

Feasibility Study on means of combating forest dieback in the European Union

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Annex III

Forest Dieback Workshop – Report – October 2007



Forest Dieback Workshop, 6-7 September 2007, Hamburg

Submitted by:



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Introduction

In order to discuss the main outputs of the *Feasibility Study on means of combating forest dieback in the European Union* with different experts and MS representatives a 2-days workshop was conducted in Hamburg at the 6-7 September 2007. The workshop brought together different representatives of selected EU Member States (Ministries), stakeholder representatives, representatives of the Commission services and experts from the scientific community, including experts on forest policy, monitoring and funding (see Annex: List of Participants). Due to the limited financial capacities to conduct the workshop the Commission requested to limit the number of MS representatives in order to maintain a balance between government representatives and other members of the group. These MS have been selected to represent a broad range of environmental conditions and socio-economic situations in Europe.

The main topics of the workshop were:

- Reviewing and discussing the current status of forest condition in the EU (taking the study review as a basis)
- Discuss and evaluate current instruments and support mechanisms available at regional, national and EU level
- Investigating a coherent approach on how best EU instruments could most effectively be utilised to combat forest dieback
- Discuss and evaluate different options and potentials to establish a specialised entity on forest protection.

The workshop served as a platform to validate the success and deficiencies in implementing Commission regulations at national and sub-national level and thus provided input on future EC policies and measures, specifically towards the objective of combating forest dieback.

Workshop Agenda

- 1) Introduction and Welcome, Workshop & Project Background (A. Requardt/ M. Köhl)
- 2) Reviewing and discussing the current status of forest condition in the EU
 - Brief Overview - Forest Condition in EU (J. Poker)
 - How does climate change affect European forests and how to deal with it? (M. Dobbertin/ J. Eichhorn)
 - Storms – Where to what scale a disaster and how to deal with it? (P. Brang)
 - ForestFire – To what scale a disaster? To what scale under control? (J.C. Valette)
- 3) Discuss and evaluate current instruments and support mechanisms available at national, international and EU level to combat forest dieback (aspects to be considered are: *prevention, mitigation and control*)
 - Relevant processes and activities at international level – Overview (G. Janse)
 - Relevant instruments and programmes at EU level – Overview (A. Requardt)
 - Relevant instruments and programmes at national level – Lessons learned from selected Case Studies (Finland, Germany, Spain) (A. Schuck)
 - The relevance of Rural Development Regulation for combating forest dieback in the EU (see EAGGF/EARDF) (L. Cesaro/ F. Setzer)

Forest Condition Monitoring within the EU

 - ForestFocus review (J. Derome)
 - LIFE+ (Z. Rakonczay)
 - FUTMON (M. Lorenz)
- 4) Investigating a coherent approach on how best EU instruments could most effectively be utilised to combat forest dieback
 - Situation and Demands from the Private Forest Sector (J. Näräkkä, CEPF)
 - Situation and Demands from the State Forest Sector (E. Kosenkranius, EUSTAFOR)
 - Evaluation and Outcome of the ForestDieback questionnaire (G. Janse)
- 5) Discuss and evaluate different needs and options for National- or a specific EU Forest Protection Strategy
 - Short Input by the national representatives:
 - Finland (A. Vehiviläinen)
 - France (F. Carouille)
 - Slovenia (J. Jaksa/ P. Simonic)
 - Greece (E. Nikolaou)
 - Portugal (M.C. Varela)
- 6) Discuss and evaluate different options and potentials to establish a specialised entity on forest protection, a) Tasks and Objectives, b) Structure and Organisation

Workshop Discussion Paper

Lessons learned

Damaging agents in European Forests – Observations on needs for action

Abiotic damage and fire need special attention due to their catastrophic nature. Forest stability improving measures and restoration measures are supported by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Fire prevention is subject of several funding programmes, but is still a problem since forestry measures are not necessarily linked to fire prevention measures even in fire prone zones. In case of emergencies, the European Union Solidarity Fund plays a major role.

Biotic damaging agents, namely insects, diseases and wildlife grazing can have considerable impact on forest health. Mitigation measures do exist which are supported for example by the EAFRD. Impact assessment and evaluation reports, however, rarely mention phytosanitary measures. Forest protection measures are mostly not further specified.

