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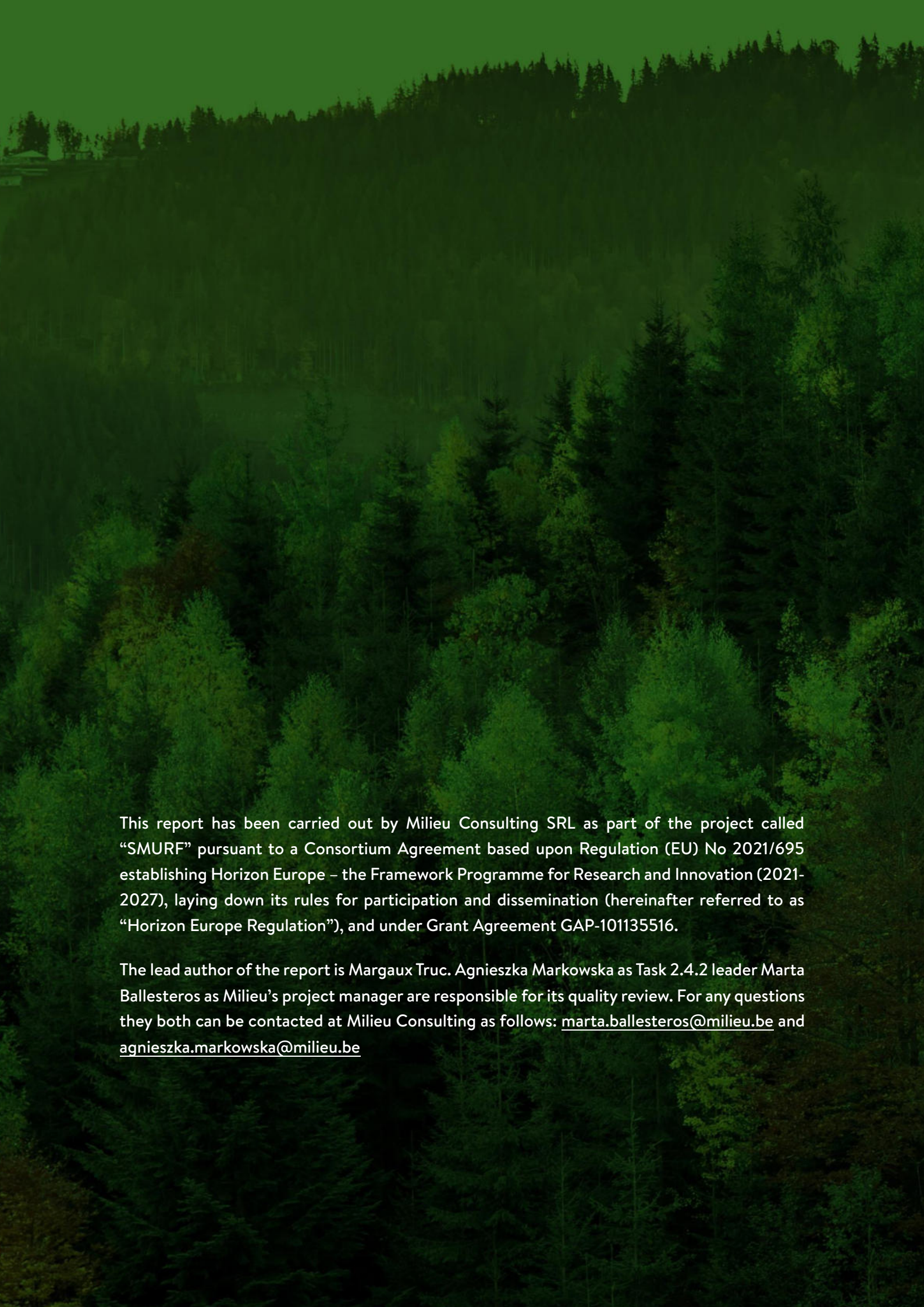
Financial incentives applicable to Small Forest Holdings and their impacts

Country Fact Sheet
Belgium – Federal - Wallonia

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Executive Summary

Wallonia is providing a range of financial mechanisms to support small forest owners, forest holders and other stakeholders in the forest value chain, with the aim of encouraging sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, and ecosystem service enhancement.

Within Priority 2 of the 2021-2027 programme of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Wallonia finances circular resource use, biodiversity and ecosystem-service restoration. A dedicated measure, named "Investment support for primary wood processing activities" and available for the period 2023-2027, is relevant for SFHs (but only when they are a business operating in the forestry or forest-works sector, with activity located in Wallonia). It co-finances up to 40 percent of investment in first-stage wood processing; the 20 percent base subsidy can rise to 40 percent when the project belongs to an innovation group, employs staff or valorises residues for renewable energy. Support is capped at €500 000 per beneficiary and complements, rather than duplicates, generic SME investment schemes.

