



## **MEETING OF THE GENERAL FOREST DIRECTORS 2 - 3 October 2008, Nice (France)**

Representatives of 26 Member States and the Commission met, at the invitation of the French Presidency, on 2 and 3 October 2008 in Nice for an informal meeting of the Directors-General responsible for forestry in the EU Member States<sup>1</sup>. The meeting was chaired by Mr Jean-Marie AURAND, Director-General for Agricultural, Agrifood and Regional Policies in the French Ministry of Agriculture.

On 2 October, participants discussed the two main topics of the meeting (increasing mobilisation of wood for energy purposes and improving forest fires prevention) and a number of other agenda items. On 3 October, participants made a field trip on the theme of "mobilising more wood, preserving biodiversity"<sup>2</sup>.

### **1) Outcome of the 106th meeting of the Standing Forestry Committee**

The Commission representative presented the outcome of the 106th meeting of the Standing Forestry Committee, which took place on 1 October in Nice<sup>3</sup>.

### **2) Increased mobilisation of wood**

The context for the discussion was set by the Presidency background paper "A challenge for European foresters: mobilise more wood, while improving the preservation of the forests"<sup>4</sup>.

Participants exchanged views on the questions for discussion included in the Presidency paper and shared information on the situation in their respective forestry sectors. They all agreed on the potential of European forests to contribute substantially to the EU's objectives on climate change mitigation<sup>5</sup> and recognised that action was needed to create the enabling conditions. In this respect, they indicated a number of problems faced by their forestry sectors, in particular:

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<sup>1</sup> List of participants set out in Annex I.

<sup>2</sup> Programme set out in Annex II.

<sup>3</sup> Summary report set out in Annex III.

<sup>4</sup> Background paper set out in Annex IV.

<sup>5</sup> In particular the 20% target for the use of renewable energy resources by 2020 (Presidency Conclusions of the European Council of Brussels (8 and 9 March 2007)).

- the lack of adequate data on available forest resources due to insufficient monitoring (several participants stressed the need for an efficient forest monitoring system at EU level);
- the fragile situation on the wood market, due *inter alia* to malfunctions in the supply and demand mechanism and the small scale and poor situation of most forestry companies (the Northern and Baltic areas have been faced with a dramatic increase in Russian export levies);
- the lack of interest of some forest owners and the difficulties of increasing forest harvesting in an economically viable way, due to *inter alia* the fragmentation of stands and poor transport infrastructure;
- the potential for tension and conflict between increased mobilisation of wood and constraints resulting from Community legislation on nature conservation (Natura 2000 and in particular the 2010 biodiversity objective), even if a significant percentage of the annual increment of wood and forest biomass remains unharvested;
- the "communication deficit" of the forestry sector towards the wider public and politicians, in particular with respect to the benefits of sustainable forest management, the contribution of wood to mitigating climate change and the fact that European forest surface is increasing every year (to remedy this deficit, it was suggested that better use be made of the Forest Communicators Network<sup>6</sup>; another suggestion made was to take a more political approach, e.g. by adopting a 'Charter on wood').

After a fruitful discussion on these problems and suggestions to solve them, the Chair noted a common view on the following points:

- There is a need to improve the functioning of the energy wood market in the EU, particularly on the supply side. This can be done by improving infrastructure, reducing logistics costs (*inter alia* by bringing together small forest owners) and providing tax incentives. Actions to that effect could be supported under Member States' rural development programmes (the Commission's ongoing analysis of forestry measures under those programmes is important to identify possible obstacles).
- There is a need to improve knowledge and data on forest resources available for energy production in the EU and to collect and share existing scientific information in this respect. This is particularly important with a view to striking the right balance between environmental and economic functions of forests, based on the principles of sustainable forest management.
- There is a need to raise awareness among forest owners, particularly small ones, of the need to manage their forests and the economic potential their forests offer in terms of energy resources, industrial wood and raw material.
- Positive and effective communication is of crucial importance in relation to wood mobilisation. The forestry sector needs to invest in a concerted strategy to explain the important role forests can play in mitigating climate change and also make it clear that economic use of forests is entirely compatible with nature and biodiversity preservation.

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<sup>6</sup> This network was established by the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission with the aim of improving the ability of the forestry and forest products sector to communicate effectively, within and outside the sector, and to raise awareness of sector policy-makers of the potential of effective communication strategies and tools.

