the sustainable wood-based bioeconomy;
- to devise measures and, where possible, to use existing European instruments to support generation renewal and compensate for the skilled workforce shortage in the forests in developing programmes of training in particular those intended for young foresters.

Welcoming the efforts made by the Commission to set up a European information system on forests, Members recommended provision of more sets of long-term data to help understand trends in forestry.

In addition, they judge it important: i) to promote the sustainable use of forest products in the construction sector, including application to the construction of more affordable houses built from sustainably sourced raw materials; ii) to encourage scientific research work oriented towards rational use of biomass.

Global challenges - environment and climate change: the Commission and the Member States are called on to take specific action with a view to achieving Aichi Target 5, under which the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, should be at least halved by 2020 and where feasible brought close to zero.

Parliament called on the Commission to finalise the review of the efficiency of the [EU Regulation on wood](#), which aims to combat illegal logging and the placement of illegal timber on the EU market, to develop an action plan to prevent deforestation and degradation of forests and to strengthen the support for the forest sector in related international bodies.