Under the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan 2023-2027, Wallonia manages €1.86 billion. Three forestry measures are relevant: Intervention 357 offers full grants for forest-road upgrades, storage platforms and erosion control; Intervention 341 pays an annual €48 per ha to compensate Natura 2000 restrictions on parcels of 10–30 ha; and Intervention 353 supplies 20-40 percent capital aid (lifetime ceiling €500 000) for logging and silviculture enterprises that invest in cleaner, safer or more digital operations.

Complementing these EU sources, a €70 million state-aid exemption (SA.106351, 2023-2027) under the Agricultural and Forestry Block-Exemption Regulation reimburses up to 100 percent of eligible costs for public-interest R&D on silviculture, biodiversity and climate resilience, ensuring that small holders benefit indirectly from new knowledge without bearing the research cost.

Regarding national subsidies and incentives, forest holders and owners are not automatically entitled to financial support. Nonetheless, they may access various subsidies provided under the Forestry Code. Articles 30 and 31 of the Code enable the regional government to grant discretionary funding for activities such as biodiversity conservation, forest restoration, public access infrastructure, grouped management, training, awareness-raising, and research. Additional support may also be allocated to address ecological imbalances between broadleaved and coniferous species. Wallonia's tax framework is also supportive. Cadastral income determines both property and personal-income tax; new plantations may reduce this base to €2.50 per ha for twenty years, while Natura 2000 parcels are fully exempt from property tax.

Sales of standing timber are not taxed. Finally, succession rules exempt the entire stumpage value of woodland from inheritance and gift duties, easing inter-generational transfer.

At regional level the "Forêt résiliente" grant, launched in 2021 under the Recovery Plan, funded climate-adaptive regeneration at €500-€3 000 per hectare between 2021 and 2024. Three calls channeled roughly €9 million to restore or diversify 3 858 ha of public and private forest.

Since 2011, the Royal Forestry Society's "Plant-a-Tree" sponsorship has supported reforestation and afforestation with funding and technical advice, backed by corporate sponsors. Eligible long-term members can receive up to €2,000 for projects planting at least 500 approved trees, reflecting growing private-sector interest in climate and biodiversity action. No other relevant funding provided by foundations, business association, educational or other institution was identified through desk research.

As per innovative funding sources, Belgium's sovereign Green Bonds (€9 billion) and Wallonia's own Sustainability and Social Bonds (€2.7 billion) channel institutional capital into green and social spending. No other innovative funding sources were identified through desk research.

While Wallonia offers a range of financial incentives, their direct impact on SFHs is sometimes limited by restrictive eligibility criteria, small-dedicated budgets, and administrative complexity. The most accessible support lines are the Forêt Résiliente grants and specific tax exemptions.

1. Financial incentives based on EU funding

1.1. The European Regional Development Fund

Belgium's Cohesion-Policy envelope for 2021-2027 amounts to almost €3 billion, of which the Walloon ERDF programme receives €595 million[1]. This figure represents 40% of the total budget allocated to Wallonia for the 2021–2027 programming period, which amounts to €1.49 billion. Of this, 40% is funded by the ERDF, 50% by Wallonia or the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, and the remaining 10% by project operators[2]. Within Priority 2 *A Greener Wallonia*, measure 9 channels grants to "Circular economy and sustainable use of resources" and measure 11 to "Support for businesses in transitioning to the circular economy and the sustainable use of resources nature protection, biodiversity, green infrastructure and ecosystem-service restoration"[3]. This priority may trigger the implementation of projects relevant for Small Forest Holdings (SFHs) and Small Forest Owners (SFOs).

Unfortunately, the website "europe.wallonie.be" has been offline during the desk research, which has prevented the author from accessing additional information on specific funding available for SFHs and SFOs.

1. **Investment Support for Primary Wood Processing Activities – ERDF Co-financing (2023–2027)[4]**

As part of Wallonia's regional strategy for economic development and resource efficiency, this investment aid scheme supports businesses engaged in forestry operations or forest-related works that seek to enhance their processing capacity and competitiveness through modern infrastructure and equipment. The programme is co-financed by the ERDF and aligns with the 2023–2027 programming period.

The scheme is administered by the Directorate of Agricultural Structures of SPW ARNE (Agriculture, Natural Resources, Environment) and offers co-financing for eligible investments up to 40%, with a minimum base subsidy of 20%. The goal is to strengthen the wood-based value chain in Wallonia by supporting first transformation activities (e.g. sawing, debarking, drying) and encouraging environmentally sustainable investments.