- The forestry sector should engage actively in ongoing discussions on developing sustainability criteria for biomass energy use and should put forward the existing criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management agreed in the framework of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) for all uses. Those criteria and indicators are applicable to all end-uses and - with a slight adaptation to the wood energy context – they can provide a robust and appropriate framework for sustainable biomass energy use.

### 3) Forest fires

The context for discussion was set by the Presidency background paper "Improving forest fires prevention, facing new threats together (2010 - 2030)"<sup>7</sup>, in which the Presidency proposes to create a closer European cooperation framework in the field of forest fires prevention and suggests a number of voluntary actions to that effect.

In addition, the Commission representative presented the outcome of the 21st meeting of the Commission's Expert Group on Forest Fires, which was held on 23 September in Aix-en Provence<sup>8</sup>, and invited the Directors-General to:

- acknowledge the urgent need for better coordination between the relevant national authorities and the forest owners to set efficient forest fire prevention measures;
- encourage the Expert Group to design new common initiatives for better protecting forests against emerging threats, in particular forest fires, and to support such initiatives.

Participants from Southern and South-Eastern Member States shared information and experiences on forest fires in recent years. They saw an obvious need to improve prevention measures, but highlighted the difficulties in this respect (prevention measures are not visible and require permanent funding). They also acknowledged that both better coordination at national level and actions at Community level were needed, in particular in relation to regional cooperation, pooling of experiences, exchange of information and lessons learnt.

In the light of this discussion, the Chair noted participants' agreement on the need for a true and efficient prevention policy, requiring medium and long-term investments. To that effect, a European training programme for prevention could be set up. The Chair also noted that the Presidency background paper would be made available to the Commission's Standing Forestry Committee as a possible basis for further work.

The Chair furthermore paid tribute to the work of the Commission's Expert Group on Forest Fires and requested the Group to:

- put forward proposals for better pooling - on a voluntary basis - of experiences and best practices at European level, and to continue its work on networks, indicators, methodology and organisation;
- prepare proposals for drawing up a coordination programme at EU level, differentiated per region, and bringing together countries with a common approach (not only EU Member States but also non-EU Member States);
- draw up a calendar for setting up a disaster prevention group.

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<sup>7</sup> Background paper set out in Annex V.

<sup>8</sup> The outcome of this meeting is set out in Annex VI.

#### 4) FLEGT

Participants welcomed the recent conclusion of the first FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement with Ghana and took note of the Commission's latest planning for its Proposal to complement the existing FLEGT Regulation<sup>9</sup>.

The Chair noted that all participants expressed agreement with the objective of the future Proposal, but that some were concerned about the possible negative impact of the envisaged measures on competitiveness of the EU's timber sector. He assured his colleagues that the French Presidency would do its best to make as much progress as possible on the examination of the Proposal.

#### 5) European Forest Week (20 - 24 October 2008)

Participants shared information on activities and events planned in the framework of the European Forest Week, aimed at increasing visibility of forests and the forest sector and raising awareness of their importance.

The UK representative announced that he would give a presentation on forests and climate change during the main event of the Forest Week, *i.e.* the joint meeting of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO Forestry Commission in Rome. His view that there was an urgent need for a strategic discussion on forests and climate change was generally supported.

#### 6) AOB: Update on the initiative to explore possibilities for creating a legally binding agreement (LBA) for European forests

The Austrian representative updated participants on the exploratory work concerning a LBA for forests in the framework of the MCPFE. He recalled that a MCPFE working group had been mandated to analyse the potential added value of such an agreement, possible obstacles and the implications it might have with regard to existing agreements, institutions and processes. The working group would meet from 27 to 29 November in Athens and would present its conclusions by the end of 2009 for consideration by the MCPFE.

In order to provide the working group with appropriate background material, Austria had commissioned the University of Salzburg to carry out a study addressing a number of technical and legal issues relating to the subject.

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<sup>9</sup> Adoption by the Commission on 15 October and presentation in the October Agriculture Council.

