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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Multi-annual Implementation Plan of the new EU Forest Strategy

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MULTI-ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF THE EU FOREST STRATEGY

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In September 2013 the Commission adopted a Communication on a new EU Forest Strategy for forests and the forest-based sector accompanied by two Staff Working Documents on the EU Forest Strategy and a Blueprint for the EU Forest-based Industries. It was followed by Conclusions from the Council¹, by an own-initiative report from the European Parliament² and by Opinions from both the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) and the Committee of the Regions (COR).

The EU Forest Strategy is based on the principle of subsidiarity. It aims at establishing a framework for forest-related actions in support of sustainable forest management, based on the coordination of the forest policies and initiatives relevant to forests and to the forest-based sector.

The guiding principles of the strategy are (i) sustainable forest management and the multifunctional role of forests, delivering multiple goods and services in a balanced way and ensuring forest protection (ii) resource efficiency, optimising the contribution of forests and the forest-based sector to rural development, growth and job creation and (iii) global forest responsibility, promoting sustainable production and consumption of forest products. It also contains a 2020 objective: to ensure and demonstrate that all forests in the EU are managed according to sustainable forest management principles.

The holistic nature of the strategy is reflected in its eight priority areas, which cover the three pillars of sustainable forest management, namely social, economic and environmental. This provides a framework within which all new policies from any of the various areas can be considered:

Contributing to major societal objectives;

1. Supporting our rural and urban communities
2. Fostering the competitiveness and sustainability of forest-based industries, bioenergy and the wider green economy
3. Forests in a changing climate change
4. Protecting forests and enhancing ecosystem services

Improving the knowledge base;

5. Forest information and monitoring
6. Research and innovation

Coordination and communication;

7. Working together
8. Forests from a global perspective

¹ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/agricult/142685.pdf

² (insert reference when available)

In line with the Council conclusions on the EU Forest Strategy supported by the European Parliament own-initiative report as well as by the Opinion of both the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, the Commission services in close cooperation with the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC), and in consultation with both the Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry & Cork and the Expert Group on Forest-based Industries and Sectorally Related Issues, have prepared a multiannual implementation plan for the Strategy.

It includes an annex with the concrete list of actions for the period 2014-2020, the actors and timing of the different activities as well as the expected outcomes. It takes into account the comments provided by the SFC, the input from the Forest-based Industries Expert Group as well as the comments provided by the Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry and Cork.

The actions presented are part of the ongoing work of the Commission and do not constitute new commitments.

2. MULTIANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Forest Multi-Annual implementation Plan (Forest MAP) provides a concrete list of actions for the period 2015-2020, the actors and timing of the different activities as well as the expected outcomes. It is structured according to the eight priority areas of the EU Forest Strategy, providing actions and target dates for each area. The actions already carried out in 2014 such as new guidelines for state aids in forestry or the adoption and operations of the Bio-based Industries Joint Undertaking are not included.

During the period of 2015-2017, as a first step, the work of the Commission services will concentrate on the following priorities:

- Coordinate, cooperate and communicate to enhance policy coherence and consistency;
- Taking the FOREST EUROPE set of criteria and indicators for Sustainable Forest Management as a starting point, to review how to demonstrate the sustainable management of forests in the EU;
- Enhance the competitiveness of the forest-based sector;
- Assess and enhance the contribution of sustainably managed forests to rural development;
- Strengthen the Forest Information System, which will generate harmonised European-wide information on forests and their state, including forest resources, health and vitality, biomass, fragmentation, fires and pests. Another objective is to coordinate and integrate diverse information systems (e.g. EFFIS) and data platforms (e.g. EFDAC) into a dynamic modular system that combines data and models into applications, which will provide accurate information on forests for policy decision makers, research organizations and the European citizens;
- Explore the potential availability of sustainable biomass from all sources, including forest-based ones, for many uses. This will provide to the EU useful information on the potential for the sustainable mobilisation of wood in the EU to support a sustainable bioeconomy and the forest-based industries with coherent information.

- In the context of Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process share experience, build knowledge and promote cooperative actions involving all interested stakeholders to maximise the contribution of the Natura 2000 network to maintaining and where necessary restoring a favourable conservation status of forest habitat types and species of Community interest including wild birds.

