



## Commission proposes comprehensive monitoring to improve resilience of European forests

Brussels, 22 November 2023

The Commission is proposing a **Forest Monitoring Law** that will **plug existing gaps in the information on European forests and create a comprehensive forest knowledge base**, to allow Member States, forest owners and forest managers to improve their response to growing pressures on forests and strengthen forest resilience.

Forests are an **essential ally in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss**, and crucial for flourishing rural areas and bioeconomy. Unfortunately, Europe's forests suffer from many different pressures, including climate change and unsustainable human activity.

**Better monitoring** will enable action to make forests more resistant to the **cross-border threats of pests, droughts and wildfires** that are **exacerbated by climate change, enable new business models such as carbon farming, and support compliance with agreed EU legislation**. Ultimately, it will help strengthen the capacity of forests to **fulfil their multiple environmental and socio-economic functions**, including their role as **natural carbon sinks**.

### **Better data, improved resilience, new economic opportunities**

The monitoring framework will enable the **collection and sharing of timely and comparable forest data** obtained through a combination of Earth Observation technology and ground measurements. **Building on existing national efforts**, the framework will **offer better data and knowledge for decision making and policy implementation**, including more up-to-date information on natural disturbances and forest disasters across Member States.

Currently, available information on the state of forests and the use of forest resources and services is scattered and incomplete, data on EU forests is often outdated and produced using diverging definitions, resulting in **significant knowledge gaps**. A comprehensive monitoring system will address those inconsistencies.

The framework will **help to create an integrated forest governance**, by ensuring cooperation among Member States, and by encouraging them to set up long-term forest plans, taking into account all the relevant policy dimensions and the multi-functionality of forests. The proposal does not introduce new direct administrative requirements for businesses, forest owners and foresters.

The framework will bring economic benefits as it will **support forest managers to market their ecosystem services, such as carbon removals**, under the [EU Carbon Removal Certification Framework](#). Based on more credible and accessible data, forest managers and forest owners will be able to develop **new business opportunities that will provide additional income**, while at the same time scaling up carbon farming and contributing to climate mitigation and adaptation. The new law will also support a **new market for providers of digital monitoring services**, including a high number of SMEs and innovative start-ups.

Finally, the proposal will support the implementation of other key legislation, such as the [LULUCF Regulation](#), [Habitats](#) and [Birds Directives](#), [Deforestation Regulation](#), as well as [Carbon Removal Certification](#), and the [Nature Restoration Law](#) once adopted by the co-legislators.

As part of its wider work under the [EU Forest Strategy](#), the Commission also adopted today a proposal for an updated EU Forest Governance, which aims at creating a renewed, inclusive and inter-disciplinary Expert Group of Member States competent on all forest and forestry matters, reflecting all the environmental, social and economic objectives of the EU Forest Strategy.

### **Managing increasing pressures on forest**

The proposal comes in the context of **increasing pressures on forests**. The Commission is publishing today a [report on Forest Fires in Europe, Middle East and North Africa 2022](#), which shows that in 2022, nearly 900 000 ha of land was burnt in the EU, which corresponds to roughly the size of Corsica.

For the third year in a row, **unprecedented wildfire events caused large environmental and economic damage in the EU and tragic loss of life**. While most of the fires (96%) are caused by human actions, they are aggravated by increased fire danger conditions driven by climate change. It is a warning signal of what global warming can bring about in the coming years, as temperatures increase, and droughts become more pronounced in many European countries. The report also shows that prevention measures play an important role in reducing the frequency and impact of the forest fires, and that updated knowledge is key to ensure it.

### Next steps

The proposal will now be examined by the European Parliament and the Council under the ordinary legislative procedure.

### Background

**Forests provide invaluable environment, climate and socio-economic benefits.** They act as biodiversity hubs and habitats, provide oxygen release and air filtering, regulate waterflows, prevent erosion, and are indispensable for climate change adaptation and mitigation. They are a cornerstone of the transition to a climate-neutral Europe, the circular bioeconomy and a healthy society. According to Commission studies, the extended forest-based value chains provide raw materials such as wood, food, medical plants, cork and resin and currently support 4.5 million jobs in the EU.

However, many **forests in the EU are not in a good state overall**. They are suffering from biodiversity loss and are heavily affected by climate change, aggravating and cumulating other destructive pressures such as pests, pollution and disease. Climate change also leads to conditions such as long periods of drought and heat that are likely to **increase the extent and intensity of forest fires in the EU** in the coming years. The consequences are taking a mounting toll on forest stability and productivity, while in parallel, the **demand for forest products and services** is growing.

Reporting provided by Member States under the Land Use, Land Use Change, and Forestry (LULUCF) regulation shows that in several key areas across the European Union forests as a **natural carbon sink are declining**. In certain areas, forests have become a source of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

To stay on track, the EU must strengthen the resilience of natural ecosystems, increase their ability to help us adapt to climate change and maintain their productive capacity to ensure lasting food and material security.

Today's initiatives and their targets rely on solutions provided by nature as our best ally in the fight against climate change. They will help the EU to deliver on climate neutrality by increasing the volume of carbon removed by natural sinks. This will also contribute to the EU upholding its international commitments under both the **Paris Agreement** and the **Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework**.

### For More Information

[Question and answers](#)

[Factsheet](#)

[Proposal for Forest Monitoring Law](#)

[Report on Forest Fires in Europe, Middle East and North Africa 2022](#)

[Carbon Removal Certification \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Carbon Removal Certification \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Delivering the environmental commitments under the Green Deal](#)

IP/23/5909

### Quotes:

European forests and foresters provide us with indispensable services, from carbon storage and rich biodiversity to food, materials and space for recreation. In order to take the right decisions at the right time and ensure that forests remain healthy and resilient, public authorities, forest owners and other stakeholders need timely and high-quality forest data. The EU forest monitoring framework, inspired by the good practices of Member States, will provide just that.  
Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President for European Green deal, Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight - 22/11/2023

Forests are some of the most precious resources we have and the green lungs of our planet. We should cherish them and take very good care of them. The forest monitoring law will not only give us a clear overview of the state of European forests but also allow Member States, forest owners and forest managers to improve their response to the pressures posed by climate change. The resilience of our forests is one of our most important allies in the fight against climate change and to protect biodiversity. Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries - 22/11/2023

To fight climate change we need healthy nature. Right now, forests across Europe are struggling, including due to pests, heatwaves, and unprecedented wildfires. These are warnings of what global warming can bring about, as temperatures increase, and droughts become more pronounced and more prolonged. Our forests also absorb carbon, and we will need to increase this 'carbon sink' in the future to meet the climate targets now written into law. To take effective action we need to have the best possible and easily comparable data available. Our proposal creates opportunities for those working in the forestry sector and supports the implementation of other Green Deal legislation.

Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner for Climate Action - 22/11/2023

#### Press contacts:

[Adalbert JAHNZ](#) (+ 32 2 295 31 56)

[Tim McPHIE](#) (+ 32 2 295 86 02)

[Daniela STOYCHEVA](#) (+32 2 295 36 64)

[Ana CRESPO PARRONDO](#) (+32 2 298 13 25)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)

#### Related media

 [Aerial views of Liège province, Belgium](#)