



Conference

# OUR FORESTS FUTURE

Sustainable forest management  
to address societal challenges

Brussels, 25 – 26 April 2019

Agriculture  
and Rural  
Development



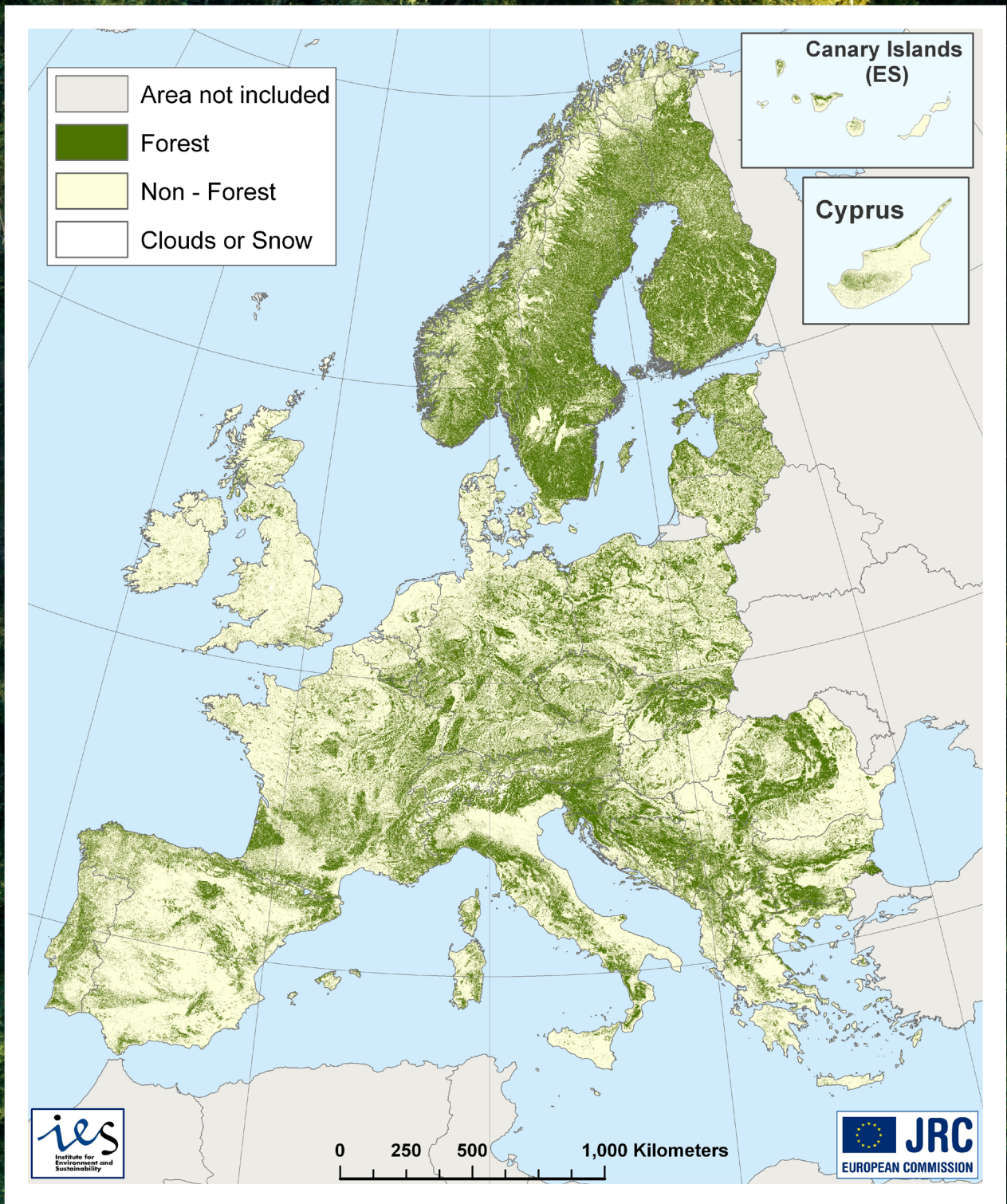
## SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE EU

- ➔ EU forests have been managed for centuries, to provide raw materials and services to people and to the environment. Almost each forest stand in the EU tells a long story of interaction with humans, and their current area, composition, status, and biodiversity are largely the result of a combination of human land uses and natural dynamics.
- ➔ EU forest area is steadily increasing, thanks to afforestation programmes and natural regeneration. Existing and new forests need to be carefully maintained in the economic, environmental and social interests of the citizens, in a densely populated continent.
- ➔ Most evidence suggests that the principles of sustainable forest management are widely applied to Europe's forests. Forests' management differs depending on their use: some are biodiversity shelters or protective forests, others provide raw materials. Active management also prevents damages to their health, and ensures the continued provision of ecosystems goods and services benefitting the society.

