

# Forest owners perspective on the measures needed under rural development policy

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# The importance of forestry in rural development

## **Economic values:**

- Forests cover 157 million ha, about 40% of the total land area in the EU.
- The total amount of wood is estimated at 24.1 billion m<sup>3</sup>, which has increased by 4.9 billion m<sup>3</sup> over the past 20 years.

## **Social values:**

- At least 92% of European forests are accessible to the public for recreational purposes.
- Around 3.5 million people work in the European forest sector, with the majority being in rural areas.

## **Environmental values:**

- Responsible forest management mitigates possible harmful impact of climate change on Europe's forests such as forest fires, wind storms, pest and disease outbreaks.
- 37 million ha of forest area is under biodiversity protection.
- Europe's forests remove annually 430 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere by photosynthesis.
- The forestry sector should continue to be supported as an integral part of Rural Development Policy in the new programming period with its separate measures.

# Supporting the competitiveness of the forest sector

- Forests significantly contribute to the vitality and well-being of rural areas.
- The rural development policy is the main instrument for forestry in the EU.
- Only a competitive and economically viable forest sector is able to fulfil its multifunctional role.
- The priorities of the Rural Development policy must contribute to achieving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry (Art. 4).

To promote competitive, sustainable forest management:

- The measures for the support of investments and the processing marketing of forest products (Art. 27)
- The support for forest infrastructure (Art. 18.lit. c).

# Promoting the mobilisation and use of wood/biomass

- Wood is a renewable, carbon neutral and ecologically friendly resource.
- Knowledge transfer and information (Art. 15), as well as Advisory (Art. 16) and Co-operation (Art. 36) actions are essential to improve the provision of ecosystem services and increase the mobilization of wood.
- Cooperation of forest owners and the setting up and maintenance of producer groups (Art. 28) could also play a key role in overcoming the scattered and small scale forest holdings' structure.

# Improving the provision of ecosystem services

- The active prevention and restoration of damage to forests from forest fires and natural disasters is crucial (Art. 25), as well as to mitigate the negative effects of climate change in the future.
- The compensation of forest owners (Art. 31) for costs incurred and income foregone in forest areas concerned by environmental legislation, such as the Habitat Directive is crucial.
- Payments for forest environmental services (Art. 35), (such as climate change mitigation, biodiversity, drinking water and recreation spaces), are essential all over Europe for a multifunctional forestry.

# Simplification by decreasing the bureaucratic burden

- To increase the uptake of available forestry related measures, we need to reduce the high level of bureaucracy and unattractive payment levels.
- More flexibility for Member states to implement the measures is needed, e.g. Art. 35.
- Already today sustainable forest management is safe guarded by national or equivalent forest legislation. Therefore additional requirement for Forest management plan (Art. 22, 25, 35) for forest holdings above a certain size is contradicting the attempt to simplify the support.

**Thank you!**



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