[1] En Mieux.be, Lancement du premier appel à projets publics FEDER et FSE+. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kekfl8wdFLA&t=5s
[2] Agriculture.wallonie.be. Bénéficier d'un subside pour des investissements bâtiments et voiries inscrits dans un programme FEDER. Available at : https://agriculture.wallonie.be/contents/iodda/2809.html
[3] En Mieux.be, Les Fonds européens en Wallonie et à Bruxelles. Available at: https://www.enmieux.be/2021-2027
[4] Wallonie.be, Demander une aide à l'investissement pour une activité de première transformation du bois. Available at : Demander une aide à l'investissement pour une activité de première transformation du bois

Applicants must choose between this aid and other standard investment aid schemes (e.g. “Investment premium for SMEs or Large Enterprises”); dual funding is not permitted. Once a scheme is selected, the applicant must remain both the formal applicant and beneficiary within that administrative stream. Objectives are:

- Support the modernisation of infrastructure and equipment for primary wood processing;
- Promote the competitiveness of local forest-related industries;
- Encourage sustainable and resource-efficient investments aligned with EU cohesion priorities.

Applicants must:

- Be a business operating in the forestry or forest-works sector, with activity located in Wallonia;
- Propose investments relevant to the first transformation of wood;
- Commit to remaining within the selected aid stream (non-cumulative with SME investment support);
- Comply with legal and land-use authorisations;
- Respect the minimum threshold for co-financed investment.

Eligible investment categories:

1. Purchase of new equipment directly related to wood transformation and commercialisation;
2. Construction, purchase, or renovation of buildings used for wood storage or to house company’s machinery or processing equipment.

Applicants must commit to maintaining the subsidised investments in good functional condition and for their intended use for a minimum period of 5 years, while also continuing to meet eligibility conditions.

The aid is provided in the form of a capital grant, calculated as a percentage of a flat-rate amount associated with the specific investment.

The list of eligible investments and the corresponding flat-rate values is available in the "Useful Links" section of the administrative portal. These flat-rate amounts, along with the list of admissible equipment, may be reviewed and updated to reflect changes in market prices and the development of new technologies.

The total aid percentage consists of a base rate of 20%, which may be increased through one or more bonuses depending on the characteristics of the applicant or the nature of the investment project.

Specifically, an additional 10% may be granted if the applicant or their enterprise participates in an operational group under the “cooperation for innovation” intervention. A further 5% may apply if the applicant employs salaried personnel. Another 5% bonus may be awarded for investments aimed at developing techniques to valorise wood waste or by-products for renewable energy use.

However, under no circumstances may the total aid exceed 40% of the flat-rate investment amount.

Furthermore, the total public support that may be granted to a single beneficiary under this measure during the 2023–2027 period is capped at €500,000.

1.2. Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Belgium has adopted two CAP Strategic Plans for the 2023 to 2027 period, one for Flanders and one for Wallonia, in line with its federal structure. Together, the plans represent over €3.9 billion in public investment, supporting farming, rural development, and environmental objectives.

The European Union contributes around €2.91 billion, through the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), while national co-financing accounts for an additional €605 million.

Flanders' plan totals approximately €2.05 billion, including €1.77 billion from the EU and €272 million from national funds. Wallonia's plan amounts to €1.86 billion, with €1.53 billion in EU funding and €333 million from national sources.

Funding is allocated to three main areas: direct payments, rural development, and targeted sectoral support[5][6].

The CAP remains a key funding source for forestry support. It should be noted, however, that according to a consulted forestry association, the administrative burden to prepare the funding requests often discourages participation. In principle, SFHs funding with true impact should stem from simple, direct, and accessible support for regeneration and infrastructure, which according to the consulted stakeholder currently represents only a tiny fraction of the overall agricultural and forestry budgets available[7].

In Wallonia, three CAP interventions are directly relevant for forest owners:

1. **Intervention 357 – Forest Infrastructure and Climate Resilience[8]**

   Intervention 357 of Wallonia's CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027 supports investments in forest infrastructure that mitigate the impacts of climate change. It aims to improve forest accessibility while protecting soils, watercourses and sensitive natural areas. The measure is specifically designed to support the resilience of forest operations and the sustainability of wood mobilisation in a changing climate.

   The total budget allocated to the 2024–2025 call is €1,000,000, and the public intervention rate is 100% of eligible costs. Projects must have a minimum value of

[5] At a glance: BELGIUM'S (FLANDERS) CAP STRATEGIC PLAN. Available at: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a6eb4007-0660-4826-b670-b51dd326d970_en?filename=csp-at-a-glance-belgium-flanders_en.pdf
[6] At a glance: BELGIUM'S (WALLONIA) CAP STRATEGIC PLAN. Available at: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/document/download/5a7276ff-4e8b-4691-ba5f-edc58c9ba971_fr?filename=csp-at-a-glance-belgium-wallonia_fr.pdf
[7] Consultation with a forestry association from Wallonia carried out in October 2025.
[8] SPW Agriculture, Intervention 357 – Infrastructures sylvicoles (accessed 17 June 2025): https://agriculture.wallonie.be/home/aides/pac-2023-2027-description-des-interventions/aides-aux-investissements-nouveaute-2025/appel-a-projets-dans-le-cadre-de-l-intervention-357-investissement-dans-des-infrastructures-sylvicoles-lies-au-changement-climatique-dessertes-forestieres.html

€5,000 and may not exceed €450,000. The aid is granted as a subsidy and is considered transparent in accordance with Article 5 of Regulation (EU) 2022/2472.

