



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



**2758th AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES Council meeting  
Luxembourg, 24 and 25 October 2006**

**Council Conclusions on  
the EU Forest Action Plan 2007 - 2011**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING the Council Resolution of 15 December 1998 on a forestry strategy for the European Union and the Conclusions on the EU Forest Action Plan adopted by the Council on 30 May 2005;

MINDFUL of the multifunctional role of forests and the importance of a balanced approach with regard to further developing the economic, social, environmental and cultural dimensions of forests, in order to foster sustainable forest management;

BEARING IN MIND that conditions and challenges with regard to forests and forest coverage are widely divergent throughout the EU and that Community-level actions affecting the forest sector should be complementary in nature and in line with the principle of subsidiarity;

RECOGNISING that many Community policies have a direct or indirect impact on Member States' forest policies and acknowledging, in this respect, the continued need for coordination, communication and cooperation within the Commission, between the Commission and Member States, as well as between the Member States;

UNDERLINES the important contribution forests and forestry can make to achieving the objectives of both the renewed Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs, in particular in rural areas, and the renewed Sustainable Development Strategy;

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EMPHASISES that forestry measures which can cause market distortion should be avoided;

STRESSES, as regards the economic dimension of forests, that the forest sector is an important sector in the EU contributing to the security of raw material supply in the EU, as well as providing a source of income for many forest owners and an important source of employment, especially in rural areas;

RECOGNISES, in this respect, the importance of enhancing long-term competitiveness of the forest sector and the forest-based industries in Europe, in particular against the background of globalisation;

STRESSES, as regards the environmental and ecological dimension of forests, the important contribution forests can make to the fulfilment of the EU's environmental objectives and international commitments, particularly with regard to preserving biodiversity, mitigating climate change, preserving water resources, and combating erosion and desertification;

UNDERLINES the importance of enhancing the protection of forests against biotic and abiotic agents, including forest fires;

RECOGNISES, as regards the social and cultural dimensions of forests, the influence of trees and woodlands on people and quality of life, as well as their significance as cultural heritage;

EMPHASISES the importance of supporting and fulfilling EU commitments made at global and regional level, and a strengthened role of the EU in forest-related international processes through a coordinated approach and in particular underlines the importance of the linkages between the EU Forest Action Plan and global and regional forest related commitments<sup>1</sup>;

WELCOMES the cross-sectoral approach taken by all relevant Commission services to co-operate in the preparation of the EU Forest Action Plan, recognising the important links to other EU policies and strategies;

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<sup>1</sup> In particular the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) and the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE)

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WELCOMES the Communication on the EU Forest Action Plan submitted by the Commission on 15 June 2006, which complements and builds upon the EU Forestry Strategy of 1998 and consists of a set of key actions to be implemented jointly by the Commission and the Member States using existing means, with the overall objective of supporting the multifunctional role of forests and enhancing sustainable forest management in the Member States, and enabling the EU to fulfil its international commitments relating to forests;

INVITES THE COMMISSION AND MEMBER STATES:

- a) to ensure jointly the effective and balanced implementation of the key actions set out in the EU Forest Action Plan, *inter alia*, by preparing a work programme, which specifies the actions and their respective time frames, and by establishing coherence and synergy with other relevant Community initiatives, in particular the Biomass Action Plan, the EU FLEGT Action Plan, the Biodiversity Action Plan to 2010 and beyond, the Community strategic guidelines for rural development, the 7<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programme and the Commission's forthcoming Communication on the competitiveness of the forest-based industries;
- b) to pay particular attention to the following actions while implementing the Action Plan:
  - strengthening forest-related research and innovation under the 7th Research Framework Programme and supporting the implementation of the Forest-Based Sector Technology Platform, *inter alia*, by providing adequate resources to that effect, with a view to developing new and innovative concepts and technologies for the forest sector;
  - examining the on-going activities regarding the valuation of and compensation for provision of non-wood forest goods and services, which are not already marketed and taking stock of the existing information with special focus on developing innovative mechanisms for compensating or marketing such goods and services and on the identification of possible constraints;
  - making the best use of the contribution of forests and forest products in the mitigation of climate change and promoting the adaptation of forests to climate change, also with a view to successfully fulfilling the EU's commitments under international agreements, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol;
  - working towards achieving the EU biodiversity objectives outlined in the Commission Communication on Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010 and beyond;

