



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Plenary sitting

A7-0113/2011

1.4.2011

REPORT

on the Commission Green Paper on forest protection and information in the EU: preparing forests for climate change (2010/2106(INI))

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

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(*) Associated Committee – Rule 50 of the Rules of Procedure

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(*) Associated committee - Rule 50 of the Rules of Procedures

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the Commission Green Paper on forest protection and information in the EU: preparing forests for climate change (2010/2106(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission Green Paper on forest protection and information in the EU: preparing forests for climate change (COM(2010)0066),
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 11 June 2010 on preparing forests for climate change,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 15 March 2010 on biodiversity post-2010,
- having regard to the Commission White Paper on ‘adapting to climate change: towards a European Framework for action’ (COM(2009)0147) and to its resolution of 6 May 2010¹ thereon,
- having regard to the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) - FOREST EUROPE, its various resolutions and its expert work in providing guidelines, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management (SFM),
- having regard to the Council resolution of 26 February 1999 on a Forestry Strategy for the EU² and the Commission report on its implementation (COM(2005)0084),
- having regard to the EU Forest Action Plan 2006-2011 (FAP) (COM(2006)0302) and the mid-term external evaluation of its implementation³,
- having regard to Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds⁴, the Composite Report on the Conservation Status of Habitats and Species as required under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive (COM (2009)0358) and its resolutions of 21 September 2010 on the implementation of EU legislation aiming at the conservation of biodiversity⁵ and of 3 February 2009 on wilderness in Europe⁶,
- having regard to the conclusions of the UNEP COP10 Conference on Biological Diversity in Nagoya in October 2010 and the Aichi biodiversity targets, particularly the commitment to protect 17% of terrestrial and inland water areas through effective conservation measures, integrated into the wider landscapes,
- having regard to the study entitled ‘Shaping forest communication in the European Union: public perceptions of forests and forestry’⁷,

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA-PROV(2010)0154.

² OJ C 56, 26.2.1999, p.1.

³ Service Contract No. 30-CE-0227729/00-59.

⁴ OJ L 20, 26.01.2010, p.7.

⁵ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2010)0325.

⁶ OJ C 67E, 18.3.2010, p.1.

⁷ Tender No AGRI-2008-EVAL-10 // Framework Contract No. 30-CE-0101908/00-50.

- having regard to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on ‘Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF)’,
- having regard to the EU biomass action plan (COM (2005)0628),
- having regard to Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and amending and subsequently repealing Directives 2001/77/EC and 2003/30/EC (Renewable Energy Directive)¹, Directive 2009/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 amending Directive 2003/87/EC so as to improve and extend the greenhouse gas emission allowance trading scheme of the Community (the ETS Directive)², Decision No 406/2009/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the effort of Member States to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to meet the Community’s greenhouse gas emission reduction commitments up to 2020 (the Effort Sharing Decision)³, the Commission report on sustainability requirements for the use of solid and gaseous biomass source in electricity, heating and cooling (COM (2010)0011 final), the IPCC 4th Assessment Report, Chapter 9: Forestry, and the results of public consultation on the preparation of a report for a sustainability scheme for energy uses of biomass,
- having regard to the European Climate Change Programme and the work carried out by the expert group on climate policy for LULUCF⁴,
- having regard to its studies No 449.292, assessing the Green Paper on forest protection and information in the EU, No 440.329 on forestry and the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, and No 449.237, on the European strategy for the prevention of and fight against forest fires, as well as the conclusions of the meeting of 13 July 2010 in Brussels of the Forestry Subgroup of the ‘Climate change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development’ Intergroup,
- having regard to the European Landscape Convention of 2000 (the Florence Convention),
- having regard to Council Directive 1999/105/EC on the marketing of forest reproductive material⁵ and the review of the EU Plant Health Regime,
- having regard to the synthesis report by TEEB (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity) on ‘Mainstreaming the Economics of Nature’ and the TEEB Climate Issues Update,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 26 April 2010 on prevention of forest fires within the European Union,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 8 and 9 November 2010 on innovative solutions for financing disaster prevention,

¹ OJ L 140 5.6.2009, p. 16.
² OJ L 140, 5. 6. 2009, p. 63.
³ OJ L 140, 5.6.2009, p. 136.
⁴ Report of 16/9/2010.
⁵ OJ L 11/17 15. 1. 2000

- having regard to Directive 2008/99/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on the protection of the environment through criminal law¹,
 - having regard to the report on the final implementation of the Forest Focus Regulation (COM(2010)0430),
 - having regard to the European Environment Agency (EEA) Technical Report No 9/2006, ‘European forest types: Categories and types for sustainable forest management reporting and policy’,
 - having regard to the report to the Commission DG for Agriculture and Rural Development entitled ‘Impacts of Climate Change on European Forests and Options for Adaptation’²,
 - having regard to the 2009 report to the Commission DG for Environment entitled ‘EU policy options for the protection of European forests against harmful impacts’³,
 - having regard to the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 9/2004 on ‘Forestry Measures within Rural Development Policy’ (together with the Commission’s replies),
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market⁴,
 - having regard to the recommendations of the FAO/UNECE/ILO Experts Network on implementing sustainable forest management,
 - having regard to MCPFE Helsinki Resolution H1 defining SFM as ‘the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems’,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report by its Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the opinions of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (A7-0113/2011),
- A. whereas forests and wooded land cover more than 42% of the EU’s surface, and forest-based industries, with a turnover of more than EUR 300 billion, provide more than 2 million, mostly rural, jobs, contributing to economic growth, jobs and prosperity through the provision of timber and opportunities for tourism,
- B. whereas EU forests make up totalities of biospheres comprising not merely trees, providing invaluable ecosystem services including carbon storage, watercourse regulation, landscape preservation, maintenance of soil fertility, protection of soil from erosion and desertification, and protection from natural disasters, all of which are of great significance to agriculture, rural development and the quality of life of European citizens,

¹ OJ L 328, 6.12.2008, p. 28.

² AGRI-2007-G4-06.

³ ENV.B.1/ETU/2008/0049.

⁴ OJ L 295, 12.11.2010, p. 23.

- C. whereas around 40% of the EU's forests are under public ownership and around 60% of the EU's forests are owned by more than 10 million private forest owners, so that both private and public stakeholders have a responsibility for forest protection and the sustainable use of forests through the implementation of SFM on the ground,
- D. whereas, despite alarming deforestation rates in various parts of the world, the long-term trend of increasing forest coverage in the EU is stable, and carbon in woody biomass is estimated to be expanding; whereas, despite the generally positive trend, carbon storage in forests across Europe remains far below natural capacity and could reverse to a source, as pressure to increase harvesting levels is increasing and approximately 500 000 hectares of EU forest are lost every year as a result of forest fires and illegal logging,
- E. whereas 30% of NATURA 2000 sites are forest and other wooded-land habitats, playing an important role as links in the network of biotopes; and whereas 66% of forest 'habitat types of Community interest' have unfavourable conservation status,
- F. whereas mountain forests account for one third of the total forest area in the EU and are essential to the natural landscape as they help in soil protection and regulating water supply; whereas these forests play a fundamental role in local economic activity,
- G. whereas protection of the last remaining wilderness areas can contribute to the halting of biodiversity loss and of the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020,
- H. whereas energy generation from solid biomass and biowaste is projected to be 58% of EU renewables by 2020 and, while forestry biomass share is expected to decrease in relative terms, there is a steadily increasing demand for timber as a source of energy; whereas vigilance is therefore necessary to prevent illegal logging and the intensification of forestry practices that could increase the ratio of felling to increment to over 100% in some Member States, counteracting climate-change and biodiversity objectives; whereas energy from biomass should be less dependent on forest biomass,
- I. whereas forest protection and protection of forests' functions should be mainstreamed in all EU policies affecting forests,
- J. whereas forests constitute live and evolutionary ecosystems, often cutting across state borders, which may be classified in different ways such as by bioclimatic zones or forest types, and whereas, in order to guide EU policy decisions, the EEA has developed a specific forest nomenclature; whereas the latest scientific achievements from all fields, such as the 'continental divide', should be taken into account in EU policies affecting forests, and those policies should avoid the risk of being too broad to be useful,
- K. whereas different forest types and the forestry sector face different and unpredictable biotic and abiotic threats from climate change, such as pests, storms, drought and fire, rendering forest resilience the cornerstone of protection efforts,
- L. whereas solid and comparable information on the state of EU forests and the consequences of climate change and production patterns in forests is an important precondition for policy and planning, including on forests' contribution to climate-change mitigation and adaptation,
- M. whereas wildfires and arson, often carried out for ulterior motives, destroy more than 400 000 hectares of forest per year, especially but not exclusively in the Mediterranean

region, at great cost to human life, property, employment, biodiversity and the protective functions of forests; whereas regeneration after fire is especially difficult for all forests, and in the case of the NATURA 2000 network, hinders attainment of the network's objectives,