The following two forest damage agents are considered as agents which can be controlled to a high degree based on a good legal framework and established structures: invasive species and silvicultural losses due to low quality forest reproductive materials. In addition positive responses on effective mitigation measures exist from all Member States towards a positive development of air pollution damage (see ICP Forests Conditions Reports).

Facts

- Forest condition is an indicator for environmental impacts which affect human welfare. Thus, combating forest deterioration is a contribution to human safety and well-being and the sustainable development of Europe.
- All Member States face economic and ecological losses due to forest damage.
- The EU supports forestry measures mainly by the EAFRD, although national strategy plans have been established. The support by the EU is not necessarily specifically targeted at damage types and does not particularly address the objective of combating forest deterioration.
- The evaluation of the impacts of support programmes is very difficult. Monitoring tools are under development during the constant improvement of EU programmes from programming

period to programming period, but up to date the efficiency of single measures cannot be traced.

- Monitoring of forest condition is an indispensable tool to detect negative impacts and then to develop mitigation measures, e.g. supported by Forest Focus Regulation 2003- 2006. Monitoring of the effectiveness of measures is indispensable for success control.
- Member States have obligations to report on the environmental condition of their forests. The EU has to report to Multilateral Environmental Agreements. The compilation of national data at European and international level with regards to forest damage is in cases often incomplete, inconsistent or not compatible (see aspects of data quality).
- Whereas the obligation towards the CLRTAP of the UNECE remains unchanged, regular co-financing for the monitoring on Level I and Level II by the EC has stopped with the expiration of Forest Focus at the end of 2006. The new LIFE+ programme (2007-2013) will support selected monitoring projects and different fire prevention measures besides other activities.
- ICP Forests established a Europe wide network of sample plots and initiated harmonised international cooperation (based on the political mandates of UNECE and EC). Without EU co-financing, this network may face difficulties in being maintained. Level I assessments are regarded as representative as they are based on a European wide plot network. Level II assessments which include measurements on deposition of air pollutants and their effects on increment and/ or forest biodiversity are not representative for any national and international reporting. Future potentials for monitoring forest dieback related issues are seen in identifying possible synergies between Level I, Level II and NFI assessments.
- There are numerous initiatives ongoing towards harmonising and streamlining forest monitoring, assessment and reporting processes (EC Projects, COST E43 etc.). These initiatives could be substantially supported by improved coordination of efforts.

Tasks ahead

- improve and strengthen the coordination of EU supported forest protection measures, especially preventive measures
- improve cooperation and joint coordination between DG activities (DG AGRI, DG ENV, DG JRC, DG SANCO, etc.)
- enhance transparency and coordinate support (including impact and efficiency assessment) to available funds for prevention, mitigation and control of forest damage
- support the integration of forest protection measures in national work programmes

- strengthen regional cooperation to protect trans-boundary forest areas (see damage caused by storms, insects and pests)
- strengthen cooperation and support exchange of expertise/experience of Member States which face similar problems of certain forest damage
- contribute to organise an operational platform for information storage and exchange (see e.g. JRC EFFIS, EFICP as part of a European Forest Data Centre – EFDAC) for easy access to data/information on forest damage
- develop efficient reporting procedures for meeting international reporting obligations on the forest condition
- contribute towards a harmonised comprehensive forest monitoring, scheme (see LIFE+ projects)
- work towards continuity of monitoring activities on forest damage thus allowing Member States to put in place /further develop/maintain necessary infrastructure

A specialised entity on forest protection

Overall objective:

The establishment of an entity that is responsible for the coordination of activities which improve the protection of forest against damaging agents.

Such an entity would address the following issues:

- support the coordination of forest condition monitoring, data storage and information exchange including reporting obligations towards Multilateral Environmental Agreements, specifically on the forest condition in Europe
- assist in identifying available funds to support particular forestry measures to combat forest deterioration in Member States.
- facilitate communications between forest stakeholders and the Commission services (continuing check of demand and supply).
- facilitate cooperation between forest policy, subsidy programmes and forest condition monitoring.

