



## Managing Forests for Sustainable Wood

26 May 2016, European Parliament, Brussels

Key policy-makers, forest owners, forest industry representatives, and experts from the environmental and nature conservation sector were gathered in the European Parliament by MEP Elisabeth Köstinger and MEP Miapetra Kumpula-Natri at the breakfast meeting entitled “*Managing Forests for Sustainable Wood*” to discuss the role of sustainable management of EU’s forests in providing renewable raw material for all outlets of the bioeconomy.

Phil Hogan, the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development provided the key note speech underlining that “*forestry represents a key sector in the transition towards a low-carbon and climate friendly economy, and is one of the main sectors that keep our rural areas vibrant and sustainable.*” The need to ensure the long-term sustainable management and development of forests, which balance their economic, social and environmental benefits while enhancing resilience was stressed recalling the importance of the EU Forest Strategy in achieving this. It was also said that the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development will provide around 8.2 billion EUR of public expenditure for forestry measures in the 2014-2020 period, which will be allocated towards measures for afforestation, creation of woodlands, training and advisory services, and investments in resilience and technologies, to name a few. Further, the sector will also be the focus of multiple research and innovation policies. It was concluded by emphasising the importance of coordination and coherence stressing that this is enshrined in the EU Forest Strategy as well as the Multi-Annual implementation Plan of the Forest Strategy.

The meeting provided inputs from various stakeholders with Sven-Erik Hammar, CEPF pointing out that “*forestry must be viewed as a circular system*” underlining that managing forests for the next generation is one of the best long-term economic investments to be made. It was further urged not to threaten the drivers of such investments by avoiding overregulation and not limiting ownership rights. The paper and pulp sector was represented by Ulrich Leberle, CEPI who stressed that the industry already optimises the use of wood, as 1 m<sup>3</sup> of wood is used 2,5 times through the cascading use. Developing the bioeconomy further, further optimisation will be needed. It was stressed that it will also be essential to prove that wood is sourced from sustainably managed forests.

Patrizio Antonicoli, CEI-Bois underlined that the European Woodworking Industry is committed to the bioeconomy and reiterated the evident vital connection with the forests insisting on the centrality of the Sustainable Forests Management and on the necessary harmony and balance between the environmental, economic, and social pillars. Fanny-Pomme Langué, AEBIOM further added that “*it is important to address sustainable forest management in a holistic way rather than focusing on certain uses*”. In order to answer questions related to bioenergy development in the EU climate and energy framework, the need for an EU harmonised policy on bioenergy sustainability was stressed. This should take sustainable forest management considerations into account, based on existing legislations



and on a macro level approach. Further, rather than talking about competition, the need to develop synergies between wood uses was raised.

René van Sloten, Cefic, offered the perspective of the chemical industry as a potential downstream user of second generation bioethanol pointing out that there is great potential to increase the industry's carbon containing feedstock if discrimination versus fossil feedstock and other uses is removed. It was said that there is demand for biobased chemicals in the EU, but a lot of investment is going outside of Europe, mainly because of the costs of the renewable feedstock. It was stressed that the chemical industry must immediately gain access to competitively priced and sustainably produced bioethanol. Strong regret was also expressed towards the EU not making a tariff offer for bioethanol in the negotiations with Mercosur and included it on an exception list in the TTIP talks.

The debate further highlighted the multifactorial benefits of sustainable forest management also underlining that these benefits can only be realised through active management. It was reiterated that economic viability of forestry is one of the preconditions of ensuring sustainable forest management. The need to build more with wood was pointed out by MEP Paul Brannen stating that *"the 21<sup>st</sup> century has the potential to be the wood century"* and MEP Gesine Meissner also stressed that wood has more technical uses than have thus far been applied. It was further reiterated by MEP Miapetra Kumpula-Natri that this should be included in the Bioeconomy Strategy also calling on the Parliament to support the work of the Commission on reviewing the strategy as well as ensuring that bioeconomy and sustainable biomass are kept high on the agenda. The debate further highlighted the role and efforts of foresters in achieving sustainable forest management, but it was also pointed out that there are many pressures put on forests and clear choices need to be made with regards to its uses. The need to mobilise and meet the challenges of demand was raised by MEP Elisabeth Köstinger asking the stakeholders how this can be achieved. It was pointed out by Sven-Erik Hammar that avoiding overregulation is one way as well as encouraging the use of wood and promoting active forestry. MEP Miapetra Kumpula-Natri further pointed out the role that digitalisation can play also emphasising the need to optimise knowledge. The discussion also mentioned that many small scale forest owners have difficulty mobilising due to fragmentation. It was said that supportive frameworks are needed for these forest owners in order to engage and interest them to manage their forests. The need for further coordination and coherence was raised stressing that forestry is a cross-sectoral issue calling for consistent policies.

The meeting was concluded by MEP Elisabeth Köstinger highlighting that a joint committee meeting has been scheduled for October between AGRI, ENVI, and ITRE to further discuss EU forestry and the challenges to meet in the future.

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