- N. whereas the above-mentioned White Paper on adapting to climate change includes forests as one of the key areas of action, stressing that the EU forestry strategy should be updated to include aspects linked to climate change,
- O. whereas only 5% of the European forest area is old-growth, primary and undisturbed by human activity; whereas the small share of this type of forest, in combination with increased fragmentation of the remaining stands of all forest types, increases the susceptibility of forests to climate threats, and partially explains the continuing poor conservation status of many forest species of European concern,
- P. whereas enhancement of forests' protective functions should form part of the EU and Member States' strategies for civil protection, especially in the face of climate-related extreme phenomena such as fires and floods,
- Q. whereas the TEEB report has presented a compelling cost-benefit case for public investment in ecosystem-based approaches to climate-change adaptation and mitigation, particularly with regard to green infrastructure, such as restoring and conserving forests,
- R. whereas diverse national, regional and local forest management systems must be respected as well as assisted, in order to enhance their adaptive capacity,
- S. whereas the capacity of European forests to act as effective sinks for CO₂, NH₃ and NO_x is still underexploited, and wood originating from sustainably managed forests may have sustained mitigation benefits, serving as a recyclable, carbon-rich substitute for energy intensive materials such as metal alloys, plastics and concrete that are widely used in construction and other industries,
- T. whereas, according to data gathered by the Commission, summer warm-up in Southern Europe will be twice as fast as in the rest of Europe and summer precipitation in the South will decrease by 5% per decade,
- U. whereas the EU FAP has four goals: improving long-term competitiveness, protecting the environment, contributing to quality of life and fostering coordination, and whereas significant progress has been made mainly in achieving the first goal,
- V. whereas the Forest Europe process has achieved a voluntary European consensus on Sustainable Forest Management; whereas the existing context for SFM lacks full recognition and consistent implementation;
- W. whereas, as part of the Forest Europe process, comprehensive preparations have been made for negotiations on a legally binding instrument, and whereas decisions on such an instrument can be expected at the next conference in Oslo in June 2011,
- X. whereas the Forest Fire Prevention¹ and Forest Focus Regulations¹ have expired, resulting in ad hoc reporting and inadequate funding,

¹ Council Regulation (EEC) No 2158/92 of 23 July 1992 on protection of the Community's forests against fire; OJ L 217, 31.7.1992, p. 3.

- Y. whereas genetic selection should seek, and be geared to improving, the adaptability of the forest ecosystem,
- Z. whereas more information is needed about the influence of forests on weather patterns at European level,
- AA. whereas the above-mentioned 2009 report to the Commission on ‘EU policy options for the protection of European forests against harmful impacts’ identified and studied four policy options, covering continuation of the current approach, the open method of coordination, increased monitoring and the introduction of a forest framework directive,
1. Welcomes the Commission Green Paper on forest protection and information in the EU: preparing forests for climate change; considers that the EU strategy on forests should be strengthened with a view to improving sustainable management and conservation, in accordance with the subsidiarity and proportionality principles;
 2. Emphasises, however, that pursuant to Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union, the EU may act in areas where, demonstrably, the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States;
 3. Welcomes the Commission’s view that forests should be seen as a major contributor to solving the climate crisis; emphasises that sustainable forest management is of pivotal importance in the EU achieving its climate goals and delivering necessary ecosystem services such as biodiversity, protection against natural disasters, and capturing of CO₂ from the atmosphere;
 4. Recalls that forests make up biospheres comprising much more than trees, and that their resilience thus depends on the biological diversity not only of trees but of all forest organisms, particularly wild animals living in the forest, and that forests are essential for the adaptation of European societies to climate change;
 5. Recalls that forests are the main repository of carbon and have a vital role to play in the fight against climate change; stresses that it is therefore vital for the EU to reinforce its strategy for combating the factors causing deterioration of forests, such as fires and atmospheric pollution;
 6. Is convinced that ecological sustainability is the prerequisite for continuation of the economic and social functions of EU forests;
 7. Underlines the role that forest biodiversity plays in adapting to climate change and the need to improve knowledge about forest biodiversity indicators – including in particular forest genetic capacity – in the interests of better adaptation;
 8. Congratulates the Commission on the exhaustive analysis of biotic and abiotic threats in its Green Paper, and draws attention to the need to examine, in addition, other factors directly linked to the impact of climate change on forests, such as defoliation, recalling that the defoliated treetop surface in southern European forests has doubled in the last 20 years, resulting, in terms of direct consequences, in reduced capacity and efficiency in the carbon-fixing processes and in the reduction of forests’ tempering effect in periods of drought or heatwaves, due to trees’ premature loss of leaves;

¹ Regulation (EC) No 2152/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 concerning monitoring of forests and environmental interactions in the Community (Forest Focus) OJ L 324, 11.12.2003, p. 1.

9. Recognises the important contributions made to sustainable forestry by existing global certification schemes, such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC);

The EU Forestry Strategy and Forest Action Plan

10. Stresses that the above-mentioned EU Forestry Strategy and Forest Action Plan should be updated to include the climate-change dimension and wider forest protection issues; recalls that a comprehensive forest policy debate with the Member States and all stakeholders affected by the implementation of the proposed measures must precede any such review;
11. Welcomes the success of EU efforts to achieve global competitiveness for European forest-based industries;
12. Calls on the Commission and Member States to intensify efforts to achieve the environment and quality-of-life goals of the FAP, the implementation of which is currently lagging behind;
13. Calls on the Commission to conduct an analysis of EU policies impacting on EU forests in order to examine whether they are coherent and guarantee forest protection;
14. Calls on the Commission to conduct an analysis of the funding currently available for forests and forestry and to reallocate existing funds which impact negatively on forest biodiversity, in line with the above-mentioned Council conclusions of March 2010;
15. Calls on the Commission and Member States to step up implementation of the actions set out in the Commission Communication of 27 February 2008 on innovative and sustainable forest-based industries in the EU (COM(2008)113 final), taking into consideration that excessive regulation may make timber products less competitive compared to non-renewable and energy intensive materials;
16. Stresses that measures for forest protection should reflect the cross-border nature of biotic and abiotic threats, according to their type, bioclimatic zone and regional conditions; stresses, further, that action to support, coordinate and supplement policy initiatives by the Member States and regions should be taken where the EU possesses added value, and in accordance with the forest nomenclature developed by the EEA;
17. Stresses that forest protection depends on long-term commitment on the part of Member States, the regions, forest-based industries and both public and private forest owners;
18. Considers that the northern Boreal forests (taiga) and the Mediterranean forests are of immense value in terms of European biodiversity and as sinks of atmospheric carbon, and should benefit from enhanced protection;
19. Considers that long-term forest planning should be flexible, adaptive and participative, taking into account all conceivable scenarios, allowing for consideration of multiple options for future development, and providing a realistic and reliable basis for management decision support; considers, further, that at EU level this should take the form of a permanent 'Forest Forum' to ensure long-term forest protection;