## HOW DOES THE EU PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF FORESTS?

- The EU Forest Strategy is the framework to coordinate and ensure coherence in forest-related policies, and to ensure the contribution of EU forests and the forest-based sector to the EU's objectives and targets.
- It builds on the principles of sustainable forest management (SFM), the multi-functional role of forests, resource efficiency and global forest responsibility.
- ***The Strategy's objectives are: ensuring that all forests in the EU are managed according to sustainability criteria; and strengthening our contribution towards sustainably managing forests and reducing deforestation at global level.***
- A recent review of the strategy found out significant progress implementing the planned action towards achieving these objectives. The Strategy and its priorities are fit for addressing the role of forests and related EU policies for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the EU and globally.
- The Commission is organising this international conference to analyse and discuss opportunities and challenges for enhancing the contribution of forests and the forest-based sector to EU's priorities.





Europe Forest Map 2016. Source: JRC

# WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES FOR EU FORESTS?



- Growing societal demands and EU policy objectives are increasingly demanding to serve multiple purposes that sometimes can be perceived as contradictory, including:
  - ➔ Ensuring their contribution to the EU climate and energy framework
  - ➔ facing adaptation to climate change
  - ➔ contributing to growth and jobs in rural areas
  - ➔ supporting the forest-based sector to stay competitive
  - ➔ supporting the development of the bioeconomy
  - ➔ ensuring the enhanced provision of ecosystem services
- EU forests are often subject to calamities such as forest fires and storms, and large areas are affected by insect damages and diseases.
- Forests are precious for biodiversity, and their contribution to our biodiversity objectives and reversing the worrying trends observed in the EU and globally has to be enhanced.
- Climate change is aggravating all these problems, putting at stake their capacity to satisfy these demands, and even their long-term survival.

## And abroad?

- Despite efforts carried out, the rate of global deforestation remains alarmingly high. Forests' degradation and loss have major consequences on stability and security, climate, biodiversity and livelihoods.
- The drivers of deforestation are multiple and complex, combining subsistence and trade factors in an ever-growing human population, and vary depending on the regional contexts of the countries affected.



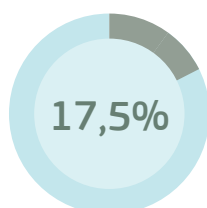
# EU FORESTS CONTRIBUTING TO INNOVATION, GROWTH, JOBS, AND THE CIRCULAR BIOECONOMY

- Wood and other forest products make an essential contribution to economic growth and to raising living standards. In the EU, they are still a significant source of welfare in some countries and regions.
  - ✓ 60 % of the EU forests are privately owned, with approximately 16 million forest owners.
  - ✓ Some 420 000 enterprises were active in wood-based industries in 2015. They represented 20 % of manufacturing enterprises across the EU-28.
  - ✓ About 0.5 million people worked in the forestry and logging sector in the EU in 2015
  - ✓ The extended forest-based industry value chains supported 3.6 million jobs in the green economy, with a turnover of EUR 640 billion (2015).
  - ✓ Forests also provide non-wood products, such as cork, resin, tannin, fodder, medicinal and aromatic plants, fruits, nuts, roots, mushrooms, seeds, honey, ornamentals, exudates, etc. Cork is one of the most important non-wood forest products in the EU, with approximately 1.7 million ha of cork oak forests accounting for 80% of the worldwide production of cork.
- ➔ Forests make a big contribution to rural economies, helping to prevent population drift to urban areas.
- ➔ Forests contribute to the prosperity and wellbeing of current and future generations. They are source of a huge variety of natural materials which people have used for millennia to, for example, build houses, make furniture, produce paper, heat our homes, create arts and crafts, produce wine stoppers, cosmetics, or food.
- ➔ By using sustainably produced wood and other forest products and services, we take care of our environment, provide jobs and enrich our daily lives.
- Sustainable forest management in the EU forests receives significant financial support from multiple financial streams (e.g. ESI Funds, LIFE, and the EU research & innovation framework programmes).
- EU's Rural Development funds (Common Agricultural Policy) are the main source of funding to forests. Most Member States address the needs of their forests in their Rural Development Programmes, amounting to EUR 8.2 billion of public expenditure for 2014-2020. Mostly small owners benefit from these, and more than 170.000 forest owners and managers receive support.
- EU-funded research has supported the forest-based sector with more than 500 projects in the last decade, with a total value of EUR 1.4 billion to benefit forestry.
- Research is increasingly connected to innovation and deployment, and the EU revised Bioeconomy Strategy will further scale-up the role of forest-based biomass to replace non-renewable materials and products, whilst protecting the environment and ensuring circularity.
- Almost 60% of the EU's renewable energy comes from biomass, more than half of that from forestry, and new sustainability criteria on forest biomass used for energy production have been adopted.
- Against this, forest stocks in EU forests are steadily increasing. The EU harvests less than 70% of its annual wood growth. Therefore, an increase in the supply of wood would be possible, addressing the potential trade-offs through sustainable forest management.

