

## ROADMAP

Roadmaps aim to inform citizens and stakeholders about the Commission's work in order to allow them to provide feedback and to participate effectively in future consultation activities. Citizens and stakeholders are in particular invited to provide views on the Commission's understanding of the problem and possible solutions and to make available any relevant information that they may have.

<b>TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE</b>	EU Forest Strategy
<b>LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT</b>	Co-leadership DG AGRI - DG ENV – DG CLIMA AGRI.D.4 – ENV.D.1 – CLIMA.C.3
<b>LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE</b>	Communication
<b>INDICATIVE PLANNING</b>	Q1 2021
<b>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION</b>	<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/forestry/forestry-explained_en">https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/forestry/forestry-explained_en</a> <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/index_en.htm">https://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/index_en.htm</a>

This Roadmap is provided for information purposes only and its content might change. It does not prejudice the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content. All elements of the initiative described by the Roadmap, including its timing, are subject to change.

## A. Context, Problem definition and Subsidiarity Check

### Context

The current EU Forest Strategy was adopted in 2013 and reviewed in 2018.

The [European Green Deal](#) announced in December 2019 an ambitious vision for the European Union to become a sustainable and climate neutral economy by 2050. In the Communication it was also announced that, building on the 2030 [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#), the Commission will prepare a new EU Forest Strategy covering the whole forest cycle and promoting the many services that forests provide. The EU Forest Strategy will enable the contribution of the forest sector to the new Commission priorities of building a new growth model through the European Green Deal, including advancing rural areas. Given that many EU policies are relevant to forests, there is a need for a comprehensive strategy to ensure that forests are addressed in a consistent manner across the different policies.

The strategy will also contribute to meet the EU's international commitments and an established, consistent and holistic approach on forests, allowing stronger EU leadership internationally (2030 sustainability agenda, Paris Agreement, Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention to Combat Desertification). The [Communication on Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests \(2019\)](#) sets the basic framework for the EU's global action, which needs to be properly and consistently taken into consideration when shaping domestic policies.

### Problem the initiative aims to tackle

The EU's forest area has been growing in the last decades and covers about 45% of EU land. However, forest ecosystems are under increasing pressure as a result of climate change, which aggravates other key drivers of pressures such as pests, diseases, extreme weather events and forest fires. Other pressures come from rural abandonment, lack of management and fragmentation due to land use changes, increasing management intensity due to rising demand for wood, forest products and energy, infrastructure development, urbanisation and land take.

Forests are hugely important for biodiversity conservation; climate change mitigation and adaptation; water regulation, the provision of food, medicines and materials; disaster risk reduction and control; soil stabilisation and erosion control; air and water purification; and as a natural home for recreation and learning.

Forests and the forest-based sector should contribute to a modern, climate neutral, resource-efficient and competitive economy; preserve lively rural areas and help maintain wealthy rural populations; and preserve landscapes, culture and heritage, where the Common Agricultural Policy plays a key role. Securing the health and the resilience of existing and new forests is crucial for their effective support to all these environmental, social and economic functions and services.

Against this context, forests need to be managed sustainably, improving both their quality and quantity, and be adapted proactively to projected climate change, to effectively support EU's climate and biodiversity objectives, and the development of the circular bioeconomy, including in rural areas.

The EU Forest Strategy will therefore have to foresee measures to avoid or correct unsustainable practices and seek the right balance and synergies between the need to increase the forest protection and restoration efforts to achieve the EU's climate and biodiversity objectives on the one hand, and the different socio-economic interests related to forests, on the other.

The EU Forest Strategy will firstly need to have a meaningful protection, restoration and re- and afforestation dimension, in strong cooperation with foresters, farmers and local communities. In line with the Biodiversity Strategy, the last remaining primary and old-growth forests in the EU need to be strictly protected.

Secondly, the EU Forest Strategy will have to have a strong economic dimension. It has to lay the foundations for innovation and promotion of new products that replace the intensive fossil-based materials and effectively contribute to a new climate neutral society.

Moreover, through the Common Agricultural Policy as well as other policy frameworks such as sustainable finance, the EU will also increasingly help to ensure that forestry in the EU, together with agriculture, is increasingly sustainable, supporting and strengthening the benefits that forestry brings to European society, and providing sustainable socio-economic rewards for farmers, forest managers, and the EU as a whole.

### **Basis for EU intervention (legal basis and subsidiarity check)**

All EU Forest Strategies have built on subsidiarity and shared responsibility for setting up their respective frameworks for forest-related actions, building on cooperative, beneficial links between EU and Member State policies and initiatives.

The EU has a long history of contributing through its policies and legislation (for instance, based on Art 43 and 191 of TFEU) to implementing sustainable forest management and to Member States' decisions on forests. In addition, many EU objectives and policies are relevant for forests and the forest-based sector and have an influence on how Member States shape their national forest policies.

Many challenges and pressures go beyond national boundaries and can be better addressed at EU level, such as global drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss, transboundary effects of disasters and disturbances on forests, or the global forest-based value chains and markets. They affect all or several Member States as well as the EU as a whole and the achievement of many of its policy objectives, not least the achievement of the climate neutrality objective and a favourable status of forest ecosystems, are addressed more effectively at EU level.