## **ANNEXES:**

ANNEX I: List of Participants of Forest Directors-General meeting

ANNEX II: Programme of the Field Trip "Mobilising more wood, preserving biodiversity"

ANNEX III: Outcome of the 106th meeting of the Standing Forestry Committee

ANNEX IV: Presidency background paper on Wood Mobilisation

ANNEX V: Presidency background paper on Forest Fires Prevention

ANNEX VI: Outcome of the 21st meeting of the Commission's Expert Group on Forest Fires

## MEETING OF FORESTRY DIRECTORS GENERAL

Date: Thursday October 2nd 2008

Venue: Nice, France



### List of Participants

Delegation	Name	First name	Function
Austria	GSCHWANDTL	Ingwald	Director/Forest policy
Austria	MANNSBERGER	Gerhard	Director General
Belgium	DE SCHEPPER	Carl	Head of Unit of the agency for nature and forests
Belgium	LAURENT	Christian	Attaché à la direction des ressources forestières
Bulgaria	BELORECHKA	Dolores	Senior expert
Bulgaria	YURUKOV	Stefan	Chairman / General director
Cyprus	CHRISTODOULOU	Alexandros	Deputy director
Czech Republic	KREJZAR	Tomas	Head of department of forest policy and economies
Czech Republic	NIKL	Martin	Senior office
Czech Republic	VENTRUBOVA	Katerina	Senior officer
Czech Republic	ZIZKA	Martin	Director general of forestry section
Denmark	JENSEN	Mads	
Estonia	REINBERG	Rauno	Senior officer
European Commission	BECK	Roland	Policy officer
European Commission	HAMELL	Michael	Unit head
European Commission	LAZDINIS	Marius	Administrator
European Commission	SCHULTE	Ernst	Forest unit head
Finland	GRANHOLM	Heikki	Counsellor of forestry
Finland	KARJALAINEN-BALK	Leena	Environment
Finland	REUNALA	Aarne	General director
France	ALLAIN	Eric	Adjoint au directeur général
France	AURAND	Jean Marie	Directeur général
France	CHAUDRON	Alain	Chargé de mission

Delegation	Name	First name	Function
France	JOUCLA	Véronique	Chargée de mission Head of the forest policy section at the Bavarian State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry
Germany	SAILER	Wolfgang	Head, International Forest Policy Division
Germany	SCHWOERER	Matthias	Forest policy advisor
Greece	NIKOLAOU	Irini	Head of generale directorate
Greece	SAGRIS	Stavros	Senior forest policy advisor
Hungary	SZEPESI	Andras	Chief Forestry Inspector
Ireland	MCAREE	Diarmuid	Forest Policy at the Irish Forest service
Ireland	OCONNOR	Noel	Head of the International forest affairs office
Italy	COLLETTI	Lorenza	Senior forestry officer
Italy	MARIANO	Angelo	Head of unit land management & natural hazards
Italy	SAN MIGUEL-AYANZ	Jesus	Deputy secretary of state
Latvia	OZOLS	Arvids	Director
Lithuania	VAICIUNAS	Valdas	Directeur des eaux et forêts
Luxembourg	ERASMY	Jean-jacques	Directeur adjoint
Luxembourg	WOLTER	Frank	Chief Specialist
Poland	BORKOWSKI	Piotr	Director of the department of forestry
Poland	CHREMPINSKA	Zofia	Direcção Geral dos Recursos Florestais
Portugal	FERREIRA	Conceicao	Director general
Portugal	REGO	Antonio Jose	General director
Romania	PAHONTU	Ciprian	Forest Department
Romania	TOKE	Istvan	
Secrétariat Général du Conseil de l'UE	DAUTZENBERG	Robert	Administrator
Slovakia	GREGUSKA	Boris	Chief state counsellor
Slovakia	ONDREJCAK	Marian	Director general of the forestry section
Slovenia	DRASLER	Andrej	Director general of agriculture, forestry en food
Slovenia	ZAFRAN	Janez	Undersecretary
Spain	SOLANO LOPEZ	Josemaria	Head of forest planning and management area
Sweden	BLOMBACK	Peter	Head of the international division
Sweden	TORMALM	Karin	Desk officer
Sweden	WIRTÉN	Hakan	Deputy director general
The Netherlands	VON MEIJENFELDT	Cor	Member of the Management Board of the Department of Nature, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
United Kingdom	ROLLINSON	Tim	Director general



**Friday October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008**



**General Forest Directors  
Field trip  
The programme**



# Field trip

**Mobilize more wood  
Preserve biodiversity**



Good morning and welcome,

Our tour takes place in the mountains, in the Alpes Maritimes Department, over a circuit of some 160 km.

The attached map indicates the route.

Our return to the Westminster hotel is planned for around 19.45.



A 2hr.30min walk over hilly ground has been planned in the Mercantour National Park.

