

Advisory group on Forestry and Cork
3 July 2012, Brussels
Draft Minutes

1. Approval of the Agenda and the minutes of the last meeting of 5 October 2011

Juha Hakkarainen, Chairman, opened the meeting and stated it has been long time since the AG had its previous meeting. Furthermore he proposed under point 7 to discuss the development needs of the working in the AG. The agenda and the minutes of the last meeting were approved. Industry requested why the CIRCA database is not working and highlighted the importance to be able to receive the relevant documents before the meeting. Producers questioned why new legislative proposal for Rural Development forestry measures is not discussed in the this AG as well as BEE reform. Chairman informed the AG that he had proposed the legal proposal on Rural Development regulation to be discussed in the meeting but the Commission had not approved this topic to be included on the agenda. The Chairman reiterated the decisions of the last meeting.

Agreed: The agenda and the minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2. State of play of the Strategic Agenda of the Chairman of the Advisory Group

The Chairman went through the Strategic Agenda and highlighted the topics that had been discussed in the AG meetings and opened the floor for discussion. NGOs were disappointed of the Commission's lack of uptake of the agenda topics presented in the AG Strategic Agenda in the AG meetings and asked for improvement. Furthermore they requested more AG meetings in order to have opportunity to affect the policy making at right time. Producers raised the question why such an important topic as legal proposal for Rural Development Policy (RDP) is not discussed in this AG as it affects the forest owners. Chairman highlighted that the members of the AG have shown great enthusiasm and commitment to the work of the AG and wish to see improvements in the work of the AG by the Commission. The Commission responded by stating they had to allocate resources to right group and right discussions. As RDP is part of CAP reform this proposal has been discussed in the AG on Rural Development which is the right place to discuss the proposal. The Commission continued stating they have organised two AG meetings per year and also additional meeting together with SFC on revision of EU forest strategy. Producer stated their disagreement of holding discussions on forestry measures under RDP elsewhere than in this AG as RDP is the main financing tool in EU for forest related measures and the relevant expertise is in the AG Forestry and Cork on forest related matters. NGOs supported this statement. Producers asked for the Chairman of the AG forestry and cork to be invited to the AG Rural Development meetings in order to improve the information flow between these two groups. Chairman concluded that the AG wishes to remain the advisory body to the Commission on the forestry related matters and should be consulted.

3. LULUCF proposal – discussion on risks and opportunities for forest and forest based industry sector

The Commission gave a presentation on the LULUCF and its potential importance in the EU's climate policy and the contents of the proposal. Commission presented the framework for accounting and monitoring that includes: communication on LULUCF,

the legal proposal on LULUCF, separate legal framework for accounting, LULUCF Action Plans and proposal to improve monitoring through Monitoring Mechanism Regulation (MMR). Commission considers that when harmonised and robust accounting is established, consideration could be given to formally include the sector in the EU climate commitment. The Commission presented the content of the proposal, implications of the new HWP pool, accounting obligations and the timeline for the process. The Chairman opened the discussion.

Producers welcomed the positive recognition of HWV however, they questioned why the SFC WG climate change final report recommendations have not been taken into account and stated their disagreement of longer rotation periods as well as how the counting has been done. Furthermore they were of view that land use change is not a problem in Europe but outside EU and forests in Europe are rather being under managed. Commitments should recognise the substitution effect wood based products have to non-renewable raw materials as well as their ability to store carbon and multifunctional role. They highlighted that SFM should not be overregulated and were of concerns of Action Plans and called for inclusion of trees such as olive and cork. Industry supported the proposal especially in view of renewable energy and wished to keep the proposal close to Durban decision. They raised their concern on the National Action Plans and proposed deeper discussion on this topic in the possible WG under AG. Industry also called for recognition of substitution effect for non-renewable raw materials. NGOs asked more information about the Action Plans and recognised HWP is positive step forward. Agro-forestry group raised their concern on forest fires and biomass reduction needs and how this will be taken into account in the proposal. Commission responded that forests are not seen only as carbon storage and other sectors should be taken into account. SF need to be also included as multi functionality of forests. Chairman concluded that in decision making it is important to have holistic view of forests including bioeconomy, climate change, environmental aspects as well as social aspects. Discussions should be continued in the next meeting.

4. Information on Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe process and negotiations

The Commission gave information on the LBA process and pre-INC2 meeting. Negotiations are well on their way. First INC1 meeting was held on 27 February – 2 March 2012 in Vienna and second INC 2 meeting is expected in 3 - 7 September 2012 in Bonn. INC3 is expected in December 2012- January 2013 and INC 4 in May-June 2013. INC is expected to conclude its negotiations by 30 June 2013 and by 31 December 2013 INC presents results to an extraordinary Forest Europe Ministerial Conference. LBA draft negotiating text has been drafted and bureau published first draft on 24 May 2012. Work is ongoing and the WP meets in June/July to prepare for the next draft. Currently the contract is light in legal aspects and needs to be sharpened for good legal document. Distinction between purpose and objective has not been yet clarified. More information can be found on the website: www.forestnegotations.org.

The AG discussed the matter. NGOs asked for analysis to be done on SFM and what added value this process brings as well as more concrete and ambitious targets. Producers supported the MCPFE criteria for SFM and saw great value in LBA but also called for clear targets. However, they found it difficult to become part of the discussions. They asked for coherence between LBA and EU Forest Strategy and asked information how consistency between the two processes can be assured. Research community saw added value in the legally binding aspect especially when Russia is involved. Commission replied that MCPFE criteria would be strong basis for SFM however tools to improve SF should be taken into account. Added value is difficult

to analyse before the content is more clear. Regarding coherence it is important that LBA and FS are synchronised and therefore if LBA envisages to go beyond FS, FS can be revised. FS ensures SFM, multiple use of forests and coordinates all forest related policies.

