



19.4.2024

FOREST STRATEGY FOR THE NEW GREEN DEAL

A SUGGESTION

1 PREAMBLE

The ecological, economic, and social benefits of European forests and their biodiversity have to be secured within a conceptual framework based on the coexistence of humans and their natural environment and the historically evolved cultural capacities of European regions according to the concept of Culture Base Coexistence Development (FAUN-iwi 2021).

The holistic approach includes preservation of forest area and local or regional ownership, ecological stability, sustainable use of resources and regional value adding, enhancement of biodiversity, social welfare, and education.

This approach is to be developed regionally by interaction of stakeholders with the local population to secure its long-term acceptance and implementation. This is achieved with regional Forest Agenda Councils.

These councils are to be assisted and interconnected by the European Forest Institute (EFI) and the Integrate Network.

2 PRESERVATION OF FOREST AREA AND REGIONAL OWNERSHIP

Forested areas in Europe must be protected by law and their expanse monitored.

If in the course of climate change and increased burdens on forest owners, forests are for sale, there should be a preemptive purchase option for public corporations or the state. These purchases should be subsidized by a European fund.

3 REGIONAL FOREST AGENDA COUNCILS

The regional Forest Agenda Councils work out recommendations concerning the stewardship of the homeland forests. The regions are demarcated according to political and/or ecological boundaries.

The councils consist of citizens selected by chance and include different genders, generations, town- and country-dwellers. To ensure the implementation of measures also a regionally responsible political office holder is to be included.

The councils are permanent and flexible institutions, renewed periodically.

The honorary posts are paid, and enough funds are available to finance excursions. Employers are obligated to release the council members from work during the meetings. This is to be guaranteed by European funds.

The organizing of the council, the meetings and excursions, the invitation of regional stakeholders and NGOs are managed by the regional and local forest offices. The council members have the right to suggest invitations and excursions.

The forest offices and the councils are supported and interconnected by the expertise and the networking of the European Forest Institute and the Integrate Network.

4 SUBJECTS TO BE COVERED BY THE COUNCILS

The Forest Agenda Councils explore and discuss the following topics.

4.1 Silviculture

4.1.1 Close to Nature Forestry

The techniques of close to nature forestry should be discussed and implemented. Local tree species are to be promoted; related species adapted to higher temperatures can be tested alongside. No clearcutting is allowed. Natural rejuvenation is emphasized.

4.1.2 Local Silviculture Traditions and Habitats

Stock is to be taken of local traditions of silviculture and their connected ecological habitats. The traditions are to be preserved or developed to secure local habitat traditions.

4.1.3 Hunting in Accordance with Ecology of Forests

To adapt to climate change, all tree species of a forest should be able to rejuvenate and to take advantage of their entire genetic variability. Therefore, it must be ensured that seedlings and young plants are not browsed intensively. Browsing must be monitored and hunting must be organized so the game population is adapted to the forest capacity.

Since this problem is found throughout Europe the extent of browsing is to be monitored Europe-wide and the EFI should establish a task force connecting and exchanging the relevant information.

4.2 Biodiversity

The biodiversity of Central European forests, some of which have been used sustainably for thousands of years by a variety of methods (CBM=Culture Based Management), must be secured and increased by a concept of biodiversity sustainability that is in harmony with historical and social requirements.

The existing hotspots of biodiversity must be charted, and their conservation and interconnectedness ensured. Their preservation in public forests is to be protected by law, in private forests conservation contracts should be subsidized by the CAP.

The conservation measures include the acknowledgement of traditions of silviculture and the habitats created thereby.

Furthermore, the dynamic nature and the wandering of forest habitats should be considered by developing and supporting a dynamic system of habitat-steppingstones (Mergner Ulrich 2021) . The support hereby of the Integrate-Network is to be sought and supported by European funds. In contrast to blanket, large-scale forest closure its efficiency as nature protection measure as targeted and widespread habitat improvement has been scientifically proven several times now, including studies by the European Forest Institute EFI (Kraus und Krumm 2013; Fahrig 2020)

Countries should set up programs either to buy forest harboring long-term ecological hotspots or to swap them for productive public forests of little ecological value.



4.3 Storage Capacity

4.3.1 Storage of CO₂

The storage of CO₂ in the forests should be optimized by raising the volume of standing trees per hectare and combining this with the production of long-lived goods made of wood (Schulze et al. 2020).

The combination of forest storage and product storage can optimize the fixation of CO₂ in and by forest ecosystems while producing timber and promoting biodiversity at the same time. The short-term revenue shortfalls caused by the increase in standing timber volume and dead wood can be compensated to the owners with funds from CO₂ emission trading.

4.3.2 Storage of Water

In view of prolonged droughts and sudden rainstorms it is crucial, to develop management tools which ensure the storage of water in forest soil.

This requires as little driving on forest soils as possible, the intelligent planning of skidding trails and the establishment of temporary ponds.

Here again the support and the exchange of ideas with the help of EFI will be an important factor and funding of measures by the CAP.

4.4 Forest Products

The forest products cover timber and fuelwood, but also can include fruits, mushrooms etc. Their sustainable use should benefit preferably local businesses, as this minimizes transport and ensures regional value adding.

4.4.1 Timber

The sustainable use of timber is a main object of forest management plans. The aim of close to nature forestry usually are valuable trees of considerable diameter. The forest councils discuss their effective and appropriate processing and visit the regional wood processing sawmills and factories.

4.4.2 Fuel Wood

The sustainability of fuel wood use is to be ensured regionally, preferably covering local use. This respects local traditions and avoids lengthy discussions about the renewability of the resource, since the regional renewability was experienced by the locals over many decades if not centuries.

4.5 Education

The councils should discuss how the topics covered and explored by them can be brought to the attention of the public. The cooperation with schools and media should be supported by EFI.

5 CONCLUSION

The findings of the Forest Agenda Councils are to be summarized as recommendations and communicated with the responsible political actors.

This approach is suitable for efficiently ensuring and improving biodiversity and good human work on the entire forest area, as well as contributing to the interconnection of valuable habitats and the preservation of cultural heritage.

The transparent and participatory implementation sensitizes those involved and the public and promotes social acceptance of the measures beyond the rural regions.



6 LITERATURVERZEICHNIS

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