You should ensure that you have suitable walking shoes and clothes. In the mountains, the temperature is cooler than on the coast, and a little rain is always possible.

A lighter replacement programme has been planned for the non-walkers among you.



The different themes to be covered during this visit are as follows: multifunctional forestry management, the prevention of natural risks, the preservation of our natural heritage and biodiversity, local and sustainable development, the production of wood, promotion of the wood energy activity, and public awareness.



We shall firstly pay a visit to a traditional sawmill, then the largest part of our tour will take place in the Mercantour National Park to finish in the evening under the sign of wood energy.



The exploitation of the forest in this part of the territory is in no way simple.. This Department does, however, provide an excellent illustration of what the economic, institutional and political partners together may achieve to exploit more wood and at the same time preserve the biodiversity.



It is a great honour for us all to welcome you and be able to present our actions during this tour.

Enjoy your visit...

The organisers.

In this folder, the essential to bear in mind.

# Programme



8:00	Leave the hotel	
9:30	Visit to a traditional sawmill at Saint Martin de Vésubie	Coffee break
10:30	Leave for the Parc National du Mercantour	Because of the large numbers of visitors, 2 groups will be formed, and one will follow the other at a 15 min. interval. This will be the case until the end of the walk.
11:15	Arrive in the Park Leave immediately for the walk through the Park Lighter programme for non-walkers	3 stages have been planned during which a short presentation will be given on the following themes: - The Biodiversity Inventory - Forestry Management - The Restoration of Mountain lands
13:30 à 13:45	Arrive at the Centre ALPHA	
13:45	Lunch	
15:00	Mobilizing wood	ONF, Private Forest and the Interprofessional organisation present their action.
15:30	Free visit of the Centre ALPHA	- Exhibition - The scenovisions - The wolf park - General visit of the ALPHA centre
16:30	Leave for La Gaude	Short halt at Saint Martin de Vésubie to drop off the outside visitors who has left their vehicles here earlier
18:00	New outlets for a new form of energy	Visit to a greenhouse heated by wood
19:00	Return to the hotel	Arrival towards 19:45



Have a good trip...

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE 106<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE  
STANDING FORESTRY COMMITTEE ON 1 OCTOBER 2008**

Chairperson: Ms Hilkka Summa (Head of Unit H.4, DG Agriculture and Rural Development).

All delegations were present except Malta.

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chairperson welcomed the participants thanking the FR presidency for the organisation of the meeting in Nice.

**2. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA**

The SFC adopted the draft agenda.

**3. PROMOTING THE USE OF FOREST BIOMASS FOR ENERGY GENERATION**

The Commission presented a report from the SFC working group on mobilisation and efficient use of wood and forest residues for energy generation. The working group commenced its work in early 2007 and finished in summer 2008.

The Committee discussed a first outline of the draft SFC opinion on the above subject. The need for such an opinion was widely recognised by the Committee. The Commission will present a draft opinion for discussion in the SFC meeting in December.

The Commission gave an update on the development of biomass sustainability criteria and outlined an expected timeframe.

No vote

**4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS OF THE WORKSHOP ON APPLICATION OF  
PUBLIC PROCUREMENT POLICY TO WOOD AND WOOD-BASED PRODUCTS  
AND DISCUSSION ON POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP**

The Commission presented the report from the Workshop held in Brussels on 13 June 2008. Based on the report, key areas where further work could focus were identified. The Committee expressed an interest to continue the work on the above issues in an ad hoc working group of the SFC.

No vote

## **5. OVERVIEW OF RESULTS FROM THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS UNDER FP7 IN 2008 AND OF PLANNED CALL FOR PROJECTS IN 2009**

The Commission presented an overview of the results from the 2007 and 2008 calls for proposals under 7<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programme and informed the Committee about call for proposals in 2009. In the call 2008, three forestry-related topics were successful with a total amount of EUR 7 million. The call 2009 was published on 3 September 2008 and contains three forestry-related topics.

No vote

## **6. MISCELLANEOUS**

The Commission informed that in the context of the European Forest Week European Economic and Social Committee is organising a conference titled: ‘The role of forests and the forest-based sector in meeting the EU's climate commitments’ on 23 October in Brussels.

On the issue of Natura 2000 implementation in forest areas, the Commission informed that written inputs had so far been received from five Member States (IE, DE, CZ, CY, FR). The deadline for submitting written contributions is extended to 15 October.