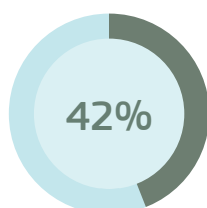
## Wood as renewable energy source, 2017.

(Source: EUROSTAT)

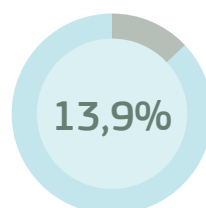
Share of energy from renewable sources in gross final consumption of energy 2017 (EU 28):



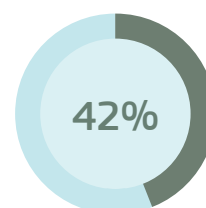
Share of wood & other solid biofuels in total Primary production of energy from renewable sources 2017 (EU-28):



Share of renewables in gross inland energy consumption, 2017 /EU-28):



Contribution of Wood & other solid biofuels to the mix of renewable energy sources in inland consumption:

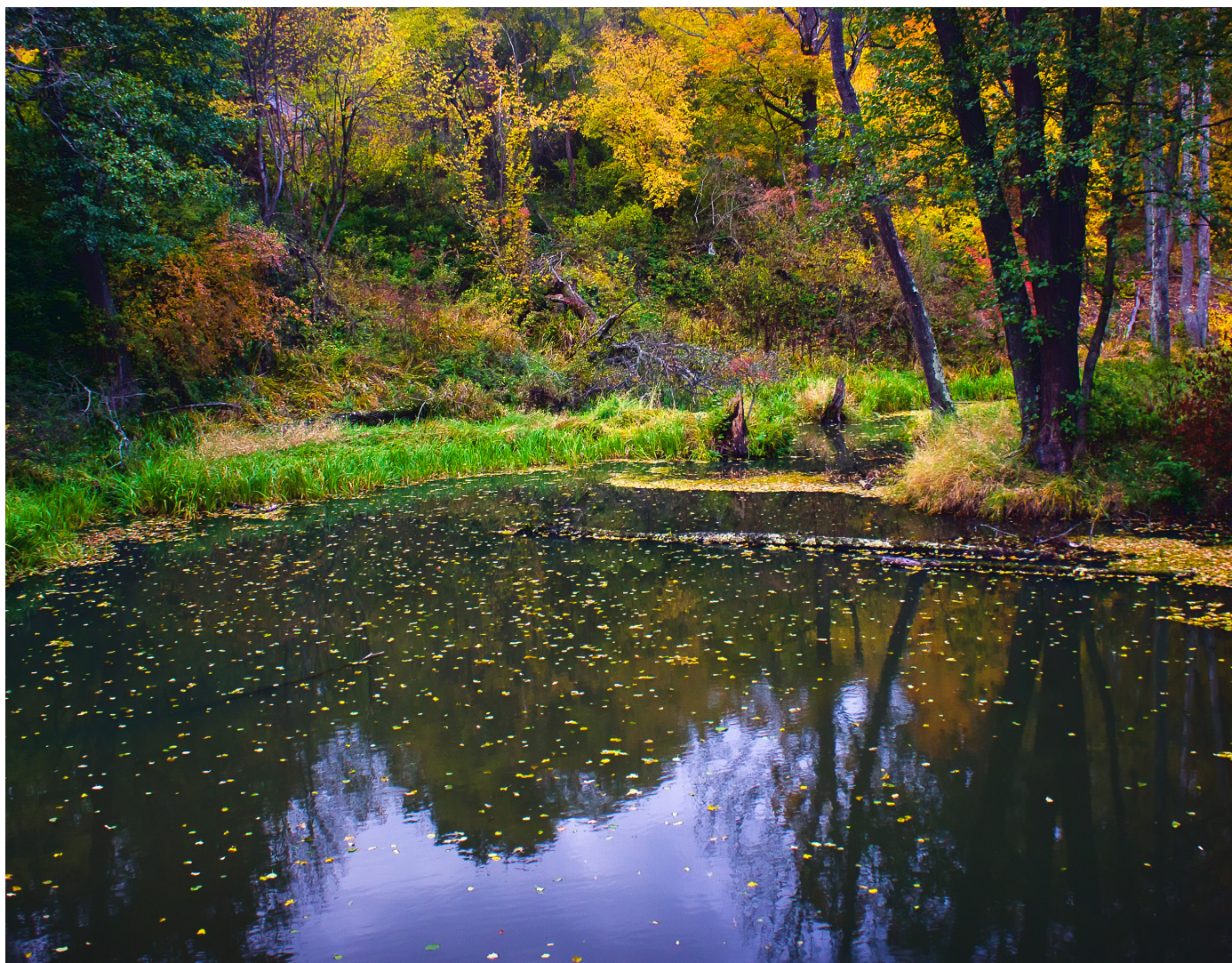


# EU FORESTS FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE

- Forests play a crucial role to achieve a carbon-neutral EU economy by 2050, as they can absorb carbon from the atmosphere and store it in soils, standing trees forest biomass, and wood products, thus mitigating the effect of emissions from fossil fuels.
  - Wood is a renewable and environmentally friendly resource. Forests provide wood as a renewable material, and biomass for energy to replace fossil materials and fuel that are sources of emissions.
- Sustainable forest management is necessary to fight climate change. Forests and forestry are key contributors to EU's ambitious energy and climate policy and the targets defined for 2030:
- ✓ At least 40% cuts in greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels)
  - ✓ At least 32% share for renewable energy
  - ✓ At least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency



- EU policy tools are in place ensure the contribution of forests to climate change mitigation. A new LULUCF Regulation emphasizes the role of sustainably managed forests and wood in carbon storage and sequestration.
- The EU strategy on adaptation to climate change promotes resilient EU policies, and encourages national adaptation efforts, where forests are often priority, through policy mainstreaming, knowledge provision and financial support.