The scheme covers both material and immaterial investments. Eligible physical infrastructure includes:

- Construction of wood storage platforms to reduce forwarding distances and soil compaction;
- Creation of turning areas to facilitate and secure timber loading operations;
- Adaptation of forest roads to reduce erosion and flooding risk (e.g. lateral ditches, water diversions, sedimentation ditches);
- Construction of bridges or culverts in wet zones, to reduce the impact of forest operations on hydrological systems.

Additionally, up to 15% of the project budget may be spent on planning and administrative costs, such as feasibility studies, environmental impact assessments, engineering, and permit applications.

Both private and public forest owners are eligible, whether individuals, legal entities or groups.
Applicants must hold either a forest management plan or a simple management plan, except in cases where:

- The private owner's total forest area is less than 5 hectares;
- The public owner's forest area is less than 20 hectares.

Only one lead applicant is accepted per project, who is responsible for the full implementation. A technical specification file (*cahier des charges*) must be included with the application.

Selection procedure and project ranking

Applications are submitted via the online platform CALISTA[9]. The call opens on 1 September 2024 and closes on 1 June 2025. Selected projects will be announced by 1 October 2025. If the call is undersubscribed, a second round may be launched.

To qualify for funding under Intervention 357, projects must score at least 15 out of 42 points across eight evaluation categories. These include the level of collaboration (number of forest owners and users involved), environmental protection (measures for water, soil and run-off), and technical improvements (emergency access and loading).

Points are also awarded for cost-effectiveness, durability (road design, drainage, resilience), and biodiversity features. Additional credit is given for tourism-related infrastructure and external co-funding. Projects that do not meet minimum technical or legal standards may face financial penalties.

The Direction des ressources forestières (Walloon Department of Nature and Forest) is responsible for implementation. Practical details, including guidance on how to encode

[9] https://calista.wallonie.be

projects into the CALISTA system, are available on the Walloon Region's official portal. A practical guide to project submission is accessible alongside the digital form.

2. **Intervention 341 – Natura 2000 Compensation for Forest Zones**[10]

   Under Wallonia's CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027, Intervention 341 offers annual compensation to forest owners facing revenue loss or increased costs due to Natura 2000 conservation obligations. The scheme applies the provisions of Article 72 of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 and is communicated under Article 33 of Regulation (EU) 2022/2472 as an agricultural and forestry aid exemption scheme.

   The measure provides an annual indemnity of €48 per hectare to eligible forest parcels within designated Natura 2000 management units, specifically UG6 to UG9 and UG Temp 01 and 03, and any additional forest surfaces deemed accessory by the administration. The objective is to offset financial constraints caused by mandatory silvicultural restrictions introduced through Natura 2000 site designations. These include, for example:

- Maintaining at least one biologically valuable tree per two hectares;
- Retaining a minimum of two deadwood elements per hectare;
- Prohibiting the planting or replanting of exotic species near watercourses and forest edges;
- Designating 3% of the area as non-intervention senescence zones;
- Preventing any changes to habitats of community interest or protected species habitats.

   Eligibility is limited to private forest owners or associations thereof, with parcels:

- Located within Wallonia,
    - Measuring between 10 hectares and 30 hectares (except in cases where physical demarcation is not feasible) – this criterion has been considered "problematic" by a consulted association since it excludes the vast majority of Wallonia's forest land under Natura 2000 protection, which is largely fragmented into holdings of less than 10 hectares[11],
- Situated within Natura 2000 boundaries and compliant with conservation rules.

   Non-eligible areas include plantations of exotic species as mapped by the administration and any surfaces not aligned with conservation objectives. Parcels restored through ecological works can also become eligible upon receipt of a conformity certificate.

   The minimum compensable claim is €60, meaning a minimum eligible forest area of 1.25 hectares is required. Compensation is based on standard cost estimates, including administrative and compliance expenses, and is considered transparent aid under EU state aid rules.

[10] SPW Agriculture, Paiement Natura 2000 en zone forestière (accessed 17 June 2025): https://agriculture.wallonie.be/home/aides/pac-2023-2027-description-des-interventions/paiements-natura-2000-nouveaute-2025/paiement-natura-2000-en-zone-forestiere.html

[11] Consultation with a forestry association from Wallonia carried out in October 2025.

To receive the payment, applicants must:

- Submit an annual declaration of forest surfaces via the CAP-on-Web platform[12],
- Provide details including project location, surface, compliance commitments and costs,
- Ensure compliance with the relevant Walloon Government Decrees of 24 March 2011 and 19 May 2011 on general and specific Natura 2000 management restrictions.