The Committee and the Portuguese representatives agreed that the issue of ‘Situation of Pine Wood Nematode in Portugal’ would be placed on the agenda of the next SFC meeting.

Joint Research Centre informed about the work on the follow-up of EFICP (European Forest Information and Communication Platform) and announced about the workshop on the subject to be organised on 4-5 December.

Next SFC meeting will take place on 18 December 2008 in Brussels.

Hilkka Summa  
Head of Unit  
DG Agriculture and Rural Development

*NB: Measures on which the Committees have delivered an opinion are formally adopted by the Commission in accordance with an appropriate procedure.*



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

**MEETING OF THE GENERAL FOREST DIRECTORS  
Nice, France  
2 and 3 October 2008**

**A challenge for European foresters: mobilise more wood,  
while improving the preservation of the forests**

The new requirements for energy and raw material call for additional wood mobilisation, especially in the context of the mitigation of climate change.

Such mobilisation is theoretically possible because European forestry resources exist, even if it is sometimes difficult to evaluate them precisely and they are often underexploited. However, some parts of the forest resources are not easily accessible (mountain area, unknown owner, no managed forest, etc) and solutions have to be developed to make them recoverable, while remaining within the framework of sustainable management, which allows the forest both to be harvested and preserved.

It seems essential to provide an explanation, in particular to civil society, of the usefulness and benefits of sustainable forestry development within the European Union so as to avoid confusion with the situation of threatened forests in other regions of the world.

This introduction is expanded in the attached note.

**The following questions are proposed for discussion:**

1. Which levers can be activated at European level to ensure additional wood mobilisation to meet new needs?
2. How to communicate with the general public regarding the importance of, or even the need for, wood removals within the framework of sustainable forest management and of the mitigation of climate change?
3. How are we to continue experience-and practice-sharing regarding the use of new forestry resources, such as the harvesting of residues?
4. How can we contribute to the Commission discussion on a sustainability scheme for biomass energy uses ? Do MCPFE criteria and indicators, once adapted to the wood energy context, constitute a solid and relevant basis for establishing this scheme?

**MEETING OF THE GENERAL FOREST DIRECTORS**  
**Nice, France**  
**2 and 3 October 2008**

<b>A challenge for European foresters: mobilise more wood, while improving the preservation of the forests</b>
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Wood was one of the principal natural resources which allowed European countries to develop, often at the expense of the forests from which it came. But their owners and managers became aware quite quickly of the importance of protecting the forests.

In France, the term "waters and forests" appeared for the first time in 1219 with the Order of Gisors issued by King Philippe Auguste. Rather than the wood resource, it was the forestry environment as a hunting and fishing reserve that they wanted to preserve. Then came the founding text of the sustainable management of forests in France : the Brunoy Decree of 1346, in which Philippe VI of Valois asked the Masters of Forests to ensure that forests "could be continuously maintained in good condition". Later, it was the needs of shipbuilding which led Colbert, superintendent of Louis XIV's finances, to carry out an inventory of wood resources in 1661.

Thus, forestry administration and policies were based on the need to protect forestry resources, while gearing their production to the needs which were identified at the time. In this respect, foresters' work is basically no different nowadays. Moreover, the general objective of the EU forest action plan of 15 June 2006 was formulated as follows: **"Forests for society: long-term multifunctional forestry fulfilling present and future societal needs and supporting forest-related livelihoods"**.

However, needs evolved profoundly over the centuries. If this always involves producing wood for material and energy purposes (little progress has been made on the chemistry of wood in the meantime ), the forester sees to the sustainable management of forests, which takes into account their various roles: economic, environmental and social. Furthermore, the climate change issue has largely transformed the context of forest management, which has now to incorporate the mitigation role of forests, while adapting them to these developments.

### **Mobilise more to meet the new requirements for energy and material**

At the meeting of the European Council of the European Union on 8 and 9 March 2007, the Heads of State or Government decided to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also to develop renewable energy to cover 20% of energy consumption. Energy wood contributes to these two objectives both because it is renewable and because it avoids fossil carbon emissions ; its own CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are compensated within the framework of the cycle of forestry carbon.

