



*“Sustainable forest management is an integral part of achieving a green economy”*

Elisabeth Köstinger, Member of European Parliament

**EU decision-makers and stakeholders gathered in the European Parliament to discuss sustainable forest management in Europe and the important role that forests play in establishing a bioeconomy, creating jobs and growth, conserving biodiversity, and adapting and mitigating climate change.**

Elisabeth Köstinger MEP invited various Parliamentarians, the Commissioner for Agriculture & Rural Development and stakeholders in Strasbourg to kick-off the *“Sustainable Forest Management”* working group of the European Parliament Intergroup on *“Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Development”* to discuss the important role that forests play and the need to align competing interests and build on common principles in order to enhance the flow of policy.

Phil Hogan, Commissioner for Agriculture & Rural Development outlined that the Commission is committed to investing in forests through rural development programmes and the bioeconomy stressing *“the importance of innovative programmes and projects that realise the added value of natural resources while at the same time contributing to jobs and growth”*. The Commissioner also emphasised the importance of considering all aspects related to forest management calling for collaboration among stakeholders as well as within the Commission in order to establish common principles and ensuring efficient policies.

The importance of Europe’s forest was stressed by all participants. The issue of sustainability criteria for biomass was highlighted by Philipp zu Guttenberg, Vice-President of the Confederation of European Forest Owners, who underlined *“that forest legislation in EU Member States is robust as our management approach addresses the forest ecosystem as a whole”* stressing that there is no sustainability risk for solid biomass.

Reinhardt Neft, Vice-President of the European State Forest Association stressed that it is not necessary for Europe to import timber from other parts of the world with the aim of setting aside our own forests for preservation. European forests can be used and preserved at the same time *“through sustainable and multifunctional forest management, Europe’s forests prove this is possible”*. It was also pointed out that managed forests often provide more biodiversity than non-managed forests.

It was further underlined by Luc Bas, IUCN that *“enhanced forest landscape restoration would be an important additional contribution to both adaptation and mitigation in Europe”*. It was also said that nature based solutions should be better taken into account in the circular economy package.

Patrizio Anonicoli, European Confederation of Woodworking Industries emphasised that more attention needs to be paid to the general eco-efficiency of construction with wood, as it was underlined that using in constructions results in significant CO<sup>2</sup> savings.

The debate highlighted a multitude of views and national experience from Members of the European Parliament, underlining the need for common guiding principles taking into account the different situations within Europe. It was also emphasised that forest owners will never use more resources than what is considered sustainable as it counters the interests of maintaining a sustainable capital and supply.



It was concluded by Elisabeth Köstinger, MEP that this kick-off meeting will be the first of many opportunities for further dialogue on what is needed to enhance sustainable forest management in Europe.

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