The scheme is in force from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2027, with annual application deadlines aligned with the CAP single declaration calendar. Aid is not available to companies in financial difficulty, those subject to recovery orders for illegal state aid, or schemes favouring national over imported products or services.

The competent authority is the *Service public de Wallonie – Direction des Indemnités Natura 2000*.

3. **Intervention 353 - Aid for Investments in Forestry and Logging Enterprises[13]**

Under Wallonia's CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027, intervention 353 supports capital investment in companies active in forest harvesting and silviculture. The objective is to promote more efficient and environmentally friendly practices across the forest value chain, stimulate rural economic development, and enhance the capacity of enterprises to respond to climate and natural crises.

The measure covers three main areas:

- Forest exploitation activities, such as felling, delimbing, debarking, shaping, skidding, and transporting roundwood to primary processing facilities;
- Silvicultural operations, including soil preparation, vegetation control, planting, tree protection, and quality improvement through thinning and pruning;
- Energy recovery, through the valorisation of wood by-products and residues for renewable energy production.

The scheme aims to improve both the environmental sustainability and the economic resilience of the forestry sector, notably through innovation, digitalisation, and the mechanisation of forest work.

Eligible applicants must be:

- Individual entrepreneurs, SMEs, or groups of enterprises as defined by EU Recommendation 2003/361/EC;
- Active in forest operations under relevant NACE codes;
- Registered in Wallonia's land management system (SIGEC) and compliant with tax and social security obligations;
- Established or planning to establish a business site in Wallonia;
- Not classified as an "enterprise in difficulty" under EU state aid rules.

[12] Guichet de l'agriculture en Wallonie. Available at: https://agriculture.wallonie.be/paconweb/web/guest/home

[13] SPW Agriculture, Aides aux investissements pour les entreprises de travaux forestiers et d'exploitation forestière. Available at : https://agriculture.wallonie.be/home/aides/pac-2023-2027-description-des-interventions/aides-aux-investissements-nouveaute-2025/aides-aux-investissements-pour-les-entreprises-de-travaux-forestiers-et-d-exploitation-forestiere.html

Applicants must use the investment for eligible operations and commit to keeping the equipment in working order and for the declared purpose for a minimum of five years.

Support is available for:

- Construction, acquisition or upgrading of immovable property directly related to forest operations;
- Purchase of new machinery and specialised equipment for silviculture and logging;
- Software and digital tools relevant to forest management.

The aid is granted as a capital subsidy, calculated as a percentage of the flat-rate cost established in the ministerial decree implementing the Walloon government's investment support scheme. This flat-rate list is subject to revision to reflect evolving market prices and technologies.

The base subsidy rate is 20%, with possible top-ups for:

- Participation in an operational group for innovation: +10%
- Employment of salaried workers: +5%
- Investments in energy recovery from logging residues: +5%

The total subsidy rate cannot exceed 40% of the eligible investment cost. The cumulative maximum public aid a single beneficiary may receive under this measure between 2023 and 2027 is capped at €500,000.

Applications are submitted via the CAP-on-Web platform[14] and evaluated quarterly through a competitive ranking process. All eligible proposals are assessed against the following selection criteria:

- Location in rural or semi-rural areas;
- Enterprise size (priority given to micro, small, and medium enterprises);
- Age of the enterprise;
- Environmental performance of the proposed investment;
- Level of innovation introduced;
- Advancement of automation, digitisation, or robotics.

Only two applications per applicant per quarter are allowed. The eligibility date (used to determine the admissibility of expenses) is set at the date of submission but does not guarantee funding[15].

1.3. LIFE and Horizon Europe

Not part of national analysis.

[14] Guichet de l'agriculture en Wallonie. Available at: https://agriculture.wallonie.be/paconweb/web/guest/home
[15] For further information, please see https://agriculture.wallonie.be/home/formulaire-de-contact.html

2. Financial incentives based on MS funding

2.1. State aid

Support for research and development in the agricultural and forestry sectors[16]

The Walloon Region has established a dedicated aid framework to support research and development (R&D) activities in the agricultural and forestry sectors for the period 2023 to 2027. This scheme is based on the Agricultural and Forestry Block Exemption Regulation (EU) 2022/2472 and is exempt from notification to the European Commission under reference SA.106351. It provides a legal and financial basis for granting public support to R&D projects that contribute to innovation, knowledge transfer, and sustainable practices in forestry.

The scheme is designed to fund research bodies and knowledge dissemination organisations undertaking projects that serve the broader forestry sector. These activities may focus on improving silvicultural techniques, biodiversity management, climate resilience, or forest-based ecosystem services, among others. While private enterprises in the forestry sector are not eligible for direct support under this regime, they can benefit indirectly through the public availability of project results.

The scheme applies across the entire Walloon Region and is valid from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2027. It has a total financial envelope of €70 million for the period.

The aid targets:

- Public or private research and knowledge dissemination organisations;
- Entities proposing sector-wide development or guidance projects relevant to forestry;
- Projects that demonstrate clear relevance to the entire forestry sub-sector.