Sustainable forest management

20. Welcomes the success of Forest Europe in enhancing SFM and achieving European consensus on SFM guidelines, criteria and indicators; notes however that the existing context of SFM, lacks consistent implementation;
21. Recalls that the aim of SFM is to reconcile production and protection aspects of forests, ensuring the continuity of their economic, social and environmental functions, in accordance with national, regional and local priorities; notes with concern that the growing trend to consider forests only from an economic perspective, forgetting their environmental and social aspects, is incompatible with the principles of SFM;
22. Calls for the Commission to make proposals to complement the above-mentioned Timber Regulation (EU) 995/2010 to ensure that all timber or timber products placed on the European market are sourced from sustainably managed forests;
23. Encourages the Member States and the Commission to continue their efforts to stamp out illegal logging and the trade in timber thus produced, as by so doing they will help to combat deforestation, forest degradation and biodiversity loss;
24. Calls for a strengthening of the link between national forest programmes (NFPs) and the FAP through structured reporting to the Standing Forestry Committee;
25. Considers that SFM is essential to the continuing ability of EU forests to carry out economic, ecological and social functions; calls on the Commission and Member States to demonstrate their support for the Forest Europe process by making SFM implementation mandatory within the EU; considers, further, that such a commitment would help assimilate sustainability principles into forestry and serve as the best possible support for the Forest Europe process and the legally binding agreements being considered by Forest Europe and the United Nations Forum on Forests;
26. Advocates full implementation of active SFM in the context of long-term NFPs incorporating national and regional priorities, measurable targets and evaluation criteria and taking account of the increased threats to forests from climate change;
27. Stresses that rural development plans and operational programmes should not be considered as equivalent to NFPs; calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure that NFPs take into account the conclusions and recommendations of the studies on the impact of climate change on water resources, ecosystems and biodiversity, and that rural development strategies and programmes are consistent with forest programmes, biodiversity strategies and renewable energy action plans;
28. Notes that genetic diversity, natural regeneration and diversity in structure and species mixture among all organisms living in the forest are common elements in forest adaptation options, cutting across all bioclimatic zones, sustainable management systems and forest types; notes further that SFM guarantees economic viability for commercial forests but does not impose it in the case of those forests with primary functions other than the production of timber;
29. Considers that long-term forest protection depends upon establishing or sustaining forest ecosystems with highly diverse tree composition, age and structure;
30. Calls on the Commission to put forward recommendations on ways of adapting national civil protection systems to cope with the impact of climate change on forests;

particularly urges the Commission to take action to expand the European Forest Fire Tactical Reserve in terms of resources and capacity;

31. Warns against unrestricted commercial exploitation of forest resources, which, particularly in the case of natural forests, very often leads to their irreversible destruction;
32. Considers that, given their importance in CO₂ sequestration, agro-forestry trees should be considered in the same way as non-productive traditional woodlands in relation to the fight against climate change;

General proposals

33. Calls on the Commission to proceed with the drafting of a White Paper on Forest Protection in the EU, taking into account the results of the public consultation on the Green Paper, the widely perceived need to be prepared for climate change, the policy options study and the adaptation options study; considers that the White Paper, in addition to confirming the contribution of forests to the economy through wood and non-wood forest products and services, should focus on maintaining and increasing European forests, as they help European societies to mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects; considers further that a higher level of protection must be ensured for high-quality habitats and protective forests with functions in countering flooding, landslides, fires, desertification, loss of biodiversity and extreme weather catastrophes; considers adequate financial resources, knowledge exchange and the promotion of research and information to be indispensable aspects of the Commission's proposals;
34. Reaffirms its view on the need for increased levels of funding for EU forest protection measures, through the rural development pillar of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP); points out that the new challenges entailed in climate change make it plain that forest protection requires greater funding and that new forms of assistance may be required;
35. Urges the Commission carefully to study, and to report to Parliament and the Council on, options for payment for ecosystem services that acknowledge their economic value and reward forest biodiversity conservation and the restoration of forest ecosystems; points out that it is important that business recognises the credibility, publicity and other financial benefits that flow from its involvement in biodiversity conservation and forest protection;
36. Urges the Commission to present a legislative proposal for forest fire prevention, incorporating funding for prevention plans and risk assessment, the European Forest Fires Information System (EFFIS), fire detection, infrastructure, training and education, and forest recovery after fires, including consideration of a 30-year ban on building on land where there has been a forest fire;
37. Urges the Commission to submit a legislative proposal prohibiting building on land cleared by fires proven to have resulted from arson;
38. Calls for the removal of legal obstacles to sustainable management;

39. Points to the need to lay down the financial framework required to boost forest firefighting, and also calls for greater flexibility to be brought to mobilisation of the Solidarity Fund;
40. Urges the Commission to present a legislative proposal on forest information, taking into account climate threats and the need for collection and dissemination of relevant, harmonised and comparable data on forest cover, biodiversity, biotic and abiotic threats and land use in the context of the UNFCCC, CBD and environmental accounts; calls further on the Commission to compile and monitor indicators relating to the protective functions of forests such as soil retention and water capacity;
41. Calls on the Commission to support research into the influence of forests on regional weather patterns in the EU, so as to inform forest management strategies with regard to changes in the size, composition and location of forests and the impact of such changes;
42. Asks the Commission and Member States to develop and disseminate best-practice guidelines based on the principles of sustainable management to fit the needs of private and state owners as well as local communities, in order to ensure resilience to climate change; notes further the importance of exchanging best practice on how companies and sectors of industry can contribute to biodiversity targets and enhance life-cycle thinking, and how they can build the link between biodiversity conservation and revenue generation; highlights the need to reinforce communication and information policy in order to ensure the sustainable management of forests, to inform the public and to encourage the use of sustainable wood;
43. Stresses the need to enhance coordination and information efforts with regard to forest protection; takes the view that greater efforts are needed to ensure that internal EU measures are consistent with external policy statements concerning forests (cooperation, development, exotic wood trade, etc.);
44. Considers that forests are part of mankind's collective cultural and environmental heritage and that remarkable trees should be protected whether they are located within or outside forests; in this regard, calls on the Commission and Member States to devise appropriate strategies for their protection, including the consideration of 'Forest Heritage Observatories'; further, encourages Member States, in the context of their national policies, to promote equal and public access to forests and nature areas, recognising that the right of public access to forests and nature areas (*allemansträtten*) as practised in certain Member States brings many benefits in terms of democratic access for recreation, appreciation of ecosystems and respect for natural heritage;
45. In order to achieve the objectives of the EU 2020 strategy with regard to national forest action plans, requests that each Member State or region develop a forest strategy which includes reforestation of river banks, the capture of rainwater, agricultural activities and research results for selection of the traditional plant and tree varieties and species best adapted to drought;

Research on forests

46. Emphasises that, although Europe possesses undeniable know-how about forestry, which stems from long-standing traditional forestry practices, financial resources for research into the impact of climate change on forests need to be increased; is of the

opinion that, in view of the scientific uncertainty surrounding the timescale and extent of the threats to forests in different areas, it is necessary to earmark funding for climate research according to specific needs and solutions applicable to different bioclimatic zones, so as to improve the relevant knowledge base;

47. Asks the Member States to set up joint long-term research programmes to improve understanding of impacts and vulnerability and to support adaptation measures in the forest sector; calls on the Commission to promote the inclusion in the multiannual framework for research and technological development of projects relating to the knowledge of forest ecosystems and their capacity for adapting to the consequences of climate change;
48. Calls on the Commission to draw up an action plan to protect EU forests in order to forestall the adverse impact of proliferation of insects and diseases caused by climate change;
49. Calls on the Member States to drive forward research into climate change and its consequences for forests; to foster broader awareness of the diverse significance of forests and the importance of managing them sustainably; to support initial and in-service training for forestry employees, focusing on areas of expertise expected to be required as a result of climate change (the promotion of diversity, damage prevention and recovery); and to encourage the exchange of knowledge and experience;
50. Considers that, given the need for effective research into the 'defence potential' of forest ecosystems, for prognostic research and for research into strategies for mitigating the effects of climate change for the entire forestry and timber sector, coordination and funding at EU level is required;

CAP Pillar 2

51. Points out that discussions on the future of the CAP after 2013 should take account of the fact that forests provide essential environmental functions and contribute to achievement of the social and economic objectives of rural development and national economies; calls therefore on Member States and regions to cooperate fully with forest authorities and the wider public in the preparation of rural development programmes to ensure consistency between EU policies, taking into account that forestry may, in some cases, be an independent sector of the rural economy;
52. Recalls that forests play a key role in the provision of socio-economic and environmental public goods for the well-being of society and for development, particularly in rural areas; calls on the Commission to devise a policy approach which recognises this role, while respecting owners' property rights;
53. Welcomes the fact that the latest Commission Communication on CAP reform¹ recognises the important roles that farmers play as indispensable actors in forest fire prevention, as stewards of forest ecosystems who protect them from threats to biodiversity – such as pests – and, above all, as territorial mainstays, since the continuation of their livelihood is the most effective way of averting depopulation;

¹ Commission Communication of 18 November 2010 entitled "The CAP towards 2020: Meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future." COM(2010)672 final).