- The EU provides significant financial support to address forest fires, pests and other disasters, promoting prevention, supporting coordinated and quick response mechanisms, and assisting restoration of damaged areas.
- The EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS), or expert groups, benefit the EU but also other countries e.g. in the European, Middle Eastern and North African regions.
- Renewed EU Regulations on plant health and on invasive alien species, have reinforced EU instruments for pest control, improving the protection of EU's forests and plants.



## FORESTS' BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

- ➔ Well-managed forests are at the heart of sound and balanced natural environments and ecosystems. They also offer valuable breathing space and areas of repose and calm for Europe's highly-urbanised society
- ✓ 50% of Natura 2000 area, the network of nature protection areas, is forest, covering 38 million hectares. 21% of the total forest resources in the EU are thus protected.
- ✓ 13% of EU forests are managed mainly for protection of soil, water and other ecosystem services.
- The EU makes funding available to address the protection of the forests' natural capital, and provides guidance to Member States, such as the *Natura 2000 and Forests guide*.
- EU's biodiversity and rural development policies promote the integration of biodiversity and sustainable forest management.
- EU is making efforts to map, assess and value of forests' ecosystem services (MAES) and is developing an EU natural capital accounts system (INCA).
- EU's research addresses how ecosystem services can be better enhanced through policy design and implementation, and EU funding increasingly integrates opportunities for supporting these.