Aid is granted directly to research organisations and cannot be used as a price support or payment linked to production volumes for individual forestry operators.

Projects must be designed and submitted before their start date and must include detailed documentation on scope, objectives, duration, location, cost estimates, and required public financing.

Eligible costs include salaries for project staff, use of equipment and materials, depreciation of buildings and land, external research and advisory services, as well as operating expenses such as consumables and supplies. The maximum aid intensity is 100% of eligible costs, and individual project aid exceeding €7.5 million must be notified to the European Commission.

The aid is awarded in the form of non-repayable subsidies and is considered transparent under EU law. Beneficiaries must publish project information online before the project begins.

[16] Service public de Wallonie – Agriculture, Ressources naturelles et Environnement (2023). Aide à la recherche et au développement dans les secteurs agricole et forestier. Last updated 3 November 2023. Available at: https://agriculture.wallonie.be/home/aides/aides-etat/aide-a-la-recherche-et-au-developpement-dans-les-secteurs-agricole-et-forestier.html No other state aid measures were identified in the Commission state aid website available at: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/competition/transparency/public?lang=en

Applications must refer to the specific legal wording of the scheme when submitted. Projects must follow the procedures outlined in the Walloon Agricultural Code and the relevant decrees governing agronomic and forestry research.

2.2. Taxes and tax exemptions, subsidies

Financial support, subsidies and tax exemptions for forest owners in Wallonia

In the Walloon Region of Belgium, there is no automatic right to financial support for forest owners. However, both public and private forest actors may access a variety of subsidies under the Forestry Code[17] and associated schemes. Article 30 of the Code empowers the regional government to award grants for forestry-related activities, such as biodiversity conservation, public access infrastructure, forest restoration, and grouped management initiatives. Support may also be extended for training, awareness-raising, and research.

Additionally, under Article 31, targeted subventions may be awarded in response to significant imbalances in the proportion of broadleaved and coniferous trees, aimed at restoring ecological equilibrium. These subsidies are available at the discretion of the regional government and do not constitute a legal entitlement.

Taxation of forest owners

A forest parcel carries a cadastral income that is used to calculate both property tax (précompte immobilier) and personal income tax; the property element is roughly half of that figure. New plantations (or natural regeneration) can cut the cadastral income to just €2.50 / ha for 20 years if the owner asks the land registry, and any parcel inside Natura 2000 pays no property tax at all. Selling standing timber is untaxed and need not be declared, whereas regular sales of felled logs are treated as business income and may require VAT registration.

Forest companies, market and taxation framework

Forest group companies (*groupements forestiers*) are recognised under federal law (Law of 6 May 1999[18]) and are subject to corporate tax and other income taxes according to the nature of revenue received (real estate, capital, or other). These entities are civil companies with legal personality, whose exclusive activity is forest production on land they own. Felling and industrial processing are excluded from their scope. Approval by the Ministry of Finance is required for their constitution, but the legal form remains that of a conventional civil company, not a standalone corporate type.

Small forest owners are not excluded from forming or joining forest group companies, allowing them to access collective management benefits and potential tax efficiencies.

[17] 15 juillet 2008 - Décret relatif au Code forestier. Available at : https://wallex.wallonie.be/eli/loi-decret/2008/07/15/2008203215
[18] Loi visant à promouvoir la création de sociétés civiles de groupements forestiers (07/07/1999). Available at : https://etaamb.openjustice.be/fr/loi-du-06-mai-1999_n1999003330.html

Finally, while there is a register of forest professionals created by the Walloon Region (non-mandatory), it serves mainly to connect owners with service providers and does not serve as a regulatory or tax-related instrument.

Succession and gift-duty exemption for standing timber

When land changes hands, a purchase by notarial deed attracts the normal 12.5 % registration duty plus the notary's fees; a private deed avoids those fees but gives fewer legal guarantees.

Article 55 ter of the Walloon Code of Succession Duties[19] exempts 100 % of the stumpage value of woodland from inheritance and gift taxes. The relief also extends to shares in recognised forest groupings. The measure removes the pressure for forced felling at generational transfer and thus favours long rotation and biodiversity-rich species No prior application is needed; the notary simply excludes the stumpage value from the taxable base in the declaration[20].

2.3. Funding provided by regional and local authorities

Programme « Forêt résiliente » – climate-adaptive regeneration grant[21]

Launched in 2021 as part of the Walloon Recovery Plan, and active until 2024, the *Forêt résiliente* programme provided targeted support for forest owners to regenerate or diversify stands that are vulnerable to climate-related stressors, particularly bark beetle outbreaks, drought, windthrow, and the broader decline of monospecific, even-aged plantations. The overarching aim was to establish more resilient forests that sustain ecological functions while securing the long-term availability of quality timber.

