

SESSION 9: Political insights: how can we take what we have learned into the new EU forest policies.

Developing “home-take messages” from the Conference’s 3 days sessions.

Event conclusions

Session 1 - Policy, Research and management

1. Forest owners and forest holdings are the fundamental pillars of the different forest-based value chains, delivering the good and services that Europeans, now and in the future, expect from forests and other wooded land.
2. In Europe there are well organized and structured Forest Owner's Organizations like CEPF, ELO and COPA-COGECA, that work together to overcome the challenges of fragmentation and abandonment, limited resources and economic viability and the many legal and structural barriers.
3. The SMURF project might be useful to increase the visibility of small forest holdings and the possibilities for networking and to promote knowledge exchange and learning. The LAURUS Network goes in that direction.
4. Forest owners are solution providers, not obstacles. Policy makers must respect ownership, enable sustainable forest management and provide support for forest holdings and a robust bioeconomy.
5. There is a need to increase the knowledge of forest holdings and forest owners in Europe, that are not known in many countries. While the number of farms is perfectly known and decreasing in the last 30 years and now is around 9 million, the number of forest holdings is unknown, estimated to be around 16 millions and increasing. The EU might promote a permanent periodic Survey like the US National Woodland Survey.

Session 2 - Legal framework and support systems for Small Forest Holdings

1. The legal and regulatory framework for forest holdings in Europe is too fragmented, complex and rather conservative and strict, and it is missing a common basic framework. There are also examples of innovative, sound, appropriate, favourable, effective, diverse, applicable, enforceable and cooperative legislation that could guide future revisions.
2. Legislative tools do not solve the persistent conflicts between the economic interests of forest owners and social and environmental preferences of the society.
3. Sound management of small forest holdings shall be shaped by the contours of innovative forest laws and environmental legislation which would take into account the specific character of property rights, the interests of forest owners as well as the preferences of the whole society.
4. There is a need in some countries to clarify and precise the forest ownership rights, revising the Cadastre and harmonizing it with the Land Registry System. The European Land Register Document (ELRD) might be a useful instrument in the harmonization of forest ownership rights and the protection of forests.
5. Forest holdings and forest owners need support to deliver the goods and services that forests could provide. National or regional forest ownership centers, like the French CNPF or the Finnish Metsakeskus, are very useful instruments, that are adequately promoting cooperation among forest holdings.

Session 3 - How to maintain the sector: financial support for forest owners

1. Private forest ownership is a fundamental element of the landscape and must be supported in order to fulfill its role in sustainable forest management.
2. EU policies, especially CAP and Horizon, are foundational to supporting forest resilience and rural development.
3. Funding alone is insufficient—coordination, capacity building, and local empowerment are indispensable.
4. Upcoming initiatives (e.g., carbon credits, bioeconomy strategy) represent new avenues for value creation.
5. A multi-actor approach—spanning governments, private investors, and communities—is required for long-term impact.

Session 4 - Multifunctional forests and payment for ecosystem services

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

1. There is clear societal and policy demand towards increased multifunctionality, even if there is not a common understanding on what this precisely mean. There is a clear need adapt multifunctionality to local conditions.
2. Is important to have increased knowledge, awareness and tools to advance towards multifunctionality:
 - a. The guidelines for closer to nature forestry are one of such tools and is welcome even if several participants highlighted the need to localize and adapt the to local conditions. Similarly, other ecosystem services also need attention, such as water production or wildfire prevention in the Mediterranean
3. Closer to Nature Silviculture (CNS) is an interesting alternative available for small forest holdings, that is economically sustainable in the long term, can provide multiple ecosystem services and reduce risks of disturbances.

Session 4 - Multifunctional forests and payment for ecosystem services

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

4. PES *in very broad sense* is one of such tools.

- a. PES have not take off in the last decades, despite having been permanently in the agenda.
- b. In the last years, corporations (inside and outside the forest sector) are paying increased attention to forest resources, and making resources available for more diverse and multifunctional management. This trend opens new opportunities for PES type arrangements.
- c. Is important to guaranty that these resources arrive to forest owners and managers, avoiding that they are diluted along the value chain. Good practices have been presented by Preferred by Nature
- d. Is important to bundle the most relevant ecosystem services in a given regions, as carbon alone will not suffice.
- e. The landscape scale must be considered when implementing PES. The Catalan climate credits provide an example on how to work at landscape level, instead of individual ownership level
- f. Is important that PES support no only set aside policies, but also support active forest management, as appropriate in each case.