54. Maintains that rural producers, producer groups and public bodies should be made eligible for forestry measures in the second pillar of the CAP; considers that the EU should continue to provide aid for forestation under the national rural development programmes, while making sure that these initiatives do not interfere with the market and that forestation measures rely on local, pest-resistant and fire-resistant material and contribute to biodiversity conservation; stresses further that forestation efforts must prioritise tree species which considerably improve the quality of soil and biodiversity, while respecting the characteristics of the location of planting, native species and the need for mixed forests;
55. Draws attention, as the Council did in its conclusions of 11 June 2010, to the fact that serious problems can arise from forest abandonment insofar as it may no longer be possible to ensure that forests continue to perform their functions;
56. Considers it necessary to encourage and support the setting up of associations of producers and forest management bodies practising SFM, particularly in areas characterised by small forests, as this will help to balance the supply of the many goods and services that forests can provide; considers that such associations and bodies would strengthen producers' bargaining power in the timber supply chain, helping to provide and create a level playing field while contributing simultaneously to tackling the problems of the economic crisis, international competition and climate change and combating illegal logging;
57. Maintains that assistance to public and private actors protecting forest biodiversity of species, habitats and ecosystem services must increase and include voluntary protection methods and areas connecting NATURA 2000 sites, as biodiversity is vital to the maintenance, development and adaptation of agriculture;
58. Calls for the invoice-based system of remuneration to be replaced by a system of standard or area-based costs;
59. Calls for the development of a standard for good forestry practices to be used as a baseline for support under all forest measures;
60. Calls for the mandatory inclusion of forest environment and Natura 2000 measures in rural development programmes, and for area-based support for the Natura 2000 network under direct payments;
61. Calls for the inclusion of a new CAP measure for 'in-situ and ex-situ conservation of source-identified forest genetic material';
62. Strongly rejects the application of intellectual property rights over forest genetic resources;
63. Urges the Commission and Member States to guarantee the long-term horizons of forestry and forest protection projects in all EU financing;

Civil protection and fire prevention

64. Is convinced that preventing forest fires is much more cost-effective than combating them;

65. Draws attention to the urgent need to implement the recommendations on the prevention of natural or human-made disasters which it recently adopted¹, especially those concerning support for afforestation/reafforestation schemes giving preference to local species and mixed forests, in the interests of biodiversity and improved resistance to fires, storms and diseases; also draws attention to the added difficulties faced by islands and the outermost regions in tackling fires; calls for such regions to be given special treatment through the various financial instruments available, including the Solidarity Fund;
66. Considers that forest fire prevention through landscape planning and connectivity, infrastructure and training should be firmly anchored in the EU's forest protection, adaptation and civil protection policies;
67. Points out that, in arid areas and regions at risk of desertification, reafforestation with productive species will benefit the inhabitants and secure their involvement in the tasks of conservation and firefighting;
68. Stresses the indisputable importance for public safety of forest areas which protect human habitats from the negative impact of natural phenomena;

Emissions reporting and accounting

69. Considers that the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) in its current form is incompatible with LULUCF accounting, primarily as a result of the difference between annual compliance requirements for industrial installations under the ETS and the longer timescales required for carbon stock changes in landholdings to occur and be observed; and therefore no linkage should be made; in this regard, calls on the Commission to reconsider how best to provide funding for carbon savings from LULUCF activities;
70. Acknowledges the challenges associated with any consideration of inclusion of LULUCF in Member States' targets under the Effort Sharing Decision; is concerned in particular that differences in accounting precision and a large degree of natural variation could undermine the compliance regime under that Decision; calls therefore for separate targets for the LULUCF sector;
71. Expresses its commitment to meeting the EU 2020 renewable energy target and the 2 degree Celsius climate-change target; is concerned however that the short time-frames used in the current greenhouse gas (GHG) calculation methodology, and the resulting carbon neutrality assumption for woody biomass, could hinder their achievement; calls on the Commission to consult the IPCC and establish a new GHG calculation methodology, controlling for longer time horizons and for biomass emissions from land use, land use change and forest management assessing carbon flow on a national level, and integrating the different phases in forestry (planting, thinning and harvesting);
72. States that the current 'biofuel' criteria developed by the Commission are not suitable in the case of woody biomass and calls for the development of new legally binding sustainability criteria for biomass promoted for the use of energy; states that the Commission should consult the work and the findings of Forest Europe so as to develop

¹ European Parliament resolution of 21 September 2010 on the Commission communication: A Community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters (P7_TA-PROV(2010)0326).

criteria which factor in possible risks of distortion in the renewable energy market, do not rely on the carbon neutrality assumption, address indirect emissions, and do not undermine the EU 2020 renewable energy and biodiversity targets; notes that detailed implementation of the criteria should be left to the local level, taking into account site-specific conditions;

73. Calls for the application of forest definitions based on an ecological forest classification such as the one proposed by the EEA in 2007, so as to be able to differentiate between carbon-rich old forests, intensively managed monocultures and other forest types, including Mediterranean shrub, according to biomes and stages of succession;
74. Stresses the importance of protecting the diversity of forests at all stages of succession within the EU, in order to ensure biodiversity of and within forests, as each stage of succession creates conditions for the following, and without concerted protection at all the various stages succession in the latter stages will be severely endangered;

External dimension

75. Calls on the Commission and Member States to work internationally to establish a new UN definition of forests which clarifies natural forest definitions on a biome basis and distinguishes between native forests and those dominated by tree monocultures and non-native species; notes, in this respect that – the EU being the biggest public aid donor to developing countries (with the forest sector receiving more than EUR 600 million in 2003) – this definition would greatly enhance policy coherence and ‘value for money’; regrets that the Green Paper fails to register progress on the need to coordinate EU actions within and outside the Union and to achieve a global legally binding agreement under the UN Forum on Forests;
76. Notes the importance of global cooperation, at both administrative and research level, on standard setting, best practices and transfers of technology and scientific know-how, especially in the context of the REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) system; also points out that fair sharing of the benefits of the REDD system cannot be achieved without active cooperation and the exchange of best practices; stresses the importance of the GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) programme in the charting, surveillance and recording of forest areas at European and international level and the contribution that the information thus gathered can make to the UN negotiations on climate change;

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77. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

EU forests: state and governance

EU Forests and other wooded land cover account for more than 42 % of the EU's surface¹.

Forests provide **livelihoods** for millions of workers, entrepreneurs and 16 million forest owners. The forest-based industries (FBIs) provide more than 2 million jobs, mostly in SMEs, and have a €300 billion turnover. 350.000 people are employed in forest management². In addition, 40% of EU forests are state-owned.

The EU ratio of felling to increment is stable at around 60%³. This ratio is projected to increase in several countries to over 100 %, causing a decline in growing stock after 2020⁴.

European forests can be grouped in five bioclimatic zones: the Boreal, Temperate Oceanic, Temperate Continental, Mediterranean and Mountain zones⁵ compatible with the EEA's forest typology, developed to guide policy decisions⁶.

European forests and forestry are governed by a variety of regional and national models, grouped according to their productive or protective orientation⁷. Forests provide both resources and ecosystem functions.

Threats to forests

Climate-related threats are broadly grouped as abiotic (storms, windthrows, drought, fire risk increase) and biotic (pests, fungal disease). Their effects are mutually reinforcing, as in the case of pests: higher temperatures lead to longer reproductive cycles of several pathogenic species.

Lack of summer precipitation is affecting **forest productivity** in all zones but the Boreal. Coniferous forest is expected to decrease in area and productivity throughout continental Europe. Spruce is expected to become unsuitable as crop species in lower elevations and beech is expected to disappear in the Mediterranean zone. In the mountain zone, **drought stress** is affecting growth and vitality of all major tree species. Production of non-wood forest products such as mushrooms, cork and herbs will be drastically reduced throughout Europe.

For Boreal forests, the effects of expected **mass outbreaks of pests** due to their northward expansion remain unknown. In addition, **milder winters** and susceptibility to **windthrows** result in **decreased access for logging**. In the same zone, birch forests are expected to shrink to 1/10 of their present area by 2100⁸¹.