This underlines the need to reinforce the links and coordination between the EU and its Member States to secure delivery on all interlinked policies, including the promotion of interaction, exchange, coordination and consistency across levels of administration and coordinated monitoring, sharing and exchange of information.

### **B. What does the initiative aim to achieve and how**

The new EU Forest Strategy will set the policy framework to deliver the forests we want in the EU in the future. It will cover the whole forest cycle and have as its key objectives effective afforestation, forest preservation and restoration in Europe. Furthermore, the aim is to help increase absorption of CO<sub>2</sub>, reduce the incidence and extent of forest fires and other climate-related pressures, contributing to the EU's biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and resilience, and climate neutrality objectives, the circular bioeconomy and the future and welfare of rural areas, supporting the social functions of forests, in full respect of ecological principles. Building on sustainable forest management, the strategy's principles and objectives should also help inform EU policies relevant to forests and the forest sector, securing a consistent approach between the EU's domestic policies and international commitments.

To nurture the forests that we have, the strategy will strive to:

- Enhance forest protection and restoration to meet the EU biodiversity and climate objectives, and decrease the loss of forest coverage, while strictly protecting all remaining EU primary and old-growth forests.
- Preserve stocks and increase the EU carbon sinks in forests, their soils and harvested wood products.
- Enhance prevention of disaster risk events and of damages, and secure forest resilience to incidence and extent of fires and other natural hazards, and secure forest health with a view to changing climatic conditions and environmental degradation.
- Support restoration of damaged areas and degraded ecosystems, taking into account projected climate conditions.
- Ensure the sustainable management of all EU forests, maximising the provision of their multiple functions while enhancing their productive capacity.

To plan for the forests of the future, the Strategy will foster:

- Afforestation and tree planting by setting out a roadmap for planting at least three billion additional trees in the EU by 2030, as announced in the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, in full respect of ecological principles, contributing to climate neutrality, the circular economy and biodiversity.
- Adaptation of forests to climate change and strengthening their resilience to face future challenges, including through enhanced conservation and use of the genetic diversity of trees.
- New training, skills and jobs that reflects the multiple functions of forests.
- Rural development, including local enterprises and value chains, tapping on forests' multiple functions.
- Innovative forest-based services and products with low environmental impact, replacing carbon-intensive counterparts.
- A strong research and innovation agenda to improve our knowledge of forests and to optimise their composition, structure management and use, including for the bioeconomy.

To manage the existing and the new forests it will be important to:

- Have a strong and inclusive governance framework engaging all relevant parties.
- Foster a stronger coordination between national forest policies and the European Green Deal's objectives.
- Improve and harmonise the monitoring of forests to demonstrate the effective contribution of sustainably managed forests to the EU objectives, and of the supply and demand of forest services.
- Secure financing, including for research, enhancing the use of EU and national budget, as well as private funds, ensuring a consistent approach among different funding instruments (Common Agricultural Policy, Horizon Europe, Cohesion Funds, LIFE, etc.).
- Foster innovative financial incentives, including payments for ecosystem services and result-based schemes ('carbon farming') for forest managers that provide public goods such as carbon sequestration or biodiversity benefits, including through protecting and restoring forests.
- Improve communication and dialogues on forests and their roles, considering the rural/urban interface.
- Ensure consistency with international commitments, reinforcing EU's international leadership.

## **C. Better regulation**

### **Consultation of citizens and stakeholders**

Since society is dependent on forests and all the key services that these ecosystems provide, many actors such as citizens, public and private forest owners, forest-based industries, consumers, environmental and other NGOs and other stakeholders must be consulted. Hence, the EU Forest Strategy will be prepared on the basis of a broad consultative process, including an online public consultation and consulting Member States and stakeholders through expert groups and their relevant subgroups in accordance with their relevant mandates such as: Standing Forestry Committee; Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry and Cork; Coordination Group on Biodiversity and Nature (and its working group on forest and nature); Rural Development Network; Expert Group on Forest-based Industries and Sectorally Related Issues. Also relevant are: Working Groups 5 and 6 of the Climate Change Committee, Expert Groups on Forest Fires, Disaster Prevention & Risk Management Expert Group, the Platform on Protecting and Restoring World's Forests, EEA's NRC Forests Group. A synopsis report and summary of the consultation process will be published on the consultation page.

### **Evidence base and data collection**

A significant body of evidence has been compiled including: the 2018 report on the progress in implementation of the 2013 EU Forest Strategy; the interim evaluation of the biodiversity strategy to 2020 and additional evidence gathered for the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030; Member States' reports under Nature Directives and other commitments; the reports on the evaluation of the CAP forestry measures and other CAP relevant assessments; sectoral reports by relevant Commission services and agencies; other relevant reports from scientific and technical sources, including EU research projects, and experience on the ground (e.g. LIFE projects), the forest-based industry's visions for 2040 and 2050.

Feedback received from Member States and stakeholders in the last two years on many forest-related policy topics will be considered, as relevant.

Relevant input from other EU institutions will also be considered.