Three successive calls channelled € ≈9 million and treated 3 858 ha of public and private forest. The third edition alone selected 380 projects (253 private owners) covering 700 ha.

The 2024 call supported regeneration on both public and private forest land with the following goals:

- Diversify vulnerable or declining stands;
- Promote the establishment of forests composed of at least three species suited to projected climatic conditions;
- Encourage biodiversity-friendly strategies, including *natural regeneration*, *biogenic species*, and *ecologically structured edges (lisières)*.

Eligible applicants had to be private forest owners in Wallonia whose parcels:

- Are at least 0.25 ha (25 ares), either in one block or comprising clearings;
- Were subject to harvesting between 1 January 2014 and 31 March 2024;
- Are located in forest, agricultural, park, or green zones (biodiversity-only grants may apply to natural, leisure or urban green areas);
- Are not beneficiaries of other public grants for regeneration;
- Respect legal requirements and land-use permissions.

[19] Code des droits de succession - Région wallonne. Available at: https://www.wallonie.be/sites/default/files/2019-05/code_des_droits_de_succession.pdf
[20] Legislation 116 - 3/2009. Code forestier, droits de succession et de donation ntf.be
[21] Filière Bois Wallonie (FBW). Reconstituer une forêt plus résiliente avec la Wallonie. https://foretresiliente.be/

Only one application per owner was permitted, with a maximum aid ceiling of €20,000.

Forest owners had to select one of the following four flat-rate packages, depending on the level of ambition and ecological design of their regeneration project:

1. €500/ha – Diversification of young stands
   For restocking or enriching young regenerating areas (<10 years), using at least three species distinct from the initial stand and not disadvantaged by climate trends.
2. €2,000/ha – Standard regeneration
   Requires at least three species, including one *biogenic* species. Up to 30% of the stand may consist of one climate-vulnerable species if it is optimal for the site.
3. €2,500/ha – Biogenic species mix
   Requires three species, with at least two biogenic species making up 50% of the stand. No climate-vulnerable species are allowed unless naturally regenerated and site-optimal.
4. €3,000/ha – Biodiversity-intensive mix
   Requires four to five biogenic species representing at least 90% of the stand. Alternatively, funding may support the creation of forest edges (*lisières*) 10–20 metres wide with a minimum of five shrub species.

All projects had to maintain species composition and ensure ecological fit with the site (*station*), as per the ecological register[22] and provenance guidance.

Applicants were encouraged to design projects either independently or with expert support. For parcels over 5 ha, owners must work with a recognised forest expert (grant of up to €420 available). Owners of smaller parcels may receive assistance from the Support Unit for Small Private Forests[23].

Eligible practices of the programme « Forêt résiliente » included both plantation and natural regeneration. Scenarios should promote biodiversity and avoid over-reliance on species with known climate vulnerabilities. The creation of structurally diverse stands is strongly encouraged[24].

The 2024 call was endowed with a budget of €1.5 million. Applications will be evaluated competitively, based on a scoring system prioritising:

- Sanitary cuts or decline-driven interventions (2 points);
- Natural regeneration with two (2 points) or one (1 point) species;
- Absence of mechanical clearing (3 points);
- Fine-scale species mixing (2 points);
- Selection of packages 3 or 4 (2 points);
- Certified sustainable forest management (1 point);

[22] Wallonie environnement SPW. Fichier écologique des essences. Available at : https://www.fichierecologique.be/#!/
[23] La Cellule d'appui et la forêt privée wallonne. Available at : https://www.filiereboiswallonie.be/la-cellule The Support Unit for Small Private Forests Forests (*La Cellule d'appui à la petite forêt privée*), established in January 2012 within the Walloon Economic Office for Wood, aims to help small private forest owners – those with plots under five hectares – make better economic use of their forests. It does so while upholding property rights and aligning with Wallonia's wider forest policy. This initiative is particularly significant due to the fragmented ownership structure in the region, which includes 76,000 properties across 63,000 hectares.
[24] Ibid.

- Preparation by a recognised expert (1 point);
- Exclusion of invasive species (1 point);
- First-time participation in *Forêt résiliente* (1 point).

In cases of equal score, projects were be ranked by submission date.

Applications had to be submitted electronically via foretresiliente.be[25] by 31 July 2024, using the designated online form. The required documents included:

- A cadastral map and parcel location;
- Photos demonstrating site conditions;
- A detailed planting and regeneration plan;
- Invoices and proof of work for reimbursement;
- Where applicable, permits and written consents.

Projects were subject to field verification by an accredited forester. Only costs essential to successful regeneration (e.g. clearing, mulching, fencing) were eligible. Proof of species composition, planting density, and survival rates may be required.

2.4. Funding provided by foundations, business associations, educational or other institutions

Royal Forestry Society of Belgium – "Plant-a-Tree" sponsorship[26]

Since 2011, the Royal Forestry Society of Belgium (SRFB) has been supporting reforestation initiatives by offering both financial assistance and technical guidance, in partnership with corporate sponsors engaged in the 'Plant a Tree' programme.