1 UN-ECE/FAO, 2000 Forest Resources of Europe, CIS, North America, Australia, Japan and New Zealand

2 Green Paper On Forest Protection and Information in the EU: Preparing forests for climate change and Commission staff working document COM(2010)66 final/SEC(2010)163

3 EEA Report No 4/2009 - Progress towards the European 2010 biodiversity target

4 UNECE/FAO, 2006 - Outlook for the development of European forest resources; a study prepared for the European Forest Sector Outlook Study

5 Report to the European Commission DG for Agriculture and Rural Development "Impacts of Climate Change on European Forests and Options for Adaptation (AGRI-2007-G4-06)

6 EEA Technical report No 9/2006 "European forest types Categories and types for sustainable forest management reporting and policy"

7 2009 report to the European Commission DG Environment "EU policy options for the protection of European forests against harmful impacts"(ENV.B.1/ETU/2008/0049)

8 Virtanen, T., Neuvonen, S. & Nikula, A. (1998). Modelling topoclimatic patterns of egg mortality of *Epirrita autumnata* (Lep: Geometridae) with Geographical Information System: predictions in current climate and scenarios with warmer climate. J. appl. Ecol. 35, 311–322

Risk of fire is increasing throughout continental Europe, particularly in the Mediterranean, along with unpredictable pest outbreaks for all tree species. In this zone, beech is expected to virtually disappear.

Pest outbreaks will impact all coniferous forests.

Forest fragmentation, which increases wildland interface with rural and urban areas, poses a major threat for continental forests.

The above is resulting in forest dieback and shifts in species composition.

Few studies exist on threats to the wider public through loss of protective functions. For the mountain zone, reduced ability to dampen runoff peaks is expected to impact various protective functions (especially with regard to floods and water quality). In the Mediterranean, fires combined with flooding lead to erosion, due to reduced plant regeneration, aggravating desertification.

Energy sector demand for woody biomass is emerging as a threat for forests and traditional FBIs. The assumption of carbon neutrality for woody biomass² neglects extended timeframes needed to re-absorb the “carbon debt“, which depends on tree productivity and previous land use and management³. This threat is linked to similar deficiencies in UNFCCC/LULUCF provisions.

EU perspective

Common policies affecting forests include the CAP (8bn € in pillar 2), environmental policy (most notably biodiversity and water), energy, industry, trade, research, and cohesion policies, including regional policy and the solidarity fund, often with a lack of coherence with regard to forest protection.

Council and EP commitment to forest protection has been expressed by regulations on fire prevention (2158/1992), monitoring (2152/2003) and due diligence for timber operators (995/2010) on the basis of Art. 175 TEU, now 192 TFEU⁴. Forest protection should be seen also in the context of prevention of natural- and man-made disasters⁵ and the adaptation strategy^{6,7}.

The 1998 EU Forestry Strategy⁸ led to the non binding 2006 EU Forest Action Plan-FAP⁹ aiming to

1. improve long term competitiveness
2. improve/protect the environment

1 Virtanen, T. & Neuvonen, S. (1999). Performance of Moth Larvae on Birch in Relation to Altitude, Climate, Host Quality and Parasitoids *Oecologia* Vol. 120, No 1, pp 92-101

2 Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28 EC

3 Bird N., Pena N. & Zanchi J. (2010) The upfront carbon debt of bioenergy, Joanneum Research Institute, Graz.

4 See also, ECJ rulings in cases 164/97 and 165/97

5 A Community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters COM(2009) 82 final

6 White Paper “Adapting to Climate Change: towards a European Framework for action” COM(2009) 147

7 EP resolution of 6 May 2010 on the Commission White Paper: “Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action” (P7_TA-PROV(2010)0154

8 Council Resolution on a Forestry Strategy for the EU (OJ C 56/1 26 February 1999)

9 COM(2006) 302 final

3. contribute to quality of life
4. foster coordination and communication

The Commission mid-term evaluation of the FAP concludes that, while much progress has taken place in goal 1 actions, all other actions have been poorly implemented¹. Major shortcomings concern enhancing protection and biodiversity conservation: 66% of forest habitats have “unfavourable bad/inadequate” status². Little action has been taken on education and information, protective functions and urban and peri-urban forests.

This is the inverse of the priorities of European citizens. According to the Commission’s forest perception study, conservation and protection (44%) is considered to be by far the most important topic for forest policy followed by forest health and pollution (15.4%) climate change (12.5%) and economic use (8%)³.

FAP coordination and communication actions are progressing slowly due to insufficient submission of National Forest Programmes (NFPs) to the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC).

All EU Member States partake in **the Forest Europe process** which, over the last 20 years, has developed common approaches on SFM.

Building on this work, active and preventive SFM, which allows for national and regional priorities, may become obligatory at the EU level. Given the advanced scientific work of Forest Europe, its application will entail minimum costs and administrative burden.

For biomass policies, “EU-wide action can ensure that common environmental protection is achieved while avoiding distortions in the internal market”⁴.

Your Rapporteur’s view is that this action should take the form of legally binding sustainability criteria, based on a revision of the assumption of carbon neutrality and a scientifically sound GHG calculation methodology which accounts for the multi-annual nature of woody biomass and for emission changes due to changes in land use and forest management. ILUC factors for all forms of biomass should also be developed.

In view of the above, inclusion of the LULUCF sector in the EU ETS – primarily designed for annual emissions of industrial installations – is questionable, due to compatibility issues.

Internationally, the EU should work towards diversified forest definitions on a biome basis which account for biodiversity, soil and the social dimension, and which focus on the conservation of carbon-rich old growth forests. This is crucial for ensuring that financial commitments for biodiversity and REDD+ are not diverted to questionable projects.

Forest information: basis for decision-making

Forest information is insufficient due to a lack of financing and reporting obligations, as

1 Mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the EU Forest Action Plan 2006-2011 by an external evaluation team (Service Contract No. 30-CE-0227729/00-59)

2 "Composite report on the Conservation Status of Habitats and Species as required under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive" (COM (2009)358 final)

3 "Shaping forest communication in the European Union: public perceptions of forests and forestry" (Tender no. AGRI-2008-EVAL-10 // Framework Contract No. 30-CE-0101908/00-50)

4 SEC(2010) 65 Commission Staff Working Document - Summary of the Impact Assessment - Accompanying document to the Report from the Commission on sustainability requirements for the use of solid and gaseous biomass sources in electricity, heating and cooling COM(2010) 11 final

provided for in the expired Regulation 2152/2003. This Regulation should be reintroduced taking into account information needs for climate threats but also the increased need for information provision for the CBD and the UNFCCC, to accurately depict forests' biodiversity and carbon stock changes. EU-level information collection should be based on compatible mechanisms, harmonised definitions and comparable data from the National Forest Inventories and other relevant sources.

Forest information is also relevant for Environmental Accounts, the “GDP and beyond” initiative and the operationalisation of payments for ecosystem services (PES).

Enhancing adaptive capacity through SFM

A common distinction is made between *inherent (ecosystem) capacity*, relying on the genetic diversity of forests, including soil biodiversity, and the *socio-economic capacity* of the forestry sector in terms of know-how and capital intensity.

Your Rapporteur acknowledges the **adaptive capacity of EU forestry** noting, however, that it ultimately relies on the inherent capacity of forests: ex-post responses to various threats may be possible but not economically feasible, either for public or private actors.

SFM focusing on long-term timber yield is practiced in several –but by no means all- EU Member States. Active or preventive **SFM provides a framework** whereby national and regional priorities are respected.

Active adaptation options converge on natural regeneration, genetic diversity and increasing diversity in structure and species mixture as measures to enhance forest resilience, regardless of forest type and management orientation¹.

Additional measures include harvest and transport technologies for the Boreal region and accumulated fuel management for the Mediterranean.

Your Rapporteur takes the view that enhancing the resilience of all ecosystems is the most cost-effective response to climate change covering both mitigation and adaptation^{2,3,4,5,6} and that broadening the **relevant knowledge base** of all stakeholders is a basic requirement for management. **Cooperation** among all stakeholders, taking into account all conceivable scenarios, must proceed urgently to ensure coherence in view of the adaptation needs of all European societies.

Further EU contribution to forest protection

By definition, climate change renders Member States’ policies insufficient for forest protection.

1 Report to the European Commission DG for Agriculture and Rural Development “Impacts of Climate Change on European Forests and Options for Adaptation (AGRI-2007-G4-06)

2 UNEP (2009) “The Natural Fix? The role of ecosystems in climate mitigation”

3 World Bank (2009) “Convenient Solutions to an Inconvenient Truth: Ecosystem based Approaches to Climate Change”

4 Towards a Strategy on Climate Change, Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity - A discussion paper prepared by the EU Ad Hoc Expert Working Group on Biodiversity, 2009

5 TEEB (2009) The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity: Climate Issues Update. September 2009

6 Swedish National Scientific Council on Biological Diversity “Biodiversity, Ecosystem Services and Resilience - Governance for a Future with Global Changes, 2009

Cross compliance is essential: all EU funding, regardless of the instrument concerned, must be climate-proof and also take into account biodiversity¹², the water dimension and the need for wilderness³.