Everywhere in Europe wood plays and will play a significant role in the process of achieving the objectives in terms of renewable energy. Compliance with these commitments should therefore lead to increased demand for wood energy. Once the sources which are still insufficiently exploited, such as recycled wood, by-products resulting from wood processing, and wood from hedges and gardens, have been exhausted, energy wood will come primarily from forests or from dedicated non-forest crops (currently being developed but they are not dealt with in this document).

The challenge for European foresters will indeed be to produce more wood. If additional volumes are not made available on the market, conflicts of use will be inevitable. New energy needs would compete with uses of wood as a material and would destabilise the existing industrial sectors (pulp, paper, panel). Their supply depends on the same type of forest products: forestry thinning and sawmill by-products. Only an additional supply will make it possible to maintain a certain hierarchy in the uses of wood, which should prevent, for example, the use of high-quality roundwood for energy purposes.

Timber is a forest-based product which also addresses climate change issues. It presents numerous qualities from this point of view:

- it demonstrates real mechanical resistance qualities for use for construction purposes;
- its production and consumption use less energy than those of most other materials;
- it is a very high-quality insulating material which makes it a good solution for the energy restoration of existing buildings and the development of new buildings with very low consumption.

Moreover, of all the different materials, wood is the one which is both ecological and renewable, unlike other materials which emphasise their ecological quality just because they are recyclable. It also allows long carbon storage when used in construction.

### **An available resource but sometimes not easily accessible**

The report by the ad hoc group on wood energy mobilisation, which reported to the Standing Forestry Committee, stresses that there is clearly a potential within the European Union for better use of wood for energy purposes. This could be based on harvesting residues, complementary felling and management of forest areas which are not yet managed. Although the situation of forestry resources differs from one Member State to another, experts consider that important additional volumes could be mobilised without compromising the sustainable management of forests. However, they highlight the importance of providing a better evaluation of these volumes.

Apart from the issue of sustainable management, the theoretical additional volumes are not always technically (slope, absence of road network) or legally (unknown owners) or socially (landscape preservation) accessible. Furthermore, volumes which are accessible must be mobilised at a cost acceptable to the wood processing chain. Finally, it is necessary to find enough companies and labour to collect them.

This is why it is necessary to ensure that the share of the burden which is put on forests is appropriate. Often coveted forestry resources might not be well evaluated by the energy sector; they will then play the role of an adjustment variable, making it possible to meet renewable energy objectives which are not accessible in other sectors.

For example, numerous biomass generation units plan to use an undercollected resource : harvesting of residues (stems, tops, branches etc). If these residues exist, it is not possible to consider them as an entirely recoverable resource. Maintaining biodiversity and soil fertility in certain cases require these wood removals to be prohibited or to be spaced out in the forest cycle of life.

Lastly, the production of industrial roundwood and fuelwood does not have to be considered separately because they do not require separate resources. Forestry harvesting makes it possible to collect all these products in a simultaneous or staggered manner. Taking into account the scale of roundwood and fuelwood transport costs and of the carbon balance deterioration in a way proportional to the distance, it seems that the matching of supply and demand has to be done preferably at local level.

Taking into consideration these difficulties in obtaining the resource, foresters have to find, together with all those involved in the forest-based sector, means of supporting additional mobilisation as part of an integrated and controlled forestry policy.

### **The red lines of sustainable forest management**

The sustainable forest management concept is the subject of a broad consensus within the forest sector. It is therefore obvious that any additional wood mobilisation has to be done within the framework of sustainable management. Public authorities, which sometimes manage public forests and sometimes check on the management of private forests, have to be very watchful both collectively and individually on this point.

Whereas the sustainability of forest management within the EU does not need to be debated, some well publicised counter-examples could quickly make this additional mobilisation unacceptable to public opinion. It could easily lead to confusion with threatened tropical forests and deliver alarmist messages about European forests.

Accordingly it seems essential to ensure that everyone clearly understands, if not is agreeable, before launching an additional mobilisation programme. The ideal situation consists of creating a kind of pact between private forestry owners, environmental and social associations, forest-based industries and forestry administration.

The discussions on sustainability criteria under the draft Directive on renewable energy (Article 15) show that the legal-technical debate is only just beginning. Regarding the preliminary draft, these criteria currently relate only to biofuel production, which affect the forest only in the case of second generation biofuels or if forestry area has been converted for energy crops. The Commission should submit a report on the extension of sustainability criteria to all biomass energy. These criteria would definitely be based on the sustainable forest management concept.

For the pan-European region, the Pan-European Criteria, Indicators and Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) serve as a reference for sustainable management. A process is under way within MCPFE to adapt them to the wood energy issue .