The scheme targets a range of interventions, including the reforestation of plots affected by climatic or biological hazards, new afforestation, and innovative silvicultural projects. Financial support is generally set at €1 per tree, capped at €2,000 per applicant, although exceptions may apply. Eligible applicants include individuals, municipalities, public authorities, and land right-holders, provided they are members of the Society for at least five consecutive years.

Applications can be submitted via online or paper forms and supported projects must involve a minimum of 500 trees using planting stock of recommended provenance. The initiative is funded through corporate sponsorship and reflects a growing interest in private-sector engagement in biodiversity and climate action at landscape scale[27].

No other relevant funding was identified through desk research.

[25] Cellule d'appui à la petite forêt privée. Available at : foretresiliente.be
[26] European Commission: Directorate-General for Environment, 3 billion additional trees by 2030 – Financing guide, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2779/41719
[27] Plantation responsable en forêt. Plantation responsable en forêt. Planter des arbres - entreprises - Société Royale Forestière de Belgique

2.5. Innovative funding sources

Green bonds – Federal Belgium and Wallonia

Belgium was one of the first EU Member States to harness the capital-markets for environmental objectives through the issue of dedicated green and sustainability bonds. These instruments channel institutional capital into public expenditure that meets strict environmental criteria, including the restoration and sustainable management of forests.

Belgium's first sovereign green bond (OLO[28] 86, €4.5 billion, 15 years) was issued in 2018 and met with strong investor demand. Sustainalytics confirmed its alignment with the ICMA Green Bond Principles[29] and welcomed the inclusion of a "Living resources & land-use" category covering biodiversity, reforestation, and Natura 2000. In 2022, the programme was expanded with OLO 96 (€4.5 billion) under an updated, EU Taxonomy-aligned framework reviewed by Moody's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) standards. To date, around 6% of proceeds (≈ €540 million) have supported projects related to land and biodiversity, including LIFE co-financing and Natura 2000. Annual allocation reports are audited and published online[30].

When it comes to regional bonds, Wallonia issues the first ICMA-compliant Green, Social & Sustainable Bond Framework in April 2019. "Protection of resources, land & biodiversity" is one of six green categories and explicitly mentions afforestation, forest-habitat restoration and soil-erosion control.

Between April 2019 and May 2020, the Walloon Region raised a total of €2.7 billion through three additional themed bond issues. It began on 25 April 2019 with its debut sustainability bond, placing €1 billion: half in a seven-year tranche maturing in 2026 and half in a fifteen-year tranche maturing in 2034. On 1 April 2020 the Region added another €500 million via a ten-year sustainability bond due in 2030 and simultaneously increased the outstanding 2034 tranche by €200 million, lifting that line to €700 million. A final transaction on 28 May 2020 brought an inaugural social bond of €1 billion with a 20-year maturity to 2040. Allocation reports for 2019-20 show that roughly €146 million (about 5 per cent of proceeds) has already been channelled into land-use and biodiversity projects, including the *Forêt résiliente* programme, river-bank restoration and invasive-species removal.[31].

Wallonia channels part of the bond proceeds into *Forêt résiliente* grants and the Green & Blue Mesh municipal corridors that often cross private forest parcels[32].

No other innovative funding sources were identified through desk research.

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[28] OLO is the short-hand used in Belgian capital-markets for Obligation Linéaire (French) or Lineaire Obligatie (Dutch), literally "linear bond." It is the name given to the benchmark fixed-rate Treasury bonds issued by the Kingdom of Belgium. Source: Obligations Linéaires (OLO & OLO Verte). Available at : https://www.debtagency.be/fr/produit/obligations-lineaires-olo-olo-verte/productoloinfo?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[29] ICMA's Green Bond Principles (GBP) are the voluntary guidelines that set the global baseline for issuing a "green bond." Source: Handbook, Harmonised Framework for Impact Reporting (June 2024). Available at: https://www.icmagroup.org/assets/documents/Sustainable-finance/2024-updates/Handbook-Harmonised-Framework-for-Impact-Reporting-June-2024.pdf

[30] Sustainalytics. (2018, February 6). The Kingdom of Belgium – Green OLO Framework: Second-party opinion. Sustainalytics. Retrieved from: https://www.debtagency.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/green_olo_-_second_opinion_2018.pdf

[31] Green, Social & Sustainable Bonds. https://www.wallonie.be/en/financing/green-social-sustainable-bonds

[32] European Commission: Directorate-General for Environment, 3 billion additional trees by 2030 – Financing guide, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2779/41719

2.6. Other funding sources

Not identified through desk research.

- An consulted association affirmed that the most significant barriers are likely not to be the availability of funds, but the complex eligibility rules, the bureaucratic application processes, and the financial risks associated with claiming them[33].

[33] Consultation with a forestry association from Wallonia carried out in October 2025.

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