Your Rapporteur supports **mandatory NFPs** as a way to ensure compliance and build on the **Forest Europe consensus on SFM**. NFPs should cover at least 5-year periods based on ex-ante and ex-post precise and quantifiable evaluation criteria and an integration of adaptive and preventive forest management. The Commission should issue guidelines for NFPs with a view to their integration in a wider forest adaptation framework.

Given the scope of threats and total EU forest area, CAP financing through pillar 2 for forests should increase, subject to the existence of NFPs and operational management plans, which incorporate the EU biodiversity strategy and long timeframes for forestry projects in SFM. Eligibility should be extended to public actors and producer groups, shifting to area-based remuneration and including in-situ and ex-situ conservation measures.

Active SFM should be clearly mainstreamed and prioritised in **research and practice**, and should also take into account public ownership of 40% of EU forests. **Species conservation and nursery practices** should extend to associated microbial and fungal species. In situ research into mycorrhizal symbiosis should be actively encouraged.

Payments for ecosystem services (PES) should be formalised in view of the next financial perspectives, building on the success of forest and water projects⁴.

Civil protection policies should also enhance the protective functions of forests including increasing forestation to prevent flooding, fires and erosion.

Reinstitution of the **Fire Prevention Regulation**, going beyond current rural development provisions, should proceed without delay, focusing on landscape management and the gradual introduction of fire-tolerant local species such as the *Quercus Spp.*

Forest adaptation and resilience should be given special consideration in the creation of an EU-adaptation fund.

Directive 105/1995, which in conjunction with the invoice-based system of the CAP, may favour performance over adaptation, should be revised to relax the rules for the marketing of local species. In-situ conservation of forest genetic resources is the basic collective endeavour which will allow forest dependent communities and industries to thrive.

1 European Court of Auditors No 9/2004 on Forestry Measures within Rural Development Policy (together with the Commission's replies)
2 EP Resolution of 21 September 2010 on the implementation of EU legislation aiming at the conservation of biodiversity (P7_TA(2010)0325)
3 European Parliament resolution of 3 February 2009 on Wilderness in Europe P6_TA(2009)0034
4 IUCN Regional Office for Europe, IUCN Environmental Law Centre, Confederation for European Forest Owners Final report study on the Economic value of groundwater and biodiversity in European forests, 2009

8.12.2010

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (*)

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on the Commission Green Paper on forest protection and information in the EU: preparing forests for climate change
(2010/2106(INI))

Rapporteur (*): Rareş-Lucian Niculescu

(*) Associated committee – Rule 50 of the Rules of Procedure

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the Commission's Green Paper on forest protection and information in the EU: preparing forests for climate change; underlines the close link between forestry and agriculture, both profoundly affected by this phenomenon; considers that the EU's strategy on forests should be strengthened, the objective being to improve the management and conservation of forests, that this strategy should be directed towards both forest protection and the sustainable use of timber resources, as forests are providers of solutions to climate change and the new challenges, and that the aim of such a strategy should be to attain a high level of resilience;
2. Points out that, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, forest strategy should continue to be primarily a matter for the Member States, with additional support from the European Union; points to the need to take measures at an appropriate local, regional, Member State or EU level; stresses that such a strategy framework would enhance the coordination of national and Community measures and boost the image of the European Union in international negotiations on combating climate change;
3. Considers that the European Union should take action to support, coordinate and supplement forestry policy initiatives by the Member States, taking into account differing

regional conditions, the objective being to achieve the sustainable development of forests, while helping to enhance quality of life for European citizens and to foster the development of rural areas by a coherent framework for all the economic, social, cultural and environmental goods and services provided by forests;

4. Observes that climate change will have different consequences for different European forest types, which means that adaptation and mitigation strategies must be decided on at regional or local level but, where Community action possesses clear added value, the action could be coordinated at EU level; considers that these strategies should pay attention to the different regional conditions for forestry and, especially, take different opportunities for and threats to forest environments in Northern and Southern Europe into consideration;
5. Notes that European forests account for 45% of the surface area of the European Union, that forests also account, together with the primary forest-based industries, for approximately 2.5 million jobs and a €300 billion turnover, that forests not only are essential to the environment, but also contribute to the achievement of social and economic objectives, for example by providing timber, improving the general living environment and protecting crops and rural areas which are developing, and that forests are a major source of funding not only for rural communities but also for national economies, revenue being generated by sustainable timber harvesting and activities relating to forestry, hunting, fishing, tourism and berry picking, and notes the important contribution of forests in preventing fires, as well as drought, desertification and soil erosion;
6. Points out that forestry is closely related to agriculture, given that most forest owners in Europe are also farmers; recognises, however, that forestry is an independent sector of the rural economy, especially in areas that are beyond the reach of agriculture or are particularly valuable for nature conservation and leisure activities;
7. Stresses that, since forest legislation affects millions of small forest owners, forest policies should always balance respect for the owners' property rights with the requirement to deliver public goods;
8. Considers that agriculture and forestry can be made to function as an integrated whole, that, while the aspects relating to production are essential, they are not inconsistent with the protection of forests or the other benefits deriving from them, and that it is necessary to strike the correct balance between the two sectors and ensure interaction between them, for example through the more efficient allocation of available funding; points out that forestry protection serves multiple policy objectives; notes that most of the European measures related to forestry are currently financed within the second pillar of the CAP and that therefore EU funding for agriculture must be continued on at least the same level, while a search for other instruments in this area is also necessary;
9. Points out that forests represent the main carbon sink and therefore play a crucial role in the fight against climate change; therefore considers it vitally important for the European Union to launch a common strategy to combat factors that cause forest deterioration, such as fires and air pollution;

10. Notes that agriculture and forest ecosystems are vulnerable to climate change, the manifestations of which have been increasing in number, frequency, gravity and intensity, as forest damage arising from causes such as forest fires and pests and massive and uncontrolled deforestation has been taking place in numerous regions of the world; notes, however, that according to the study 'State of Europe's Forests 2007', the area in Europe covered by forests has increased by approximately 13 million hectares over the course of the last 15 years; points out that forests play an important role in terms of watercourse regulation, water quality standards, the protection of springs, landscape preservation, maintaining soil fertility and protecting soil from erosion (especially in mountain regions) and desertification (especially in arid regions), all of which are of relevance to agriculture;
11. Points out that species diversity is vital for the maintenance and development of agriculture and that forests play a major role in meeting the challenge of safeguarding biodiversity; stresses that the biodiversity guaranteed by forest ecosystems and the ecological functions these perform are seen as part of mankind's heritage;
12. Stresses that the 1998 EU Forestry Strategy and the 2006 Forest Action Plan should be updated to include the climate change dimension and wider forest protection issues;
13. Considers that active forest management is important for its contribution to the EU2020 Strategy and its key element of creating growth and jobs, as well as the EU's energy strategy and that the great potential of forests as a renewable source of energy and provider of naturally renewable materials is currently being underexploited; accordingly welcomes the Commission's public consultation initiative regarding the role of agriculture and forestry in achieving climate-change objectives;
14. Calls on the Commission to propose ways of optimising the reduction of carbon emissions by means of substitution of products and construction materials whose production involves massive carbon emissions and optimising carbon sequestration by means of increased use of wood; considers that the inclusion of forests in the Community's EU ETS maximises the contribution made by the forestry sector to combating climate change, by giving forestry access to the 'carbon credit' market mechanisms;
15. Points out the need for the Commission to swiftly deal with the discrepancies between the objectives of legislation affecting forests and agriculture policy; calls for cohesion between different EU policies, especially on forestry and agriculture but also between policies on renewable energy, biodiversity, industry, research and the Europe 2020 Strategy;
16. Recalls that farmers are helping to increase forest resources by planting trees, using stratified agro-forestry systems or foresting poor-quality soil or soil unsuitable for efficient methods of farming, as well as contributing to the provision of certain protection systems and the identification of hardy species; considers that the EU should continue to provide aid for forestation under the national rural development programmes, while making sure that these initiatives do not interfere with the market;
17. Considers that forest owners should pay particular attention to the wildlife species that naturally colonise the special habitats formed by forests, as these help preserve biodiversity;