As a second step, the mid-term review of the EU Forest Strategy to be carried out by 2018 will help determine the priorities in the subsequent period (2018-2020).

2.1. Actions by priority area

Priority area n°1: Supporting our rural and urban communities

A sustainable and competitive forest-based sector can play an important role in rural development and in the whole economy while providing societal benefits.

Development of rural areas is primordial for ensuring economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union. In this context, implementation of the Forest Strategy supports and is consistent with the forestry measures under rural development programmes (RDP). The new RDP provides a coherent set of measures in support of sustainable forest management. Relevant measures include support for afforestation, establishment of agroforestry systems, prevention and restoration of damage to forests, investments to enhance the ecological and economic value of forests, on-site, small-scale first-stage wood processing, knowledge transfer and training. Member States can include the forestry measures in their Rural Development Programmes according to their specific needs and priorities.

The recently established Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) for co-operation in agriculture and rural development in 2014-2020, includes the development of financial instrument products (e.g. for loan fund, guarantee fund, or combination thereof) also for the forestry sector, for the benefit of forest holdings, forest ecosystems and forest products' processing activities. The EIB will also advise Member States and regions in defining investment strategies and projects to support competitiveness and innovation in forestry and rural businesses.

In the period 2015-2020, a number of actions are foreseen to assess the effect of rural development measures (e.g. ex-ante, ex-post and specific evaluations followed by opinions from the SFC). The EIB could also facilitate feasibility assessments, market-gap analyses, and ex-ante assessments in the context of Rural Development Programming. Towards the end of the period emphasis will be on assessing the needs of forestry for the post 2020 programming period.

Regarding State Aid, further to the adoption of the European Union Guidelines for State aid in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas 2014 to 2020³, Commission will assess throughout the period 2015-2020 the implications of these new rules for forestry and make recommendation for the next period.

³ European Union Guidelines for State aid in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas 2014 to 2020 and Commission Regulation (EU) No 702/2014 of 25 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

Priority area n°2: Fostering the competitiveness and sustainability of the EU's Forest-based Industries, bio-energy and the wider green economy

Forests, and the raw materials derived from them, can provide opportunities to maintain or create jobs and diversify income in a low-carbon, green economy.

Under this priority, the Commission, together with Member States and stakeholders, will identify a set of relevant criteria and indicators related to sustainable forest management (SFM) criteria, and means of demonstrating SFM irrespective of end uses. The corresponding SFM criteria and indicators should be applicable for the purpose of different EU policies where relevant and when there is a need to refer to SFM and its means of evidence in a way linkable to subsequent life-cycle phases. This would ensure that a common approach for assuring sustainable forest management for all forests and their products (including forest biomass) could follow a coherent set of requirements and use the same evidence base regardless of end use.

The work programme for 2014-2016 has been developed in cooperation with the Expert Group on Forest-based Industries and Sectorally Related issues (EG F-BI) to specifically target the industrial part of the Strategy and its accompanying Blueprint on Forest-based Industries. These remedial actions aimed at addressing the challenges facing forest-based industries are also reflected in the enclosed multi-annual implementation work plan. The priority area therefore includes various measures aimed at: facilitating wood-based raw materials supplies from both primary and secondary sources, stimulating growth notably through improved market access and conditions, improving resource and energy efficiency; addressing education, training and skills, and seizing the opportunities of low-carbon bioeconomy, ensuring coherent regulatory framework, and fostering skills and innovation.

Priority area n°3: Forests in a changing climate

Forests can help mitigate climate change, and associated extreme weather events, and must therefore maintain and enhance their resilience and adaptive capacity.

Under this priority the focus will be on increasing the mitigation potential of forests, through a number of measures addressing increased removals, reduced emissions, prevention of disasters such as forest fires and the prolonged use of harvested wood products.

The enhancement of forests' adaptive capacities and resilience through robust forest reproductive material, the implementation of forest nature-based solutions and forests' contribution to the adaptation of other sectors will also be specifically addressed.

Following the European Council conclusions of October 2014⁴, the Commission will also examine how to include land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) into the 2030 greenhouse gas mitigation framework.