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- promoting wood as a renewable raw material, *inter alia*, by information exchange, by evaluating the main constraints in this field and by linking to relevant Community industry sector policies and actions to support a wide-spread, efficient and cost-effective use of wood and other forest products;
  - further developing and increasing the use of forest biomass and wood residues in energy production, based on the principles of sustainable forest management and with particular attention to developing sustainable production patterns, information gathering and use of data concerning the availability, appropriate mobilisation of forest biomass and the raw material needs of the forest-based industries;
  - making the best use of the contribution of forests to combat desertification, preserving water resources and protecting soils, taking into account the EU Water Framework Directive and the Convention to Combat Desertification;
  - improving the quality of life in urbanised areas;
  - further elaborating a European forest monitoring system which would provide, on a comprehensive basis policy-relevant information on forests, making the best use of the indicators for sustainable forest management endorsed by the 4th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, taking into consideration the existing work and structures;
  - continuing, within the framework of the FLEGT Action Plan and the St. Petersburg Ministerial Declaration (ENA-FLEG), the efforts to combat trade in illegally logged timber and the problems associated with illegal logging;
  - exchanging ideas and experiences on the national public procurement criteria for legal and sustainable timber, as well as considering the possibility of achieving better compatibility with each other;
  - strengthening the EU profile in international forest-related processes by intensifying coordination and cooperation on activities and instruments that aim to achieve sustainable forest management worldwide, as well as by better integrating forest policy concerns into the EU's international development policies.
- c) to implement the EU Forest Action Plan in an open and transparent way, collaborating closely with stakeholders, exchanging experience and information, and communicating actively to the general public.

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INVITES THE COMMISSION:

- a) to further improve coordination and cooperation between the various fields of Community policy that are relevant to forests, and to continue a cross-sectoral approach, supported by the envisaged appointment of coordinators for forest-related policies in the Commission departments concerned;
- b) to strengthen the role of the Standing Forestry Committee, by assigning it a general coordinating role in the implementation of the EU Forest Action Plan, including ongoing work on forest monitoring, by improving its working methods, by enhancing its advisory role in all forest-related issues at EU level, and by continuing close collaboration with the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork, the Advisory Committee on Community Policy regarding Forestry and Forest-based Industries and other relevant expert groups;
- c) to provide, within existing resources and instruments, adequate support to the implementation of the EU Forest Action Plan;
- d) to carry out a mid-term evaluation of the Action Plan in 2009 and to report to the Council on the implementation of the Action Plan by 2012.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES:

- a) to make the best use of the range of forestry measures available within the framework of the Community's rural development policy for the period 2007 – 2013, including afforestation, forest restoration and agro-forestry, for implementing the key actions set out in the EU Forest Action Plan;
- b) to make full use of the new financial instrument for the environment - LIFE+ - in order to improve forest monitoring, enhance the protection of forests and sustain the protective functions and biodiversity of forests;
- c) to make use of the wide range of opportunities provided by other Community instruments, such as the 7th Research Framework Programme, European Regional Development Fund, Intelligent Energy-Europe Programme in the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, and Community programmes in the field of education;
- d) to incorporate the key actions set out in the Action Plan, as appropriate, into their national and regional strategies (e.g. National Forest Programme, National Climate Change Strategy, National Energy Strategy, National Biodiversity Strategy, National Strategy for Sustainable Development);

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- e) to foster cooperation of forest owners and their associations and enhance education and training in the forest sector in order to enhance efficient and sustainable management of forest resources and strengthen the competitiveness and economic viability of the forest sector;
  - f) to continue to seek areas for cooperation in implementing actions under the Action Plan and to promote the exchange of ideas and experiences with the aim of increasing their positive impacts."
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