18. Considers that, given the need for effective research into the ‘defence potential’ of forest ecosystems, for prognostic research and for research into strategies for mitigating the effects of climate change for the entire forestry and timber sector, coordination and funding at EU level is required;
19. Considers that forests generate priceless public goods, for which the market reward has hitherto been insufficient and that the European Union should provide assistance, information and incentives to forest owners from funding instruments as a reward for their efforts to implement measures to protect the genetic diversity of forests; reaffirms its view regarding the need for adequate levels of funding for EU forestry measures, rewarding farmers and foresters for providing these public goods, including the consideration of the storage and substitution effects in the context of the use of wood; emphasises that these European incentive mechanisms should not interfere with the properly functioning market for timber products, paper, pulp and energy production;
20. Considers that the EU can support, coordinate and supplement actions taken by the Member States in order to identify best practice guidelines, so as to help ensure that forests are able to withstand the effects of climate change, and that such guidelines should be adapted to the needs of owners and local communities and based on the principles of sustainable management; stresses that excessive regulation will make timber products less competitive compared to non-renewable and energy-intensive materials, such as plastics, aluminium and concrete, and will thus make it more difficult for the EU to reach the climate targets;
21. Considers it necessary to improve and encourage associations of forest owners to practise sustainable forest management, as this is the key tool for balancing the supply of the many goods and services that forests can provide, whilst acting as the basis for adapting to climate change, and that these associations should also boost the currently unused timber potential and strengthen forest owners’ bargaining power in the timber commercial chain; considers it necessary to encourage the creation of a network of forest owner organisations in Europe in order to promote the exchange of information and best practice and to concentrate supply;
22. Considers that the EU should support sustainable forest management through funding for forestry activities of benefit to it, and that encouragement should be given to the setting-up of forest management bodies, particularly in areas characterised by small forests, and that special attention should be given in this respect to forestry undertakings, most of which are small or medium-sized and which must be encouraged to modernise and restructure in order to meet the new challenges arising from climate change, combating illegal logging, the economic crisis and international competition;
23. Highlights, likewise, the crucial role played by farmers in preventing fires; therefore considers it necessary to ensure that farming remains a viable activity in order to curb the cessation of production and depopulation of rural areas, given that this would considerably aggravate the situation with regard to fires;
24. Points out that persistent droughts, as consequences of climate change, have been responsible in recent years for the proliferation of forest fires in certain Member States; recalls its suggestions related to forest fires already expressed in its opinion on the

prevention of natural and man-made disasters, especially with regard to the need for solidarity between Member States, the benefits of a European task force and a European database of economic and social disaster records, including the mapping of areas at increased risk; recalls the importance of giving priority to native-species, multi-species and mixed forests in forestation and reforestation projects; also recalls its suggestions related to a better functioning of the European Solidarity Fund and the need for greater operational capacity and coordination among the various Community instruments in the area of natural disasters;

25. Draws attention to the added difficulties faced by islands and the outermost regions in tackling fires; asks for special treatment to be provided for those regions through the various financial instruments available, including the Solidarity Fund;
26. Stresses that in order to mitigate the consequences of climate change it is necessary to introduce measures to bolster the financial stability of investment in forestry, such as insurance assistance;
27. Supports measures at EU level relating to the development of a forest monitoring system, the provision of information about forests which would help to improve forest management, and the monitoring of threats, both abiotic and biotic, on a trans-national scale.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	1.12.2010
Result of final vote	+: 32 -: 1 0: 5
Members present for the final vote	John Stuart Agnew, Richard Ashworth, Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă, Michel Dantin, Paolo De Castro, Albert Deß, Herbert Dorfmann, Lorenzo Fontana, Iratxe García Pérez, Sergio Gutiérrez Prieto, Peter Jahr, Elisabeth Jeggle, Elisabeth Köstinger, Gabriel Mato Adrover, Mairead McGuinness, James Nicholson, Rareş-Lucian Niculescu, Wojciech Michał Olejniczak, Georgios Papastamkos, Marit Paulsen, Britta Reimers, Ulrike Rodust, Alfreds Rubiks, Giancarlo Scottà, Czesław Adam Siekierski, Marc Tarabella, Janusz Wojciechowski
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Spyros Danellis, Bas Eickhout, Marian Harkin, Giovanni La Via, Véronique Mathieu, Maria do Céu Patrão Neves, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Dimitar Stoyanov, Milan Zver
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Reimer Böge, Ingeborg Gräßle, Heide Rühle

12.11.2010

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on the Commission Green Paper on forest protection and information in the EU: preparing forests for climate change
(2010/2106(INI))

Rapporteur: Lena Ek

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas growing trees sequester carbon from the atmosphere and are a significant source and sink of carbon flows, and since European forests are expanding in area, the carbon in woody biomass in Europe is estimated to be expanding currently at a rate of 116 million MT per year,
- B. whereas, according to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the long-term trend of increasing forest coverage in the European Union is stable,
- C. whereas Europe has a total area of forests and other wooded land of 177 million hectares, covering 42% of its land area,
- D. whereas the diversity of natural conditions in the various forest regions in Europe is huge, ranging from sub-arctic to Mediterranean and from alpine to lowland, including flood plains and deltas,
- E. whereas forests provide a livelihood for millions of workers, entrepreneurs and forest owners, and contribute significantly to economic growth, jobs and prosperity,
- F. whereas in 2005 the sector had a turnover of approximately EUR 380 billion, equivalent to some 9% of GDP in Europe,
- G. whereas sustainable forest management, including forest protection, is crucial for keeping

forests diverse, healthy and resilient,

- H. whereas actively and sustainably managed forests constitute one of the most effective means of storing CO₂ from the atmosphere,
- I. whereas the forest sector is especially important in rural areas and the 350 000 enterprises in the forest-based industries employ some 3 million people, i.e. 8.6% of the total manufacturing labour force in Europe,
 - 1. Welcomes the Commission's view that forests should be seen as one of the main instruments for stemming the factors which contribute to climate change, by, for example, capturing CO₂ from the atmosphere; emphasises that sustainable forest management, including forest protection and forest restoration adapted to the different conditions across Europe, is of pivotal importance for the EU in achieving its climate goals and protecting forest biodiversity, which delivers numerous ecosystem services (supply to users of timber as well as services related to carbon storage and protection against natural disasters) and cultural services (in the form of sustainable tourism) that are essential to society;
 - 2. Considers that a vigorous policy to combat climate change is entirely compatible with the ambition for further development of the forest industry as an important branch of industry in Europe; considers that the forest industry should be further developed so that it continues in the future to contribute towards sustainable economic growth, the creation of new jobs and the fight against climate change;
 - 3. Points out that, in some Member States, forestry is already firmly based on the principle of sustainability, whereas in others sustainability principles have not been assimilated as fully into forestry; maintains that the EU must ensure that every Member State helps to implement SFM (sustainable forest management) in the true sense; points out that the EU could set up a knowledge centre to provide the necessary information to Member States;
 - 4. Points out that European forestry initiatives should be aimed both at 'adapting' forests to climate change and at monitoring and improving their protection, especially where, for example, high-quality habitats are concerned;
 - 5. Notes the potential added value of European coordination of forest information and supervision of climate change adaptation targets, mitigation targets, renewable energy targets and best practices for multifunctional and sustainable forest management, in particular in view of the cross-border nature of the challenges faced;
 - 6. Calls for cohesion between different EU policies on forestry, agriculture, renewable energy, biodiversity and other environment-related issues, and between industrial and research policy and the EU 2020 strategy;
 - 7. Stresses the need for increased competitiveness in the forestry sector, to be achieved through investment in innovation, research and the development of mechanisms for disseminating knowledge generated;
 - 8. Points out that some of the biggest challenges facing European forests are forest fires, deforestation, loss of biodiversity and hence reduced forest resilience, infestation by

invasive species, parasites and pests and other forest diseases; notes that the EU should tackle these challenges by means of cooperation and information initiatives;