⁴ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/145397.pdf

Priority area n°4: Protecting forests and enhancing ecosystem services

Forests provide ecosystem services on which rural and urban communities depend, and host an enormous variety of biodiversity

Under this priority the focus will be on the protection of forests, and in particular those under Natura 2000 with the aim to maximise their contribution to preserving and where necessary restoring a favourable conservation status of species and habitat types of Community interest as well as of wild bird populations and their habitats. Working together in Natura 2000 areas through the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process will allow enhancing cooperation and exchange of experience in the management of forest habitats and habitats of forest-dependent species with a view to enhancing the coherence of the network and its contribution to achieving the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

The enhancement of the protective role of forests contributing to multiple ecosystem services, including soil protection and to the provision of water of adequate quality and quantity through the implementation of sustainable forest management also in the context of the Programmes of measures of River Basin Management Plans will particularly be addressed. Natural disaster risks will also be addressed, e.g. by financing projects linked to the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS), a monitoring and early warning system. Green infrastructure solutions linked with urban areas, where the majority of the EU population lives, should also be considered.

The development of innovative mechanisms for the financing of ecosystem services, linked to the Mapping and Assessment of the state of Ecosystems and of their Services (MAES) work, will be also high on the agenda for this priority.

Priority area n°5: What forests do we have and how are they changing?

Strengthening the forest knowledge base will give better understanding of the complex environmental and societal challenges facing the forest-based sector.

The main action under this priority concerns the development of a Forest Information System for Europe (FISE), with the aim to collect harmonised information on the multifunctional role of forests and on forest resources, integrating diverse information systems and data platforms. Several modules will be developed (i.e. forests and natural disturbances, forests and the bioeconomy, forests and climate change and forest and ecosystem services), building on the available EU forestry statistics and forest accounts (Eurostat). The EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020 and LIFE + will also contribute to FISE objectives.

Other actions refer to the development of the EU database of forest reproductive material and to the MAES, including forests.

Priority area n°6: New and innovative forestry and added-value products

A coherent and ambitious EU forest-based research area will stimulate innovation across the forest-based sector

The EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020 includes the Societal Challenge 2 "Food security, sustainable agriculture marine and maritime

research and the bio-economy" which underlines the importance of strengthening research and innovation on forestry and the forest-based sector. The focus will be in transferring technological and scientific knowledge to forest practice and the market. In particular through Horizon 2020 as well as through the relevant European Innovation Partnerships (EIP), in particular EIP on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability and EIP on Raw Materials. Projects will support the sustainable wood supply to forest-based bioeconomy, the development of new products with higher added-value and the exchange of best practices between industry, scientists and producers. Under the former there are also a number of possibilities for multi-actor project approaches⁵ and thematic networks⁶ that can share practical knowledge and ensure the link with rural development operational groups.

Other initiatives part of Horizon 2020 such as the contractual Public Private Partnership on Sustainable Process Industry (SPIRE) can support the valorisation of forestry primary production (e.g. residues) and its integration in industrial value chains (e.g. chemical industry) for the production of added-value products and industrial streams.

Where relevant, the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) will be used to strengthen coordination of research and innovation work between the EU, Member States and stakeholders.

Priority area n°7: Working together to coherently manage and better understand our forests

Coordination, cooperation and communication will contribute to achieving policy coherence and consistency.

Coordination is indeed at the core of the EU Forest Strategy. Special emphasis will be paid to strengthen Standing Forestry Committee's (SFC) confirming that the SFC, in accordance with the mandate defined by Council Decision of 29 May 1989 (89/367/EEC), ensures early and enhanced input into policy making through appropriate coordination with all relevant Commission services and cohesion of forest-related issues, contributing to policy coherence.

During the implementation, cooperation with other relevant committees and groups will be sought when needed, on a case by case basis to ensure flow of information between different bodies and early input in the policy-making process.

Regarding communication, further efforts will be pursued and public perception of forests will be also further assessed, possibly through the Eurobarometer.

Priority area n°8: Forests from a global perspective

Consistency between EU and Member State policies, objectives and commitments on forest-related issues at international level must be ensured.

The focus will be on promoting sustainable forest management across Europe and globally and address deforestation. The review of the Timber Regulation in 2015 and the

⁵ Research projects where farmers and other end-users will be involved "all along the project" from preparation and implementation up until dissemination of the project results

⁶ Multi-actor networks that target the collection of existing scientific knowledge and best practices in order to turn them into easy accessible end-user material for practice to be distributed through the EIP network

evaluation of the EU FLEGT Action Plan will contribute to taking stock and to ensuring continued support for global efforts to fight illegal logging and associated trade while reducing unnecessary costs and reporting requirements.

