

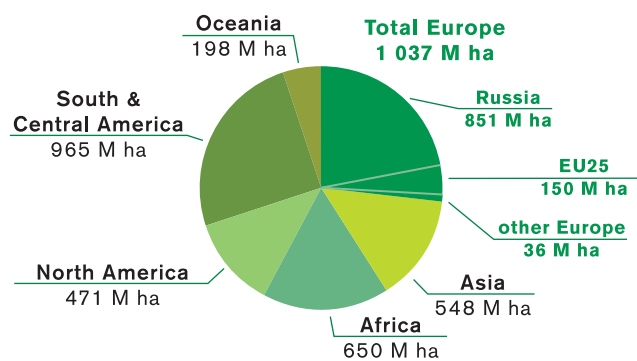
EUROPEAN WOOD FACTSHEETS

1. FORESTRY

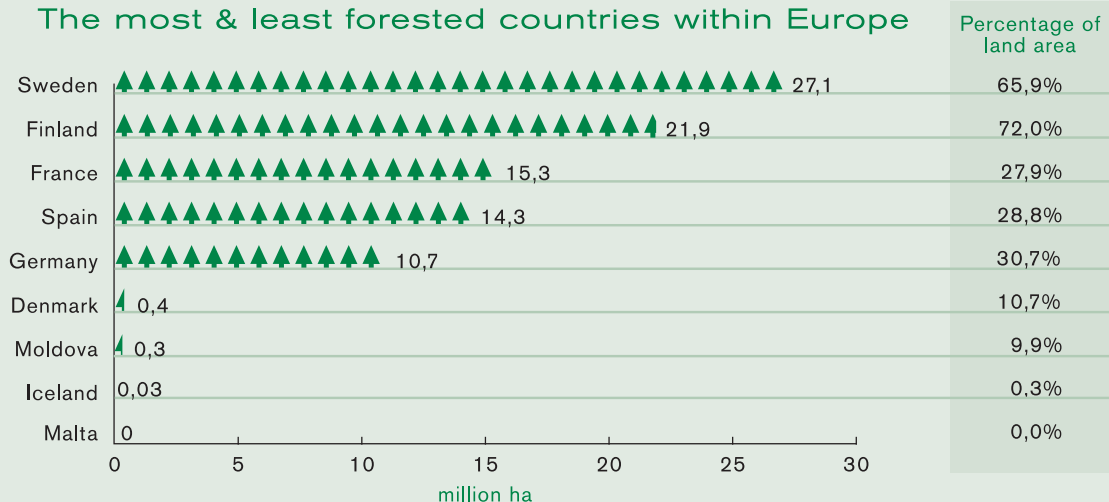
Europe's forests • Sustainable management • Certification

Europe's forests**A global context**

Globally forests are an immense resource, accounting for 29,6% of the Earth's total land base¹. Although just 5% of that area is accounted for by European forests (excluding Russia), they are the most intensively managed in the world, providing 12% of current global round wood fellings and 23% of industrial round wood². The European forest sector's output is about 25% of current world industrial production of forest products, accounting for almost 30% of wood-based panels, paper and paperboard³. Despite the increasing demand for forest resources, the EU has become a net exporter of forest products, while at the same time expanding Europe's forests.

Forest cover by continent (total 3 869 million ha)**Europe's forest cover**

Europe has over 1 000 million ha of forest spread over 44 countries⁴, equivalent to 1,42 ha (more than two football pitches) per capita. The Russian Federation accounts for over 80% of this forest area, yet even in the EU forest cover averages 47% per country, ranging from less than 1% in Malta to 72% in Finland and Sweden⁴. EU25 countries have an average forest cover of 36%, amounting to 149,5 million ha of forest.

The most & least forested countries within Europe

FAO, State of the World's Forests 2001, Rome 2001

Forest growth

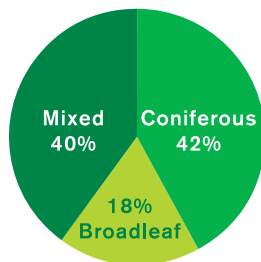
Europe's forests are expanding – unlike most forest regions in the world – at an annual net area rate of 510 000 ha.

Total standing volume is 20 000 million cubic metres and just 64% of the net annual increment is harvested⁵.

Europe's net annual increment is estimated at 346 million cubic metres (excluding Russia)¹, or almost one single family timber frame house per second.

Forest composition

70% of Europe's forest cover is semi-natural, 8% is plantation. In addition there are 3 million ha of natural forests (excluding Russia), of which 350 000 ha are untouched⁶.



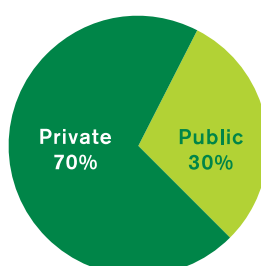
Species

Due to their climate, the Nordic countries' forests are mostly coniferous. Within the variation due to natural conditions, forests are diversified by social needs and customs; Austria, Germany and Poland have a relatively high portion of coniferous forests, while mixed forests predominate in, for example, the Czech Republic.

Ownership

European forestry is characterized by small private and public forest ownership. Some 63% of the EU25 forest is managed by 9,2 million family owners and 5,5 million public institutions, with an average family forest holding of 13 ha⁴.

Forest ownership in Europe (EU25)



Functions

European forests fulfil many functions, from amelioration (improving the landscape and helping the local economy), to nature conservation, preservation of biodiversity, recreation (the public has access to 94% of European forest land), CO₂ sequestration and commercial wood production.