5. Governments have the responsibility to create the frameworks for functional PES schemes, including actions to create demand or willingness to pay. On the other hand, forest owners and managers need to be proactive to actually develop those schemes that work for them.

Session 5 - LAURUS Network



Laurus is a new Network for supporting the European Forest Owners' Associations Staff through offering Training, Knowledge and Connection to its technical staff.

It is a space for personal collaboration and for exchanging knowledge.

Laurus Network aims at Empowering technical staff of European Forest Owners' organisations through innovation, training and connection;

To be part of **Laurus Network** you only have to register in its website (<https://www.laurusnetwork.eu/>) and you will access to a private area within access to the upcoming webinars, training activities and more fresh information.

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Session 6 - Innovative solutions to overcome forest ownership fragmentation

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

1. Forest ownership fragmentation is a significant limiting factor in European forestry both at the economic and political level with implications in forest management, sustainability, biodiversity conservation, climate policy, risk management, and resilience.
2. There are many initiatives in Europe at several scales (local, regional and national) that can provide inspiration and tools for the development and implementation of solutions in many geographic and ecological conditions.
3. It is important that these initiatives, their objectives, implementation, and results, can be openly shared among European forest owners, managers, and decision makers in pursuit of solutions for forest ownership fragmentation.
4. There are no one-size-fits-all solution in forestry.

Session 7 - Global chains & New business models

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

1. Innovation in wood products and emerging bioeconomy markets offer possibilities to create new uses and more demand for forest use, both timber and NWFP.
2. Demand for wood is likely to grow a lot and will increase competition for raw materials. In addition, climate change will become a major factor interfering with wood markets.
3. New initiatives and new business models to overcome inactive, fragmented smallholder forests must aim for enhancing profitability and competitiveness. This means first of all gaining scale and efficiency (area of forest, number of owners, amount of harvest).
4. Traditional land use and forest products represent a rich knowledge and cultural heritage, which should be valued through more research and development
5. Innovative industries can become drivers to stimulate such new forest owner initiatives to group forest management activities, form associations and demonstrate new business cooperations.
6. More cooperation is needed along the entire wood value chain, bridging the gap between forest owners/managers, wood processing industries and even manufacturers of final products. Cluster organisations and networks can bring together all stakeholders and create a strong voice for innovation support and policy advocacy.

Session 8 - Sustainable forest management answers to forest owners needs

Main Conclusion

- 1. Sustainable Forest Management faces increasing threats**
Wildfires, pests, diseases, and invasive species are major risks requiring proactive and adaptive strategies to ensure forest resilience.
- 2. Integrated Forest Management is essential**
Managing forests in a multifunctional and integrated way is key to balancing ecological, economic, and social functions. Public forests often serve as good examples of integrated management, showing best practices in combining wood production, biodiversity conservation, recreation, and ecosystem services. These examples can inspire and guide private forest owners.
- 3. Forest owners need practical support and clear incentives**
Simplified regulations, financial support, and technical assistance are fundamental to help private owners actively engage in sustainable management.
- 4. Closer-to-Nature Silviculture offers promising opportunities**
This approach supports biodiversity and long-term forest health. Associations and cooperatives play a central role in promoting its adoption on larger areas. Incentives are needed to facilitate the transition to these practices and manage increasing external pressures (e.g., climate change, market demands).
- 5. Certification schemes (PEFC & FSC) promote Integrated Forest Management**
Both standards value integrated approaches, enhancing the sustainability and credibility of forest products. Public support and targeted incentives are crucial to ease access to certification, especially for smallholders and for those adopting new silvicultural models.

1ST EUROPEAN CONFERENCE **SMALL FOREST HOLDINGS**

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