*“Sustainable management means the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems”.* **MCPFE definition.**





MINISTRY FOR AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

**MEETING OF THE GENERAL FOREST DIRECTORS  
Nice, France  
2 and 3 October 2008**

**Improving forest fires prevention, facing new threats together (2010-2030)**

Building upon the achievements of previous initiatives of the European Commission and Member States (e.g. Forest Fire experts Group, the Sabaudia Workshop jointly organized by the Italian CFS, FAO and the EC, research projects such as SPREAD, EUFIRELAB or FIRE PARADOX), this note aims at outlining, after dialog, the various phases of a closer **European cooperation framework in the field of forest fires prevention.**

On a voluntary basis, affected and interested countries could:

- adopt a **common reporting template** to account for annual national and EU budgets allocated to the various categories of fire prevention measures;
- outline and compare **relevant projections** on issues (e.g. scenarios regarding rural depopulation, demographic pressure in peri-urban settlements, or climatic conditions) which could translate into increased fire hazards and fire vulnerabilities in the near future;
- lay down **common criteria, common objectives and joint territorial strategies**;
- strengthen the **technical cooperation** by pooling, for instance, of the training facilities or by sharing best practices; and finally,
- collect and benchmark their results in a **shared scoreboard** of fire-prevention in the affected countries of the European Union.

**The following questions are proposed for discussion:**

- What could be the scope of such a voluntary scheme: EU level, pan-European, Mediterranean?
- Who should design its terms of reference: Working Group of the European Commission's Group of experts on forest fires? Link with the Standing Forestry Committee (Forest Action plan n°9.1 and 9.2)?
- What should be the road map for setting such a scheme : calendar, specific study to finance,...?
- What should be the outputs : EU guidelines, report,...?

**MEETING OF THE GENERAL FOREST DIRECTORS**  
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**2nd and 3rd October 2008**

**Improving forest fires prevention, facing new threats together (2010-2030)**

Many rural territories in the EU become increasingly vulnerable to fire. New common threats arise for which common solutions could be found: global warming, changes in the species mix and water regime, dieback, lack of productive investment, rural exodus and farm abandonment, peri-urban fragmented residential settlements that mesh with unmanaged forest, all leading to an increased fuel continuity and vulnerability.

As from now and for the next twenty years (2010-2030), European Guidelines to adapt the most vulnerable rural territories should be set. Building upon the achievements of previous European initiatives (e.g. Forest Fire Prevention Working Group, the Sabaudia Workshop (jointly organized by the Italian CFS, FAO and the EC), research projects such as SPREAD, EUFIRELAB or FIRE PARADOX) and following its Communication on Disaster Prevention, the European Commission is invited to propose a new EU Action Plan on Forest Fire Prevention (FFP) and to coordinate resulting National Fire Plans in the Member States (MS) willing to take part in this scheme.

### **Overview of EU level initiatives regarding forest fires prevention**

The Council Regulation (CEE) n° 2158/92 protection of the Community's forests against fire aimed at protecting the EU forests by means of subsidies towards FFP and included conditionality clauses, according to which the MS had to draw program documents based on an assessment of territories according to five fire risk categories (FRC).

Then followed the first Rural Development Regulation (RDR 1, 2000-2006). Thanks to the FEOGA, National RD Plans (NRDP) enabled the MS to benefit from co financing of FFP infrastructures.

In 2003, the Parliament and Council adopted the n° 2152/2003 "Forest Focus" Regulation. During its short life span (2003-2006), it aimed at setting and streamlining an EU wide monitoring scheme for forests, focussing on Fire and Air Pollution. One fifth of the credits were actually allocated to 50% co-financing of FFP measures (and 100% financing for fire related studies) in the Member State.

### **Current forest fire prevention activities (since 2007)**

#### ***Projects managed by the MS***

They are eligible for EU (FEADER) co-financing through the new Rural Development Regulation (RDR 2, 2007-2013). Member States monitor and evaluate their regional and/or national Fire Strategies, including the EU chapters managed according the RDR2. Through these policy assesments exercices, it is highly relevant to adapt FFP strategies to the new threats identified in the first paragraph of this paper, and to the extension of vulnerable areas, especially in the most populated or touristic regions. The Structural and Solidarity funds

managed by DG REGIO also include projects or subsidies to help and improve forest regeneration after large fires.