9. Urges the Commission, the Member States and the regional authorities significantly to enhance the role of forests in protecting against flooding, landslides, fires, loss of biodiversity and extreme weather catastrophes, while at the same time taking flood-defence aspects into account in the development of information systems and in framing financial support systems for forests;
10. Notes the importance of global cooperation, at both administrative and research level, on standard setting, best practices and transfers of technology and scientific know-how, especially in the context of the REDD system; also points out that fair sharing of the benefits of the REDD system cannot be achieved without active cooperation and the exchange of best practices; stresses the importance of the GMES programme in the charting, surveillance and recording of forest areas at European and international level and the contribution that the information thus gathered can make to the UN negotiations on climate change;
11. Stresses the need for sustainable forest management and for the productive and protective functions of forests to be kept, as well as for general forest viability, and underlines the need to make the EU's forests more resistant to climate change and loss of biodiversity;
12. Stresses the need to respect the different challenges for forestry policies across the EU; notes in particular the different ecosystems, differences in forest ownership structure and the diversity of climate challenges facing different parts of Europe; highlights the need to take measurements and conduct monitoring at the appropriate level – local, regional, Member State or EU;
13. Warns against unrestricted commercial exploitation of forest resources, which, particularly in the case of natural forests, very often leads to their irreversible destruction;
14. Stresses the important role played by forests in the national economies, in particular in regional development, especially in rural areas, where the forestry sector is a major contributor to economic growth, jobs, prosperity, competitiveness and the attractiveness of regions;
15. Stresses that, since forest legislation affects millions of small forest owners, forest policies should always balance respect for owners' property rights with the requirements of delivering public goods;
16. Points out that forestry is a natural part of integrated rural and regional policy, a fact which should be taken into account in the discussions on the future of the CAP after 2013, and that it is also necessary to determine the need for measures relating to forestry;
17. Acknowledges that, in many instances, wind parks can be set up in forest areas; considers that measures for renewable-energy source projects and for forest protection are mutually complementary rather than conflicting;
18. Acknowledges the importance of maintaining or increasing forest resources in the EU, in

particular in Member States more affected by extreme weather and climate change, since forests and woodland are associated with significant social, economic and environmental benefits; and also that measures designed to protect forests should focus on prevention and adaptation in such a way that the forest does not lose its productive, ecological and social functions;

19. Considers that wood-based raw materials can be low-energy substitutes for energy intensive materials, such as metal alloys, plastics and concrete, widely used in construction and other industries; points out the risk of excessive regulation making timber products less competitive by comparison with these non-renewable materials;
20. Stresses the need to focus on the supply chain of raw and manufactured products in order to guarantee legal trade and forest protection; stresses that supply chain management could help to create a more level playing field, with stakeholder involvement and collaborative efforts having a crucial role;
21. Calls for vigilance and for close monitoring of forest resources to ensure that bioenergy strategies and any increases in harvesting levels for biomass do not lead to a depletion of forest carbon-storage capacity and counteract climate change objectives;
22. Stresses the indisputable importance for public safety of forest areas, which protect human habitats from the negative impact of natural phenomena;
23. Points out the importance of business recognising the credibility, publicity and other financial benefits that flow from its involvement in biodiversity conservation and forest protection;
24. Highlights the need to reinforce communication and information policy in order to ensure the sustainable management of forestry, adapt to climate change, inform the public and encourage the use of sustainable wood;
25. Notes the importance of exchanging best practices on how companies and sectors of industry can contribute to biodiversity targets through life-cycle thinking, and how they can build the link between biodiversity conservation and the generation of revenue;
26. Notes that Europe possesses undeniable know-how about forestry, which stems from long-standing traditional forestry practices; calls, however, for further action on research, training, communication and information regarding the risks of climate change for forests and the forestry sector, as well as for long-term planning by the regional authorities and the Member States, in cooperation with stakeholders and the Commission; considers that further research on the absorption of CO₂ by different types of forest is still necessary;
27. Calls for further action on research, education and information regarding the risks of climate change for forests and the forestry sector, as well as for long-term planning by the forestry industry, the regions and the Member States; stresses the need for better coordination of European and national research programmes on the risks of climate change for forests and the forestry sector; calls on the Commission to examine the possibility of setting up a reference website with digital mapping of forest areas and their authorised uses, NATURA areas and rare ecosystems, in order to provide government

services, citizens and companies with better information;

28. Stresses that the adaptive capacities of forests can have a positive impact on forest complexes and the forest industry in relation to the global effect of climate change; calls, therefore, for more financial support for research on adaptive capacities;
29. Stresses the need to enhance coordination and information efforts within the EU and between the EU and the Member States; takes the view that one means of achieving this would be for a single unit in the Commission to take on an active coordinating role with regard to all the Union's forestry-related activities; calls on the Commission to investigate, and put forward a proposal for, the creation of such a function within one DG;
30. Highlights the need to work out a strategy for financial instruments geared to the global and EU goals for forestry, including the exchange of best practices between Member States; asks the Commission to present a study before the end of 2011;
31. Considers that the industrial exploitation of forest resources to supply wood as a raw material to the chemical industry, or a semi-manufacture for the production of construction materials, should be restricted primarily to forest plantations; warns against the adverse effects of privatising the Member States' natural wealth, including forests;
32. Calls on the Commission to compile and monitor, at European and national level, indicators relating to forests and their functions (e.g. forest coverage, regenerative capacity, soil water capacity, erosion rates, areas for reforestation, etcetera);
33. Points out that, in arid areas and regions at risk of desertification, reforestation with productive species will benefit the inhabitants and secure their involvement in the tasks of conservation and firefighting;
34. Recognises that forests are particularly important in Mediterranean countries because of their ability to bring down the temperature and balance the water cycle, and therefore considers that reforestation should be preceded by scientific studies to identify the varieties and sites best suited to the purposes of soil conservation and rainwater catchment;
35. Encourages the Member States and the Commission to continue their efforts to stamp out illegal logging and the trade in timber thus produced, as by so doing they will help to combat deforestation, forest degradation and biodiversity loss;
36. Considers that, given their importance in CO₂ sequestration, agroforestry trees should be considered in the same way as non-productive traditional woodlands in relation to the fight against climate change.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	9.11.2010
Result of final vote	+: 44 -: 0 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Jean-Pierre Audy, Ivo Belet, Bendt Bendtsen, Jan Březina, Giles Chichester, Pilar del Castillo Vera, Lena Ek, Ioan Enciu, Gaston Franco, Adam Gierek, Fiona Hall, Romana Jordan Cizelj, Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš, Philippe Lamberts, Bogdan Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, Marisa Matias, Judith A. Merkies, Angelika Niebler, Jaroslav Paška, Aldo Patriciello, Miloslav Ransdorf, Herbert Reul, Teresa Riera Madurell, Michèle Rivasi, Paul Rübig, Amalia Sartori, Francisco Sosa Wagner, Patrizia Toia, Evžen Tošenovský, Ioannis A. Tsoukalas, Claude Turmes, Vladimir Urutchev, Adina-Ioana Vălean, Kathleen Van Brempt, Alejo Vidal-Quadras, Henri Weber
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	António Fernando Correia De Campos, Andrzej Grzyb, Jolanta Emilia Hibner, Silvana Koch-Mehrin, Ivari Padar, Vladko Todorov Panayotov, Peter Skinner, Silvia-Adriana Țicău, Catherine Trautmann

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	16.3.2011
Result of final vote	+: 53 -: 6 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	János Áder, Elena Oana Antonescu, Kriton Arsenis, Pilar Ayuso, Paolo Bartolozzi, Sandrine Bélier, Sergio Berlato, Martin Callanan, Nessa Childers, Bairbre de Brún, Bas Eickhout, Edite Estrela, Karl-Heinz Florenz, Elisabetta Gardini, Julie Girling, Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines, Satu Hassi, Jolanta Emilia Hibner, Dan Jørgensen, Karin Kadenbach, Christa Klaß, Holger Kraahmer, Jo Leinen, Corinne Lepage, Linda McAvan, Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė, Miroslav Ouzký, Vladko Todorov Panayotov, Gilles Pargneaux, Antonyia Parvanova, Andres Perello Rodriguez, Sirpa Pietikäinen, Mario Pirillo, Pavel Poc, Vittorio Prodi, Frédérique Ries, Anna Rosbach, Oreste Rossi, Dagmar Roth-Behrendt, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Carl Schlyter, Horst Schnellhardt, Richard Seeber, Theodoros Skylakakis, Bogusław Sonik, Salvatore Tatarella, Åsa Westlund, Glenis Willmott, Sabine Wils, Marina Yannakoudakis
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Marisa Matias, Miroslav Mikolášik, Bill Newton Dunn, Bart Staes, Eleni Theoharous, Giommaria Uggias, Thomas Ulmer, Marita Ulvskog, Anna Záborská