

Written Statement for the High-Level Policy Dialogue: Sustainable Forest Management: unlocking forest biodiversity's potential

Cepi, the Confederation of European Paper Industries, welcomes the opportunity to participate in this timely debate on the future of sustainable forest management in Europe and its contribution to biodiversity protection and enhancement.

The European pulp and paper industries source 86% of the wood they use in the EU and share the strategic objective to keep healthy and growing forests. This includes maintaining biodiversity, which is a key component of ecosystem stability and productivity. We believe that sustainable forest management remains the solution to enhance environmental functions of forests alongside social and economic ones.

Although new challenges such as climate change make it necessary to adapt existing forest management practices, the starting point should be the acknowledgment of the achievements of sustainable forest management in maintaining biodiversity today. The Forest Europe 2020 report shows that over the years, sustainable forest management, in both protected and non-protected areas, has led to improving trends for many biodiversity indicators, such deadwood volumes, tree species diversity, forest area designated for biodiversity conservation and forest bird species, alongside an increase in the forest area and in growing stock. Sustainable forest management is also an efficient mean of climate change mitigation, by increasing forests' carbon sink through the management of their age structure. It also helps forests' climate adaptation, sometimes by introducing species that are more resilient to new climatic conditions.

At the same time, continued efforts are needed to further enhance forest biodiversity and guarantee forests' multi-functionality. To this aim, it should be recognised that different kinds of forests all have a contribution to make. As shown by a recent EFI report¹, maintaining biodiversity is not limited to the protection of high value forests such as primary and old-growth forests, but "*hands-on nature-positive management is possible in every forest managed for wood production, including plantation forests*". This integrative model which combines wood production with biodiversity and other functions should be adapted to the needs of different regions in Europe, reflecting the variation of forest types across Europe.

Finally, the involvement of all forest stakeholders is essential to design, implement and monitor forest biodiversity policies, also considering the diversity of forest ownership in Europe. Proper impact assessment is also key to evaluate trade-offs between different management options, for example considering that depending on the stringency of such policies the unintended effect of shifting part of the production of forest products outside of the EU² may appear.

¹ Muys, B., Angelstam, P., Bauhus, J., Bouriaud, L., Jactel, H., Kraigher, H., Müller, J., Pettorelli, N., Pötzelsberger, E., Primmer, E., Svoboda, M., Thorsen, B.J., Van Meerbeek, K. 2022. Forest Biodiversity in Europe. From Science to Policy 13. European Forest Institute. <https://doi.org/10.36333/fs13>

² Schier F, Iost S, Seintsch B, Weimar H, Dieter M. Assessment of Possible Production Leakage from Implementing the EU Biodiversity Strategy on Forest Product Markets. *Forests*. 2022; 13(8):1225. <https://doi.org/10.3390/f13081225>



Cepi is the European association representing the paper industry. We offer a wide range of renewable and recyclable wood-based fibre solutions to EU citizens: from packaging to textile, hygiene and tissue products, printing and graphic papers as well as speciality papers, but also bio-chemicals for food and pharmaceuticals, bio-composites and bioenergy. We are a responsible industry: 85% of our raw materials are sourced from within the European Union and 78% of the wood comes from certified forests, 92% of the water we use is returned in good condition to the environment. We are the world champion in recycling at the rate of 71.4%. At the forefront of the decarbonisation and industrial transformation of our economy, we embrace digitalisation and bring 21 billion value addition to the European economy and €4.5 billion investments annually. Through its 18 national associations, Cepi gathers 495 companies operating 895 mills across Europe and directly employing more than 179,000 people.