



Which role for forests in the future CAP?

10 July 2018 – European Parliament



This event was co-hosted by **MEP Herbert Dorfmann** and **MEP Jytte Guteland**, and brought together representatives from policy, practice, NGO and civil society, to engage in an informed debate on the topic of forests in the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The panel also included:

- Peter Wehrheim, Cabinet of Phil Hogan, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development
- Ingwald Gschwandtl, Director – Head of Division Forest Policy and Forest Information, Austrian EU Presidency
- Octavian Anghel, Deputy CZO of the Romanian State Forests (ROMSILVA), EUSTAFOR Member
- Arpo Kullerkupp, The Estonian Private Forest Union (EPFU), CEPF Member
- Javier Ruiz, WWF, European Policy Office team, Senior Policy Officer, Agriculture and Sustainable Food System

MEP Herbert Dorfmann opened the conference by stressing the importance of forests in Europe, and the key role of CAP towards the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy. While there is a strong link between forestry and agriculture, Mr. Dorfmann highlighted that the CAP's second pillar is important in supporting EU forestry. During his intervention, it was moreover stressed that a significant element now is to have a first reading agreement, as well as a mandate to create new debates and new opportunities. Last but not least, the positive impact of the bio-based industry of wood on the economy was also addressed.

Representing the European Commission, **Peter Wehrheim** highlighted the importance of forests to the EU, with reference to their numerous contributions, not only to the environment but also to a plethora of economic and social matters. According to Mr. Wehrheim, the forest areas, which have increased in the EU above 40%, are linked with job creation in rural areas, as they bring new opportunities for innovative activities in bio-economy. Moreover, forests bring value to a climate-friendly economy through their products, tourism-related activities and recreation services. This is therefore a key sector fostering the transition towards sustainability; a common principle for both agriculture and forestry, according to the European Commission. "In the proposal for the future CAP, there are 9 specific objectives distributed between economic, environmental and social objectives. The environmental objectives include forestry mainly for climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation". The future of food and farming relies on promoting sustainability in these areas, while the aim is now to promote, employment, growth, bio-economy and sustainability through forestry. With reference to the second pillar of CAP, it includes a key tool box that member states can adapt to their needs. As the CAP allows a lot of flexibility for forestry, there is a significant reinforcement and support for research and innovation. Regarding the latter, "we must not forget the potential for digitalization in the forest sector", as Mr. Wehrheim stressed.

After that, **Ingwald Gschwandtl** presented the situation of forests in Austria, 80% of which are private and mostly owned by farmers, as an example for multifunctional, sustainable forest management. With reference to key challenges, Mr. Gschwandtl mentioned the need for active forest management, in order to reduce the risk for natural hazards, for instance floods or landslides, and to ensure multiple benefits from forests. As climate change is impacting forests in a negative manner, it is critical to increase the forests' resilience to render mitigation possible. Forest management in the EU is challenging especially as there is no common forest policy. However, there are common concerns as regards ensuring forest health and resilience, climate change adaptation, replies to growing demand for renewable materials, energy and ecosystem services, as well as transition to a bio-based economy and towards meeting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Octavian Anghel presented the activities of ROMSILVIA, which is managing Romania's public forests and challenges and opportunities for Romanian forests vis-à-vis the new Common Agricultural Policy. The main challenges that forests have to face in Romania are related to a higher frequency of extreme weather events like drought, strong storms and fires, therefore it is crucial to strengthen forests' resilience to climate change and extreme weather events. Also, labour migration from rural and

mountain areas is an important issue to be addressed in Romania. Mr. Anghel presented concrete examples on infrastructure construction and water management related projects, and he also pointed out that State Forest Management Organizations are not eligible for important forestry measures in relation to biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation, and this creates missed opportunities for Romanian rural areas, “financial incentives need to be based on providing services rather than on the type of forest property” he claimed. He concluded pointing out the need of properly recognizing the role of forestry to progress on the objectives of the new CAP.

Then, **Arpo Kullerkupp** underlined that the Rural Development fund supports a wide range of forestry measures that are beneficial for the development of vibrant rural areas and the protection of the environment. In Estonia, the funds are mainly attributed to the thinning of young forests. As technology's and innovation's role are of significant meaning, Mr. Kullerkupp highlighted that most of the procedures are made automatically, while on-site inspection is realized with drones. All in all, sustainable forest management needs to be further promoted, as it contributes to tackling climate change, as well as mitigating and adapting with it, protecting biodiversity, preserving habitats and landscapes, and finally providing numerous ecosystem services.

Jabier Ruiz from WWF presented the NGO's perspective on the topic of the event. “Forests have an important role to play in the future CAP not only in the second pillar, but also in the first one”. Therefore, the possibility to allow forestry to also benefit from funding from the first pillar should also be investigated. “A lot of measures in the first pillar have an impact on forests even if it is not their focus”, according to Mr. Ruiz. Using biomass for energy production is not a good option, while being renewable doesn't mean being smart. With reference to solutions, Mr. Ruiz mentioned that there are many tools available in CAP to contribute to sustainable forestry. Regarding budget repartition, “it isn't only about rebalancing, but also about placing elements from the second to the first pillar to bring more flexibility”. All in all, changes need to happen at all levels of governance, to be seen on the ground. “For a positive final outcome, forestry needs the largest support possible”, as Mr. Ruiz indicated.

The aforementioned interventions were followed by a fruitful debate with the audience. Discussions mainly revolved around governance issues, such as the need for a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe, the definition of roles of different actors to ensure that forestry measures will be addressed in member states' strategic plans, as well as forestry's adaptation needs.

Last but not least, the closing remarks of this conference were provided by **MEP Jytte Guteland**, who underlined that it is decisive to use forests in a sustainable manner. “Forests are our green gold” and can be used not only for recreational purposes, but also to boost rural development, mitigate climate change, improve biodiversity and social inclusion. They are also linked with the growth of our economy, creation of jobs, innovation and a wide range of opportunities. It is now consequently crucial “to ensure that sustainable forestry receives the proper funds to attain these goals”.