

Bioenergy Europe welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the new EU Forest Strategy

Brussels, 27 April 2021 - As part of the [European Green Deal](#), the European Commission launched a [public consultation](#) (running from March 25th to April 19th) on the development of a new EU Forest Strategy. Bioenergy Europe provided feedback on this critical initiative for our forests. We recognise the importance of having longstanding, healthy, and productive forests – a vital condition benefitting the environment and society at large.

The new EU Forest Strategy will build on the EU's 2030 biodiversity strategy, cover the whole forest cycle, and promote the many services that forests provide.

The strategy will be aimed at ensuring healthy and resilient forests that contribute significantly to biodiversity and climate goals, reduce and control natural disasters, secure livelihoods and support a circular bioeconomy and rural communities.

EU forests serve as a source of resilience, absorbing emissions, providing resources to local communities, and are home to terrestrial biodiversity. Furthermore, sustainable forest management increases the capacity of CO₂ absorption, reducing fire risks, improving soil quality, preventing insect outbreaks, and contributing to local economies.

The bioenergy sector as part of the wider bioeconomy depends on healthy forests and already works actively to ensure their sustainable management. We are working with the wood industry and forest owners to ensure that European forests maintain their biodiversity, vitality, and regeneration capacity.

According to the latest FAO findings, between 1990 and 2020, the EU forest stock has increased by 47% and its coverage gained on average 482,000 hectares every year. This equals roughly 1,3 football fields every minute.

In the last two decades, the harvesting remains lower than the growth: more than 30% of the annual forest increment remains in the forest, creating additional wood availability for the future.

Furthermore, in 2018 the percentage of wood removal diverted for energy purposes remains stable compared to previous years accounting for around 23% of the total harvesting. These are tops and branches left after harvesting and thinning. This confirms a stable trend since 1990 and remains around one fourth of the total harvest in the EU, despite a staggering triplication of consumption (from 41 Mtoe to 117 Mtoe) of bioenergy in Europe over the same period.

This demonstrates that bioenergy is not a driving force behind forest harvesting. On the contrary, this increase is due to the better use of residues from forest-based industries. In this sense, the bioenergy sector is an example of effective circularity, that has environmental and socio-economic benefits.

We believe the new EU Forest Strategy must offer an actionable plan for the European forests and forest-based sector to sustainably provide renewable materials, products, and energy for the post-fossil economy.

The EU Green Deal objectives can only be achieved if fossil-based materials and energy are swiftly substituted. The new EU Forest Strategy must help drive the competitiveness of the forest-based industries to support these objectives.

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A robust strategy must also enable forest multifunctionality while supporting all values of EU forests: social, economic, and ecological. Investing in rural development, innovation and increasing the resilience of forests to climate change are key to the success of the EU Green Deal.

Biomass energy systems for example offer significant possibilities for clean energy production but also foster sustainable development in rural areas.

Finally, we believe the new Strategy should ensure policy coherence and legal certainty for forest-based industries and bioeconomy market operators.

Bioenergy Europe is looking forward to collaborating with the European Commission and other forest-based industries to develop an ambitious EU Forest Strategy promoting strong and resilient forests.

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[Bioenergy Europe](https://www.bioenergyeurope.org) (formerly known as AEBIOM) is the voice of the European bioenergy industry. It aims to develop a sustainable bioenergy market based on fair business conditions. Founded in 1990, Bioenergy Europe is a non-profit, Brussels-based international organisation bringing together more than 40 associations and 110 companies, as well as academia and research institutes from across Europe.