Based on the multifunctional role of forests and the links with the food security, the role of forests for food security and nutrition, including through agroforestry systems and non-wood forest products will be also addressed.

On the one hand, the EU and its Member States will continue its active involvement in relevant international forest-related multilateral fora at the global (UNFF, FAO, ITTO, UNFCCC, CBD, CITES, UNCCD, UN-DESA/DSD,) and regional level. On the other, EU international partners will be further involved in EU activities such as in cooperation projects under Horizon 2020 or participating to the meetings of the EU Rural Networks Assembly and its sub-groups.

At an appropriate time and at latest by 2020, using as a basis for potential further consideration the outcome of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee work, the EU will explore possible ways to find common ground on the Legally Binding Agreement on Forests.

2.2. Actors

The main bodies having input to this plan are as follow:

- The Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) - Member State's main representative and coordinative body on forest-related issues (chaired by the Commission).
- The Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry and Cork (CDG F&C) – stakeholders (chaired by stakeholders).
- The Expert Group on Forest-based Industries and Sectorally Related Issues (F-BI EG) – stakeholders and Member State's representatives on forest-based industrial issues (chaired by the Commission).

Other committees and groups, such as the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) or the Expert group on Natura 2000 management will also contribute to the implementation of the Forest MAP.

The European Commission – through relevant Directorate Generals as appropriate will implement the relevant actions.

2.3. Horizontal provisions

In line with the Council conclusions, the plan concentrates on priorities and milestones.

As a crosscutting element, the Strategy foresees a mid-term review in 2017-18.

The Council and the European Parliament will be informed as appropriate on progress made in the implementation of specific actions.

The full list of actions for the period 2014-2020, the actors and timing of the different activities as well as the expected outcomes are included in the annex. Key-priorities for the period of 2015-2017 are highlighted.

The details of the activities towards the guiding principles of the EU Forest Strategy such as studies or working groups will be more specifically formulated in the annual working plan of the Standing Forestry Committee and the work programme of the Expert Group

on Forest-based Industries and Sectorally Related issues, which should be linked to the multiannual implementation plan. The plan includes a non-exclusive list of actions, as flexibility to take on-board new and emerging issues will be kept.

ANNEX 1

Concrete list of actions for the period 2014-2020 of the multi-annual implementation plan of the EU Forest Strategy

1) Priority Area "Supporting our rural and urban communities"

- A sustainable and competitive forest sector can play an important role in rural development and in the whole economy while providing societal benefits.

Strategic Orientation	Actions	Actors COM/MS/Both Stakeholders	Year of Activity/Target Date	Expected Outcome/Follow-up Action
b) The Commission and the Member States should assess and improve the effect of forestry measures under rural development policy;	2007-2013 RDPs Ex-post evaluations + synthesis of ex-post evaluations of RD programmes	BOTH	2015-16	Outcome: report. SFC Opinion on ex-post evaluations of RD programmes – <u>2016</u>
	2014-2020 RDPs Ex-ante synthesis of RD programmes + possible round table on forestry measures contributing to rural development and rural well-being	BOTH	2015	Outcome: evaluation report. SFC Opinion on initial evaluations of RD programmes – <u>2015</u>
	Annual Reports on the implementation/delivery of Rural Development Programmes	BOTH	2015-2020	Outcome: reports.
	Evaluation of forestry measures under RD policy (2007 – to date)*	BOTH	2017	Outcome: evaluation report. SFC Opinion on evaluation of forestry measures under RD policy – <u>2017</u>

* Commission priority for 2015-2017

	Development of a financial instrument product (e.g. for loan fund, guarantee fund, or combination thereof) for the benefit of forestry holdings, forestry ecosystems and forestry products' processing activities.	EIB and COM	2015-2020	Financial instrument product in place and implemented
c) State aid modernisation package, including revising the conditions for block exemptions in the forestry sector; ⁷	Assessment of the implementation of the new state aid guidelines	COM	2017	COM to assess during the plan period whether the changes in relation to forestry were successful
a and d) MS implementation of RDPs	Use funds including the European Social Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development to improve competitiveness, promote the diversification of economic activity and quality-of-life, and deliver specific environmental public goods, ⁸ to contribute to promoting the social functions of SFM (particularly job creation and actions contributing to a sustainable, trained and safe workforce); Support Forest Advisory Systems for awareness-raising; training; and communication between local forest holders and authorities;	BOTH	2015-2020	Concrete actions implemented at local level

⁷ Since the forestry sector falls outside of Annex I and Article 42 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, all competition rules fully apply to it.