Managed forests

Left entirely to nature, forests will achieve a climax stage, where the site is supporting the maximum amount of biomass that the soil fertility, rainfall and temperature conditions will allow. At this point the forest only grows as trees fall from age, wind or landslip, disease or fire.

Although natural regeneration will occur, the dead and dying trees will decay or burn, emitting CO₂ from the stored carbon. Growth is matched by decay and, with no forest management, there is no net increase in carbon storage.

Harvesting trees as they mature allows much of their carbon to continue to be stored throughout the life of the resulting wood products, while at the same time supporting an industry which has the incentive to plant new trees in their place.

Sustainable forest management

Reforestation

The European forest industry recognizes that its future is inextricably linked to the protection and expansion of its forests. This, coupled with strong and effectively enforced laws, ensures more trees are planted than are harvested.

All European countries have policies and practices requiring reforestation. Although the number of trees planted per hectare will vary depending upon species and site, it will always be more than the number cut, in order to allow for natural losses and for the forest to be well stocked.

A variety of approaches

Due to the wide variety of historical, demographic, economic, climatic and ecological circumstances, different management and regeneration methods are used across Europe – from large scale regeneration felling in uniform coniferous monocultures, to group, or even single tree, selection systems in mixed or broadleaved forests.

In harmony with nature

European forest management is moving towards methods that enhance natural processes and produce authentic forest structures which are environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable.

Protected forests

Almost 12% of the forest area is set aside to conserve forest biological and landscape diversity⁴. Of this, more than 1,6 million ha are strict forest reserves⁷. There are large tracts of protected forests in Northern and Eastern Europe with little human intervention, which are actively managed for biological biodiversity. 85-90% of the European forest serves multi-functional purposes and also helps to protect the soil, water, and other ecosystem functions (like biodiversity, air quality, Climate Change and land stability).

Nature dominates forest regrowth

66% of the European forest is restored by natural regeneration, 30% by planting or seeding and little more than 1% by coppicing⁴.

European guidelines

After the Environmental Conference of Rio de Janeiro (1992), international and regional platforms defined internally accepted sustainable forest management guidelines. Currently the official body dealing with sustainability is the Ministerial Conference on Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE).

'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, Resolution H1 of the Ministerial Conference on Protection of Forests in Europe.



Certification

Europe leads the way

Since the early 1990s, forest certification has grown rapidly. As of mid-2004, certified forests account for nearly 180 million ha worldwide. This means that, of the 700 million ha of forest actively managed for wood and non-wood products, 25% is certified. 44% of the world's certified forests (almost 78 million ha) are in Europe and 96% of Europe's certified forests are in EU25 countries, representing 75 million ha – half of all EU25 forests.

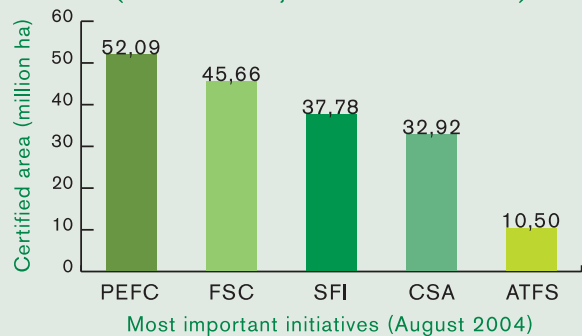
Forest certification

This is a voluntary means to verify and promote sustainable forest management.

A qualified independent agency evaluates the impact of forest management to an agreed standard and provides a rating to customers. It is a means of rewarding good forest stewardship, providing customers with reassurance, enhancing the credibility of wood and wood products and maintaining and improving their marketability.

60 international, regional and national initiatives (with their own standards), are operating across the world in 149 countries (FAO, 2001).

Worldwide certification schemes (total 178,95 million ha)



Although many European countries have been developing their own national standards, most have now adopted the principles of global systems like PEFC, originally developed to answer the needs of the small European forest owner, or FSC, set up with the co-operation of WWF.

It is important to appreciate that certification is just one measure of sustainability. As over 90% of European wood consumption is sourced from Europe's forests, which are characterized as 'generally stable, well managed and in surplus production', the consumer or specifier can be reasonably sure of the environmental credentials of their product (IIED, 'Using Wood Products to Mitigate Climate Change', 2004).

TERMS

Certification schemes: ATFS (American Tree Farm System), CSA (Canadian Standards Association), FSC (Forest Stewardship Council), PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification), SFI (Sustainable Forestry Initiative).

Coppice: Forest comprised of shoots sprouting from tree stumps, left after harvesting, which can grow into new trees.

Europe: *Austria, Belgium/Luxemburg, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Albania, Andorra, Belarus, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Macedonia, Republic of Moldavia, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Ukraine and Yugoslavia (EU25: countries in italic).*

Fellings: Average (annual) standing volume of trees, living or dead, that are felled during the given reference period, including volume of trees or parts of trees that are not removed from the forest, other wooded land or felling sites.

Forest: Land with tree crown cover (or equivalent stocking level) of more than 10% and area of more than 0,5 ha. The trees should be able to reach a minimum height of at least 5m at maturity in situ.

Natural regeneration: Re-establishment of a forest stand by natural means, i.e. by natural seeding or vegetative regeneration. It may be assisted by human intervention, e.g. by scarification or fencing to protect against wildlife damage or domestic animal grazing.

Standing volume: Volume of trees, living or dead, above stump, measured over bark.

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