

## **Stakeholder consultation of the Sixth Community Environment Action Program**

Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK) / Forestry Group and  
Environmental Policy and Land Use  
Finland

8<sup>th</sup> April, 2011

### **Framework for environment policy in EU**

The Sixth Community Environment Action Program (6th EAP) has established the framework for environment policy in European Union (EU) since 2002 and will do so until mid 2012. It has set out environmental priorities with a particular focus on climate change, nature and biodiversity, health and the quality of life as well as natural resources and waste. The program was mid-term evaluated in 2006-2007.

Challenges concerning environmental policy have increased and become more complicated. As a result of international commitments, EU has put clear goals for improved environmental condition and subsequently carried out actions to reach those goals. For example, reduction of GHGs by 20, increase of the use of renewable energy to 20 % and reduction of energy consumption by 20 % until the year 2020 are remarkable inputs in the environmental policy, which are included in Europe 2020 strategy. The Roadmap for building a competitive low-carbon Europe by 2050, that was only recently adopted by the European Commission, goes even further by seeking reduction of GHG by 25 % until the year 2020.

### **Four priorities set in the Sixth Community Environment Action Program**

In this review we focus on three priorities set in the 6th EAP, i.e. 1) climate change, 2) nature and biodiversity, and 3) environment, health and quality of life.

#### ***1) Climate change***

As reported in the mid-term review of the 6th EAP in 2007 our understanding of the risks linked to climate change has improved since the year 2002 and, therefore, our response has to be changed. **Forests and wooded land cover more than 42 % of the EU's surface and they act both as source and sink of greenhouse gases (GHG).** They affect the GHG budget through changes in forest and soil carbon stocks and delivery of biomass in order to substitute for fossil fuels and other raw materials. Delivery of biomass from forests is seen as an important part of the goal to reduce GHG and to increase the use of renewable energy. On the other hand, forests play an important role in, e.g. biodiversity protection, soil fertility, prevention of erosion, and regulation of water supply. Partly confrontation/different claims of EU environment and energy policies is more than challenging from the forests' point of view and presupposes more comprehensive approach in the future. This should not be forgotten in the preparation of the 7th EAP. This will be one focus also in the revision of Forest Strategy.

## *2) Nature and biodiversity*

Inside the EU, the **NATURA 2000 network** of protected areas sets a model for nature protection. It is, however, clear that the establishment of NATURA areas is not enough, but the areas should also be taken care of adequately. Therefore, long-span care of the NATURA areas should be included in the next EAP, rather than increasing acreage of protected areas. It is also essential to urgently review the lists of habitats and species in EU's Habitats and Birds Directive's Annexes. Current lists do not correspond with the reality of the state of these species and habitats.

At the moment, 30 % of Natura 2000 sites are forest habitats and their role will be important also in the future. However, because of the economical, ecological and social importance of forests, more effective measures should be found to ensure the preservation of biodiversity in commercial forests. This means combination of protection to every day forest management. The basic idea that is largely accepted in EU and especially in pan-European process Forest Europe is **sustainable forest management (SFM)**, which takes into account economical, ecological, social and cultural sustainability. Efforts to implement SFM practices in all MSs should be emphasized. Sustainably managed forests will have an increasing role in mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

In addition, **possibility of land owners to participate in natural values trading**, competitive tendering or to have the habitats protected for fixed period of time should be induced. In Finland the Forest Biodiversity Program for Southern Finland (METSO-program) was approved by the Government in 2002 and recently Sweden has started similar program. New means of protection make it possible to achieve biodiversity with the maximum cost-effectiveness by focusing actions to the most valuable sites.

The assessments of the impacts of the above mentioned programs show that voluntary protection of forest increases the acceptability of forest protection of forests among forest owners and makes the attitude climate more favorable towards protection of forests. In addition, impacts of protection based on forest owners' voluntary actions on round wood markets, the economy, and employment seem to be significantly lower than those of protection carried out by means of traditional protection programs.

It has been and will also be in the future important for EU to work for **prevention of deforestation and illegal logging at global level**. The EU regulation laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market was adopted in 2010 and at the moment the regulations are implemented in MS. In our work, the focus should be more in voluntary partnership agreements (VPAs) with the third countries on illegally logged timber. Only in this way we can ensure that the timber imported from those countries is legally harvested.

## *3) Environment, health and quality of life*

One part of the EU legislation to limit environmental threats to human health is the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC. As reported in the mid-term review of the 6<sup>th</sup> EAP in 2007, sufficient funding is a necessity for effective implementation of the Water Framework Directive at MS level. Insurance of funding should be emphasized in the future work.

### ***General comments***

In order to strengthen the better regulation agenda in environment policy-making the Commission focuses on e.g. the use of the market to deliver environmental results, cooperation with civil society when developing environmental policies and development of a close working relationship with industry in order to promote sustainable development agenda. It is surprising that tight collaboration with two important groups - **land owners and primary producers** – are not taken into account. Tight collaboration with them forms the bases for environment policy-making and subsequent implementation of regulations and guidelines.

European Union has actively involved in the work of **International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management** launched in 2007. The aim of the panel is to provide independent, coherent and authoritative scientific assessments of policy relevance on the sustainable use of natural resources and their environmental impacts over the full life cycle. In its work the panel seeks a holistic approach to resources management, which is needed to better identify their interlinkages and gaps. If succeeded the work of the panel is extremely important for decision making both at EU level and globally, because at the moment the EU policies related to sustainable resource management lack coherency at certain level.