⁸ Conclusions of the European Council of 7-8/2/2013 on the Multiannual Financial Framework.

e) Improve their valuing of the benefits that forests give to society and, through sustainable forest management, should find the right balance between delivering the various goods and services.	See section 4 (a) below.			
Other – prepare forestry-related recommendation or the post 2020 Rural Development Policy	SFC analysis and debate	SFC (MS)	2018	Opinion
Other – prepare forestry-related recommendation for post 2020 State aid guidelines	SFC analysis and debate	SFC (MS)	2018	Opinion

2) Priority Area "Fostering the competitiveness and sustainability of the EU's Forest-based Industries, bio-energy and the wider green economy - Forests, and the raw materials derived from them, can provide opportunities to maintain or create jobs and diversify income in a low-carbon, green economy".

Strategic Orientation	Actions	Actors COM/MS/BOTH Stakeholders	Year of Activity/ Target Date	Expected Outcome/Follow-up Action
a) Explore and promote the use of wood as a sustainable, renewable, climate and environment-friendly raw material more fully; assess the climate benefits of material and energy substitution by forest biomass and harvested wood products and the effect of incentives for using forest biomass in creating market distortions;	Study on climate benefits of material substitution by forest biomass and harvested wood products: perspective 2030 "CLIMWOOD".	BOTH	2015	Outcome: study report + possible seminar on the results and further actions
	Study on climate benefits of forest biomass use for energy generation in the EU by 2030.	COM	2015	Outcome: study report + possible stakeholder seminar
	Study report on impacts on resource efficiency of future EU demand for bioenergy.	BOTH	2015	Outcome: study report + possible stakeholder seminar to present findings
	Review the utility of sustainability criteria and indicators in subsequent life-cycle phases for all uses of wood.	BOTH and forest-based sector	2016-2017	Outcome: F-BI Expert Group conclusions
	Assess possible synergies with other initiatives and measures to seize opportunities of bioeconomy for wood-based materials.	BOTH and forest-based sector	2015-2017	Outcome: F-BI Expert Group conclusions

b) Develop objective, ambitious and demonstrable EU sustainable forest management criteria that can be applied in different policy contexts regardless of the end use of forest biomass, by the end of 2014 ⁹ . Appropriate measures will be presented by the Commission;	SFC Working Group mandated to analyse existing criteria and indicators of SFM, to examine and make recommendations on relevant operational indicators related to SFM criteria, and to examine and identify approaches and tools for demonstrating SFM irrespective of end uses.*	BOTH	2015	Outcome: report (analysis and recommendations on set of criteria and indicators that can be used as a high level indication of SFM, and that can be used by other policies and sectors), including examinations of options for demonstrating SFM.
	Appropriate measures to be presented by the Commission	COM	Ongoing	

* Commission priority for 2015-2017

⁹ To ensure a proper input from Member States and stakeholders, the date for this exercise had to be reported to 2015

c) Assess potential wood supply and facilitating increased sustainable wood mobilisation; develop good-practice guidance for this and for the “cascade” principle, as well as on resource- and energy-efficient manufacturing processes;	Study on the optimised cascading use of wood*.	BOTH and forest-based sector	2015-2016	Outcome: study report + possible event to discuss results.
	Studies on biomass availability, including in relation to SFM.*¹⁰ (note: includes work on technical specification for and a preliminary appraisal under a multiannual project by JRC on biomass assessment – including forestry biomass)	BOTH	2015	Outcome: study reports.
	Study on identification of good practices in resource, energy and process efficiency for wood-processing industries.	COM and forest-based sector	2016-2017	Outcome: study report + possible event for results dissemination.
	Implementation of the European Innovation Partnerships on Raw Materials and for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability. Notably, facilitate raw material supply by supporting innovation in technology, infrastructure and human capital.*	BOTH and forest-based sector	2014-2020	Outcome: Strategic Implementation Plans (innovation projects under Horizon 2020 and EAFRD)
	Study on possibilities to increase the growth and sustainable utilisation of forests ¹¹	BOTH	2018	Outcome: Study report
	Based on existing policies, identification of relevant practices and other elements for the forest-based industry and Member States regarding resource	BOTH and forest-based sector	2016--2018	Outcome: contribution from F-BI Expert Group on resource-efficient biomass