Options for structure and organisation could be:

- specialised entity within the Standing Forestry Committee, either
 - a) subset of SFC members or
 - b) subset of SFC members, AGFC members and scientific experts

- entity within Commission Services, like support unit of DG ENV, DG Agri, DG JRC
- joint entity of SFC and Commission services, like SFC for programming tasks, JRC or other for data coordination eventually supplemented by expert /advisory groups either already existing ones or strategically/politically important new ones
- a European Agency/ Topic Centre
- group of experts of selected MS, including experts on forest monitoring and experts on forest policy and subsidy programmes (see ICP Forests Expert Panels)
- independent advisory group, independent from Commission Services
- other...

Workshop Discussion – Summary

Item 2: Reviewing and discussing the current status of forest condition in the EU

For systematic monitoring in Europe the influence of pollution has been the initiation point for establishing the currently existing monitoring scheme. Now, 20 years later, forests are mainly threatened by climate change and loss of biodiversity. It has to be investigated in which way the monitoring scheme can be redesigned to meet new challenges. To understand the effect of climate change on forests, many new indicators are needed. The Level I network of sample plots of ICP Forest could be a good base, but modifications are needed.

Item 3: Discuss and evaluate current instruments and support mechanisms available at national, international and EU level to combat forest dieback

The participants discussed the affect of international processes and conventions on EU forest related policy. It was clearly stated that one should make a distinction between legally binding and non-legally binding processes. The convention like UNFCCC, CBD or CCD that have been signed up to are legally binding, whereas other processes such as MCPFE are non-binding and rather meant to provide a policy framework in which the EU and its MS have a *gentlemen agreement* to cooperate in decisions made when drafting national or EU level actions.

Of particular interest was to discuss the role of forestry in rural development planning. In some Member States forestry measures are of low priority in comparison to agriculture and especially environmental protection measures are regarded as rather unpopular, since they

affect only a few people directly. There was a call to set priorities at a higher level than national level which was rejected by representatives of other Member States arguing that specific problems induce specific national action and thus EU wide regulations are not needed. Still, there was agreement that a proposal for an EU policy focusing on combating forest deterioration could be acceptable for the Member States including the Nordic countries.

Another plead was made regarding a grant programme for small scale forest owners to support the use of management plans in view of the fact that well managed forests are less susceptible to damage.

Regarding financial support for forest condition monitoring, shortcomings of coordinated data evaluation were announced. Funding is available for the monitoring activities themselves and may be available for data management, but financial support is hardly ever available for a thorough data evaluation. This counts also for the new LIFE+ programme. Additionally, the access to monitoring data by the scientific community is restricted and often difficult. Participants agreed that a framework organisation/body is needed for the coordination of monitoring activities with respects to not only data assessment but also use of data, e.g. meeting other information requirements such as of the MCPFE also. It was suggested that also research projects should include explicit modules on model-development and data evaluation.

Item 4: Investigating a coherent approach on how best EU instruments could most effectively be utilised to combat forest dieback

Situation and demands from the Private Forest Sector

The representative of the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF), founded in 1994, presented the opinion of the assembling of national forest owner associations of 24 European countries. In the view of private forest owners, the situation regarding forest dieback in Europe is divers and a 'one fits all' solution does not exist. Private forest owners do much voluntary work on prevention of forest damage. Due to measures such as removing excess biomass and thinning the stands are more resilient towards fire, storm and insect outbreaks. The work is only possible when framework requirements like income from timber or non-wood forest products and respected ownership rights are fulfilled.

For private forest owners especially the Rural Development Regulation and the Forest Focus Regulation have offered important contributions to forest damage prevention, mitigation and

control. However, a lack of funding in the new Rural Development Regulation is expected. In addition, a lack of specific instruments/regulations to guarantee the support to forest damage prevention policies is feared. Member States programming concentrates on agriculture and seems to not use the possibilities provided by the Rural Development Regulation.

CEPF presented some proposals aiming at support of private forest owners in their efforts on forest protection:

- coordinated communication on EU funding instruments
- better coordination at EU-MS level with stakeholder participation
- more research on forest dieback and Climate Change
- responsible leadership in forest dieback policy at EU and MS level
- more support on capacity building actions
- support economic pillar of SFM.

The first discussion topic concerned the transparency of available EU instruments. In the view of private forest owners the information on support measures is not transparent. Though basically all information is available on the internet, the owner associations lack the resources to have experts on EU instruments like national governmental bodies have and assistance for non-experts would be needed. Nevertheless it was recognised that the Commission has no mandate to develop projects or ask for specific action in Member States.

