

MTK represents more than 300 000 farmers, forest owners and rural entrepreneurs in Finland.



The EU needs a strong and balanced forest strategy, but the forest policy belongs to the Member States

The importance and potential of forests are enormous to promote sustainable development and transition to a fossil-free economy. It is urgent to recognize all pillars of benefitting the forests: economic, social and ecological pillars need to be in balance to manage forests sustainably. Now, the European Commission is only highlighting the ecological side, which is jeopardizing the multifunctional use of forests.

The EU needs a strong forest strategy to utilize the potential of forests. However, the Union has shared competence with the Member States in several policy areas, such as energy, agriculture and the environment, which all have strong connections to forests and national forest decision making. For this reason, the Union needs a coherent, strong and effective forestry strategy that creates a framework for that competence.

MTK requires the Commission to rewrite the forest strategy and follow the European Parliament's points on the forest strategy. The leaked Commission version of the strategy does not seem to consider the views of the Council or the democratically elected Parliament: this raises an immediate discussion of transparency and the state of democracy of which the Commission has itself stated strongly in the Union.

MTK wants to highlight the following:

- The Commission must follow the opinions of Parliament and the Council and rewrite the strategy. The Commission must also listen to the science-based opinions of the forest sector.
- Forest policy is and must continue to be a part of national decision-making power.
- The use of forests must be considered in light of the various dimensions of sustainability.
- The differences between countries in the sustainable management of forests must be understood. One size fits all model does not apply in forestry since the Union has several forest zones.
- Instead of strict restrictions, the forest strategy should focus in advising forest owners in different parts of the EU.
- The commission needs to understand that forests are mainly owned by private families. Property rights may not be forgotten, and the forest owners must be heard.

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Forests and the forest sector provide significant welfare for Europe. The sector directly employs 500,000 people and has indirectly almost 3 million employees. There are 16 million private forest owners in Europe and much of the € 12 billion in timber trade incomes benefit rural areas where there are only a few alternative business opportunities. Future opportunities will not be scrapped by a poor forest strategy.

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