# EU ADDRESSING INTERNATIONAL FOREST CHALLENGES

- ➔ The EU is strengthening its role in the global efforts to promote sustainable forest management and fight deforestation and forest degradation in international fora, in coordination with its Member States.
  - ➔ The EU and the Member States actively promote Sustainable Forest Management in pan-European (FOREST EUROPE) and international forest-related fora and processes (e.g. UNFF, FAO, ITTO, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity), including the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
  - ➔ The EU, as the leading world's development cooperation donor, is promoting the role of forests for sustainable development, within its external and cooperation action.
- The EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan is a relevant, innovative response to the challenge of illegal logging. Improving its implementation has significantly enhanced forest governance in several countries.
  - EU development cooperation has assigned EUR 235 million in 2014-2020 to support improved governance and promote forest conservation through FLEGT and REDD+ (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) activities, supplementary to the specific cooperation programmes at country or regional levels.
  - The EU is supporting the global protection of forests in its bilateral trade agreements.
  - A new initiative stepping up EU action against deforestation will reaffirm the EU's leading role in promoting action to fight deforestation and forest degradation.





# EU FORESTS AT OUR SERVICE



- Forests thrive in virtually all environments, from sub-Arctic to Mediterranean, from Alpine to low-land, in flood plains and deltas. In all regions, they are home to a large number of animals and plants.

- ✓ 43% of EU land – 182 million hectares – is forest or other wooded land
- ✓ Of these, 134 million hectares are available for wood supply
- ✓ Forests are growing and colonising areas that were formerly deforested – from 1990 to 2015 an area the size of Greece was afforested

- Forests are one of Europe's greatest renewable resources, providing multiple benefits to society and the economy. The way we manage, protect and develop our forests today is vital for our children and grandchildren.
- Forests and the forest sector can greatly contribute to delivering sustainable solutions to current and future societal challenges that concern all citizens of the Union. The Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the EU's climate and energy policies, and the EU Bioeconomy Strategy have confirmed the growing relevance and importance of the forest sector for the EU.





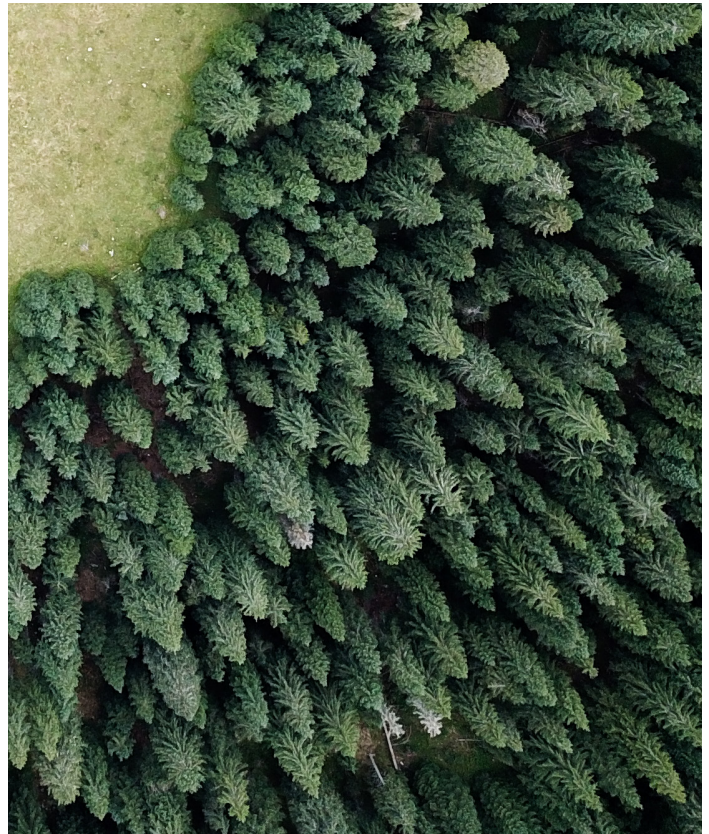
## What do we get from forests?

→ Forests provide many benefits and services, some more obvious than others, including:

- Raw materials for construction and other bio-based industries
- Rural livelihoods: jobs and income for people, often in rural and remote areas
- Reducing the EU reliance on fossil fuels, providing green energy (biomass) to replace them.
- Climate change, mitigation (carbon capture and storage) and adaptation (by e.g. microclimate regulation, control of floods, windstorms, etc.).
- Pollution control, through air and water regulation and purification.
- Protection of fertile soils, preventing erosion, desertification, landslides, floods and avalanches.
- Biodiversity conservation, hosting key habitats, shelters for wildlife; biodiversity corridors, and micro-climates for rare species.
- Leisure spaces, for people to relax and pursue outdoor activities

Link to DG Agriculture and Rural Development website on forestry:

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/fore/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/fore/index_en.htm)







#EUForest

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