Another aspect of the efficiency of EU support is the fact that a lot of private owners are not organised, thus they have no access to support. These unregistered owners may be responsible for a considerable amount of forest area in which problems occur, e.g. forest fires. It was acknowledged that this is an issue of certain Member States, but at the time being EU programmes do not reach all who are concerned. CEPF welcomes the proposal to establish an EU entity with responsibility for improving coordination of ongoing activities relevant for different stakeholders and Member States. In addition CEPF suggests establishing an entity with a broader scope than just combating forest deterioration.

Situation and demands from the State Forest Sector

The representative of the European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR), founded in 2005, presented the opinion of 26 members registered from 20 countries with a total forest area of about 45 Mio ha (27% of EU forest area).

EU financial instruments are mainly available for private forest owners. There are two measures which are also applicable for state forests:

- restoring forestry potential and introducing prevention actions
- support for non-productive investments.

New member states (and their state forest management organisations) have a lack of competence on EU financial instruments and they wish more guidance and co-ordination.

The efficiency of forest protection measures depends on scale economy and full utilisation of available best-practices. State forest managers have good competence and networks for forest protection and therefore they should be considered as a crucial part of large scale preventive measures. Communication on best-practices and joint financing/implementation (public-private, owners-industry) should be promoted. Concerning the restoration measures, primarily the actions to make major forest roads accessible (which has an impact to other restoration activities, wood mobilisation and human safety) should be recognised as generally efficient actions and respective financing should be available to all forest owners.

Communication on programs and available financial instruments is a crucial issue – it helps to secure:

- a) a good selection of project proposals,
- b) proper financing of most urgent needs (especially concerning restoration) and
- c) feedback/ review on needs of improvement and efficiency of actions.

EUSTAFOR welcomes the proposal to establish an entity with responsibility for the coordination of activities of forest protection. The suggestion is to consider not only protection, but also other issues such as carbon sequestration.

Item 5: Discuss and evaluate different needs and options for National- or a specific EU Forest Protection Strategy

Participants agreed that forest protection measures and accompanying monitoring activities should be coordinated in some way. Still it was doubted that a national forest protection strategy would be better suited to combat forest dieback than a set of different acts, regulations and NFPs. With respect to future adaptations to climate change, needs and priorities are not clearly defined.

Following aspects were seen as crucial at EU level which again could be commonly formulated within a EU Forest Protection Strategy:

- improved coordination of forestry measures keeping in mind the principle of subsidiarity
- improved coordination of financial instruments (e.g. one financial instrument exclusively relevant for various forestry measures)
- coordination and harmonisation of data on forest condition, including the support for the assessment of lacking information like on bark beetle populations and related damage; developing a common EU set of forest condition indicators, but with the option of extension at national level.
- coordination of reporting requirements; strategic document on requirements for long-term activities with respect to forest monitoring
- coordination of information distribution to forest owners on SFM and fire management

Item 6: Discuss and evaluate different options and potentials to establish a specialised entity on forest protection

The issue of a new entity/body for forest protection at EU level was debated cautiously. Tasks and objectives as presented in the Workshop Discussion Paper were accepted. Participants preferred to imbed the task of assistance/guidance/support on forest protection into existing bodies like JRC, the DGs and SFC.

CEPF and EUSTAFOR supported the idea of an entity based at DG AGRI since the Rural Development Regulation is the most important funding instrument for forestry. They suggested that the entity should include Member State and stakeholder representation and work closely with the SFC. The entity should have a mandate to have influence. Data coordination on forest condition should be based at the JRC.

All participants concluded that e.g. an EU advisory group or any other organisation form, which brings together various scientific experts and MS and stakeholder representatives working on a) EU forest related policy, b) forest condition monitoring and c) funding for forestry measures, would be highly beneficial for combating forest dieback effectively. This would contribute also to improve the coordination of EU forestry related tasks and objectives in future. A continuous dialogue with different experts and MS representatives on this particular topic is very welcome. The *Feasibility Study on means of combating forest dieback in the European Union* and the Forest Dieback Workshop in Hamburg September 2007 was

seen by all workshop participants as highly relevant and a good start for providing new input and support to the various ongoing activities of preventing, mitigating and control forest dieback within the EU.

Annex: List of Participants – Forest Dieback Workshop, Hamburg 2007

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