Agreed: The Chairman concluded the importance of including AG in the LBA process and continuing discussion on the topic when LBA process proceeds.

5. State of play on the biomass sustainability criteria

The Commission representative did not arrive and this item was not presented. Producers highlighted the underuse of the EU forest potential and stated they would not like to see different criteria for different use of wood. Furthermore they highlighted new criteria would only create confusion.

6. Guidelines on implementation and management of N2K, PAFs, biogeographical seminar, short report from Eu Natura Directors meeting 21-23 May 2012

The Consultant Kerstin Sundseth presented the N2k group work. Purpose of the guidance document is to clarify the implementation of the Habitats and Birds directives in forested areas and address potential challenges as well as identify synergies between FM and N2000 objectives. Overall objective is to contribute to better mutual understanding and cooperation between forestry and nature sectors. Guidance document is joint initiative from DG AGRI and DG ENVI. This is the first guidance document produced since EU and N2000 network has changed. It is therefore important to update and modernise the document. Consultant presented the participatory process. Workshop and meetings are expected. Scoping document will be provided for comments to the AG members.

After the presentation the AG discussed on the matter. Producer saw this as a good initiative and hope this recognises the work done by forest owners in these areas. They wished to participate to the upcoming workshop. However, producers questioned why only forestry sector receives this guidance document and not other N2000 areas. NGOs asked for more time to give feedback and were favouring of the project. Consultant extended the deadline to 15 September 2012. Commission stated that the date for the workshop is not yet decided however SFC and AG would be invited as well as other committees. Commission asked for nomination of experts who would like to participate. Furthermore, they informed that guidelines are also prepared for agriculture and N2000 areas. NGOs asked to link the workshop to the next AG meeting. Producers asked for larger share of funding made available for forest owners in these areas (80 % FO and 20 % to control & authority) especially from Life +. They also asked for update of the species list as in some areas certain species have already disappeared and thus protection of the area does not correspond to the reality and clarification of how CSF will help financing N2000 areas. Better integration of forest owners into these management plans was also seen necessary as well as voluntary contracts. Workers were asking for beech tree initiative and what can forest owners expect from that.

Agreed: Important topic that has to be further discussed in the AG. AG members were invited to provide input to the consultation.

7. Discussion on the functioning of AG and development needs

The Chairman asked the AG ideas on how to improve the functioning of the AG. Research community would like research to be part of the strategic agenda and stakeholder groups should be able to give information where research is needed. Producers would like to develop innovation partnership on forestry as well as have better integration and communication between other groups such as Forest based industry Committee and AG on Rural Development.

NGOs asked for the Agenda to be prepared earlier for the meeting, more meetings per year, less presentations by the Commission and more discussion on relevant topics in order to give the Commission guidance in policy making. Producers and industry supported this. NGOs also wished the Commission to maintain the given date 4 weeks before the meeting and not to change the date and reiterated the minutes of the previous meeting where they had asked for the relevant documents for the meetings to be sent at least 2 weeks before the meeting date. Industry wanted to have a real discussion on the implementation of the timber regulation and rural development measures for forestry not only information of the outcomes. Furthermore the industry would like the AG to come into conclusions and recommendations.

The Commission explained the possibility to create working groups that would work under the Advisory Group focusing in more detail on pre-selected relevant topics. Proposal would be to have WGs with one working language (English) only. If interpretation would be needed then option would be to start with ½ day meeting with the Commission presentations and discussion with the AG members (AG meeting) followed by ½ day session in the afternoon in 3 separate rooms with 1 language per room. Different methods could be considered and ideas are welcomed.

Members discussed this option and were of view that WGs under AG would only be beneficial if they have clear objective and need that would come from the AG. This should be further discussed before decision should be taken to create them. Further development of collaboration with SFC WGs and AG should be investigated.

Agreed: The Chairman concluded the AG is willing to try new working methods, however WGs under AG would only be beneficial if they have clear objective and need that would come from the AG. This should be further discussed before decision should be taken to create them. Furthermore AG reiterated the previous minutes that agendas for the AG meeting should be prepared well in advance. Further development of collaboration with SFC WGs and AG should be investigated and the role of AG as advising body should be better utilized.

8. Any other business

NGOs asked information about the elections of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen. The Commission responded that the elections would be held in the next meeting and Chairman and Vice-Chairmen could indicate their interest to continue.

Chairman explained that the revision of EU forest strategy was not on the agenda as it will be discussed tomorrow in the workshop with the members of the SFC.

Agreed items:

- **The agenda and the minutes of the last meeting were approved.**
- **The Chairman concluded the importance of including AG in the LBA process and continuing discussion on the topic when LBA process proceeds.**

- **Important topic that has to be further discussed in the AG. AG members were invited to provide input to the consultation.**
- **The AG is willing to try new working methods, however WGs under AG would only be beneficial if they have clear objective and need that would come from the AG. This should be further discussed before decision should be taken to create them. Furthermore AG reiterated the previous minutes that agendas for the AG meeting should be prepared well in advance. Further development of collaboration with SFC WGs and AG should be investigated and the role of AG as advising body should be better utilized.**

Disclaimer

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