

## Raw Materials Week 2019

18 November 2019, Le Plaza Hotel, Boulevard Adolphe Max, 1000 Brussels

### EU Forest-Based Industries: the track to 2050

#### 1. Nature of the meeting

Following from the first biotic raw materials event in 2018, this event presented the state of the EU Forest-based Industries and a vision. With representatives from academia, business, NGOs and public authorities, this meeting took stock of the current situation and showed future-oriented actions of the sector (Session I) and presented and discussed the sector-led vision to 2050 (Session II).

#### 2. Keynote speech

The keynote speeches (University of Wageningen and CEETAR, the association of Forest Contractors) addressed the current challenges of the forest-based industries from management of raw materials supply – in light of diverse management, increases in disturbances and changing raw materials quality – to attracting a skilled workforce in rural areas.

#### 3. Session I: The state of the EU forest-based sector in the wider world

The remainder of the session featured future-oriented activities of the sector:

- new developments in the use of hardwood for building materials (Baubuche)
- dedicated research to lay a foundation for a skills programme in the furniture industry (Digit-fur)
- advances in creating new solutions that can replace fossil-based products, such as foam for helmets (Stora Enso)
- efforts of the rubber-industry to address supply chain issues for a material under pressure by climate change (ETRMA)

#### Session II: How the EU F-BI will meet the challenges and reach the goals of 2050

The forest-based industries, represented by CEPI and CEI-Bois, presented the sectoral vision towards 2050 developed by the industry. Looking towards the mid-century, wood-based solutions can play a part in all aspects of society, from our built environment to food supply to our leisure activities, thereby contributing to Europe becoming carbon-neutral.

The sector also looked at transparency in the value chain, increasing circularity in the raw materials supply and pathways and goals to reduce emissions in production and mitigate climate impact.

They identified the following pathways:

- Develop markets for forest-based solutions, e.g. through life-cycle assessments and improvements in standardisation
- Ensure a sustainable supply of raw materials, e.g. through advancing circularity and availability of secondary raw materials, supply chain transparency and trade diplomacy
- Boost research and innovation, e.g. through a dedicated research agenda and access to strategic investment opportunities and funds
- Invest in cross-cutting issues such as up-and reskilling the workforce, improving the attractiveness of the sector, and closing the data gaps in the forest-based sector.

The session participants discussed the presented vision – its level of ambition, objectives and elements.

#### Panel discussion and questions

The panel gathered NGO (IUCN), trade unions (EFBWW), industry (SNCF), recyclers (SUEZ), and academia (University of Wageningen) to discuss the 2050 vision of the industry. The panellists agreed that the ambition of the vision is good, but were concerned about its operationalisation.

Among the issues discussed on this were:

- Increasing the value of natural resources and products derived from them, as well as maintaining or increasing their health
- Addressing the differences between countries and regions, e.g. on waste collection, resource management, knowledge and skills, disturbances
- Boosting the attractiveness of the sector for young people and women, and increasing health and safety for workers
- Linking to other sector and building up collaborations and ecosystems

### **Endnote speech**

The session closed with the example of the Region of North Karelia, Finland. The region invested in their resource and managed to attract expertise and bio-economy industries. With strong political will and a long-term strategy focusing on smart specialisation and clustering, the region is achieving balanced development by sustainable resource use. It is now on track to reach EU, national and regional targets and is looking to become a low-carbon region and fossil-fuel free in 2040.