### ***Projects managed by the European Commission***

The LIFE+ fund and the Research Framework Program feed annual calls for proposals, upon which research and demonstration projects on management, conservation and restoration of forest ecosystem can be (co) financed, including FFP initiatives. The scheme does not however provide support for large scale projects. The Joint Research Centre of the Commission (JRC) manages and develops the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS), providing fire risk assessment and a database of past fires.

### **Forest fires related issues in Europe**

The green, and soon to be published white, papers from the Commission on « Adaptation to Climate Change in Europe » include several sections on addressing the forecast aggravation of Forest Fires. They notably mention:

- implementing the principle of adaptation (and mitigation since Forest Fires are significant carbon sources) in national forest legislation;
- integrating climate change adaptation concerns (including FFP) in European funds;
- elaborating / promoting (conditional) insurance mechanisms to share the burden of fire risk management between the public and private sectors.

The MS can face different fire management issues depending on their climate conditions (although Fire Prone Areas are slowly migrating north) and on the categories of forests they can grow:

- productive Forests where FFP (when needed) is part of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) but also has a clear investment value;
- non-productive Forests where FFP comes as an additional cost to forest owners and forest managers without any direct market value added. Agricultural abandonment leads to natural and unmanaged afforestation, whose products cannot be profitable and which borders on natural areas or human settlements. Those forests, mainly found around the Mediterranean Sea, often rely on public action and liability to ensure sound FFP.

However, all MS today face this same issue of Climate Change Adaptation as rural and forest areas will be challenged in the next decades by extreme and unpredictable weather related events (be it fire, dieback, pathogens infestations or storms) to an extent yet unknown. Early action is therefore needed.

Practically speaking, one of the first responses could be to launch a pilot initiative of technical cooperation (similar to the FIRE5 initiative for Fire Suppression) in the field of FFP applied to the two forest categories detailed here above. In a longer term perspective (after 2013), the Standing Forest Committee of the Commission and the Forest Protection initiative from its DG Environment could shape a more integrated European Forest Protection framework, adapted to the new stresses (both climatic and socio-economic) faced by European Forests. Regarding FFP, it means setting up gradual and territorial provisions, depending on the local FRC.

In order to allow concerted action and assistance at EU level (hence cost-effective progress), objective and agreed criteria/definitions across MS are required. This also means closer collaboration and increased transparency between FFP responsible national administrations across the interested MS in defining their priorities and training requirements.

**Meeting of the Directors-general for forests  
Nice, France, 2 and 3 October 2008**

At the occasion of its 21st session on 23 September 2008 in Aix en Provence (France), the expert group on forest fires of the European Commission (gathering 20 experts from 12 EU Member states) decided to address the following to the Directors-general for Forests in order to inform them on its opinion on forest fire prevention at European level. The group expressed strong interest for deepening European cooperation in the field of forest fires prevention and:

- noted that:

- The European forests need an improved protection in response to new challenges, such as the difficult adaptation to damaging impacts resulting from climate change, the rural exodus, economic interest contrary to some protection measures and the soaring demographic pressure in peri-urban settlements; these factors impact at mid and long term on the health of forests, as well as their capacity to sustain the vital ecosystem services they deliver;
- Adequate prevention measures are needed to face these challenges and are often far more cost effective than the remediation work they try to prevent;
- The European Commission prepares a prevention strategy for natural and man-made disasters, including forest fires;
- Community funds put at disposal of the Member States for preventing forest fires can sometimes not be used adequately and effectively, in particular as regards the repartition of these funds between the forest owners and the local or regional authorities, forest budget sometime suffering of previous trade offs benefiting the agricultural sector;

- supports:

- The implementation of the Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines which were developed by a broad group of stakeholders coordinated by FAO. However, they would need to be adapted to the European context, especially regarding their application to the relevant administrative levels (local, regional, national or Community);
- The fire prevention related recommendations of the Workshop “Forest Fires in the Mediterranean Region: Prevention and Regional Cooperation” (13-15 May 2008, Sabaudia, Italy) organized by FAO, the Italian Forest Service and JRC (IES, Ispra).

- invites the Directors-general to:

- Acknowledge the urgent need of a better coordination between the relevant national authorities and the forest owners to set efficient forest fire prevention measures;
- Encourage the expert group designing new common initiatives for better protecting the forests against emerging threats, in particular forest fires, and to support such initiatives.