

**Opinion of the Standing Forestry Committee
regarding the role of forests and forest sector in bioeconomy**

10 October 2017

- Recalling the EU Bioeconomy Strategy which states: *“The bioeconomy encompasses the production of renewable biological resources and their conversion into food, feed, bio-based products and bioenergy. It includes agriculture, forestry, fisheries, food and pulp and paper production, as well as parts of chemical, biotechnological and energy industries.”*;
- recalling the EU Forest Strategy which states: *“Forest-based biomass, together with non-wood forest products, which are gaining market interest, provide opportunities to maintain or create jobs diversify income in a low-carbon, green economy.”*;
- recalling the Paris Agreement which states: *“Parties should take action to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases.”*;
- emphasizing that bioeconomy is a key concept for enabling the transition to a low carbon economy, combating climate change and reaching the sustainable development goals;
- taking into account that bioeconomy is a crosscutting issue and requires coherent, interdisciplinary and complementary approaches among different policies;
- considering that forests are a primary source of natural capital and provide a range of ecosystem services;
- noting the commitment of Member States and the EU to the concept of sustainable forest management as defined by Forest Europe to ensure the benefits of forests are delivered in a balanced way;
- acknowledging that the forest and forest-based sector are an integral component of the bioeconomy;
- acknowledging that the forest and forest-based sector can contribute to increase the use of renewable material by other sectors;
- being mindful that any advancement of scientific knowledge with the view to innovation is fundamental both towards the further implementation of sustainable forest management as well as the development of a bioeconomy;
- acknowledging and respecting different conditions and approaches in the Member States to address bioeconomy;
- respecting Member States competence in forestry, the principle of subsidiarity and the need to minimise regulatory burden;

the Standing Forestry Committee is of the opinion that the European Commission should revise the EU Bioeconomy Strategy, to take into account the following:

1. Sustainably managed forests and the forest-based sector can provide multiple jobs and generate relevant income and wealth to society from the production of renewable resources and products, including a wide array of ecosystem services, contributing significantly to the rural development. Moreover, sustainably managed forests and sustainably produced wood-based products can significantly contribute to the reduction of CO₂ from the atmosphere by storing, sequestering and substituting fossil based carbon. Thus the full potential of the forest and forest-based sector contribution to a EU bioeconomy should be used and further developed.
2. To further promote and maximise the contribution of the forest and forest-based sector to the EU bioeconomy strengthened efforts are needed in areas like:
 - a. Sustainable production and mobilisation of renewable resources and increased provision of the forest ecosystems services;
 - b. new innovative business strategies, value chains and green jobs, particular in rural areas including a focus on small-scale entities;
 - c. research, innovation and development as well as investments in new technologies, pilot and demonstration facilities, spin-offs and start-ups and a wide range of competitive forest-based products;
 - d. promotion of the sustainable production and consumption of wood in all relevant sectors (such as in construction, energy, chemical or textile industry), highlighting the renewability of the material and its carbon storage and substitution function in all production stages and with this securing a broader and more diversified scope as an opportunity for transformation, also bearing in mind the possibilities of circular economy;
 - e. awareness-raising on forests' potential for the increase of jobs and new business models, also in non-wood based sectors such as tourism, recreation or human health;
 - f. comprehensive dialogue of all relevant actors along the value chain.
3. With respect to the need of increasing forest productivity as well as resilience towards climate change and promoting biodiversity related goals more research, innovation and development is specifically needed in the field of forest genetics, plant health and breeding.
4. With respect to new products and value chains more research, innovation and development is particularly needed in the construction sector and the use of hard wood.
5. The SFC sees the need to update the European Union's definition of bioeconomy, which should also include services.
6. When developing new research innovation programmes in the framework of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy, the SFC sees the need to move from basic research towards

implementation, technology transfer, developing new business models, production lines and lines of investment and thus profiting from an innovative bioeconomy at each stage of the value chain – which also means a more consolidated collaboration between research and other stakeholders as well as a stronger involvement of other DGs apart from DG RTD at European Commission level.