¹⁰* Commission priority for 2015-2017

¹¹ To be confirmed

	efficient use of biomass.			use.
d) Stimulate market growth and internationalisation of EU Forest-based Industry products and improve sectorial knowledge, including on sustainable construction and consumer information on furniture.	Assess the needs for improving market transparency and consumer awareness: study on "The EU furniture market situation and a possible furniture products initiative".	BOTH and forest-based sector	2014-2015	Outcome: study report (done) + workshop (in European Parliament) and discussion in F-BI Expert Group.
	Stimulate favourable investment conditions in construction.	MS	2014-2020	Outcome: National level instruments in the follow up of the Commission's Communications on sustainable construction and buildings ¹²
	Raising awareness of forest-based industries on available tools to facilitate internationalisation e.g. COSME, European Enterprise Network.	COM	2013-2020	Outcome: F-BI Expert Group meetings
e) Facilitate access to third markets for EU Forest-based Industry products and raw materials via bilateral trade agreements, and by improving information on import conditions and raw material exports;	The EU will continue to ensure that existing trade-related commitments at the bilateral and multilateral levels are met, including with regard to the liberalisation of wood and forest-based industry products; as well as to promote trade in wood and forest-based products from sustainably managed forests in its bilateral trade agreements e.g. EU-US TTIP, EU-Canada CETA, EU-Japan FTA and vigilance on trade barriers.	COM	2014-2020	Outcome: Trade agreements; comments to notifications and use of trade defence instruments as appropriate

¹² COM(2012) 433 and COM(2014) 445.

	Assess the need for improving information on sectoral trade information and production inputs.	BOTH and forest-based sector	2016-2018	Outcome: F-BI Expert Group conclusions
f) Support the Forest-based Sector Technology Platform and encourage new initiatives, such as private-public partnerships, e.g. in the bio-based sector, which foster research and innovation.	Facilitate access to funding for innovation and adaptation to change e.g. COSME, Horizon 2020, European Structural and Investment Funds.	BOTH and forest-based sector	2015-2020	Outcome: RTD and innovation projects + possible F-BI Expert Group report (recommendations)
g) Launch a cumulative cost assessment of EU legislation and policies affecting forest-based industry value chains. The results could contribute to a wider analysis of impacts, including costs, benefits, and coherence, of policies and legislation.	Study on an assessment of the cumulative cost impacts of specified EU legislation and policies on the EU Forest-based Industries .	BOTH and forest-based sector	2015-2016	Outcome: study report
Other: Identify needs and provisions for education, training and skills development in forest-based sector.	Projects within the EU Sectoral Social Dialogues Committees (woodworking, pulp & paper, printing and furniture) by the social partners.	COM and forest-based sector	2013-2020	Outcome: project reports

3) Priority Area "Forests in a changing climate"

- Forests can help mitigate climate change, and associated extreme weather events, and must therefore maintain and enhance their resilience and adaptive capacity.

Strategic Orientation	Actions	Actors COM/MS/BOTH Stakeholders	Year of Activity/Target Date	Expected Outcome/Follow-up Action
a) MS demonstrate how they intend to increase their forests' mitigation potential through increased removals and reduced emissions, including by cascading use of wood, taking into account that the new LIFE+ subprogram for Climate action and Rural Development funding can promote and support new or existing forest management practices that limit emissions or increase net biological productivity (i.e. CO ₂ removal).	MS provide their information on LULUCF actions.	BOTH	2014-15	Outcome: report.
	Multidisciplinary studies on the effectiveness, costs and standards of forest nature-based solutions to cost-effectively contribute to climate change mitigation and natural risk reduction Also; see section 2 (a) above.	BOTH	2016-2020	Horizon 2020 projects, reports, manuals, standards etc.
	Civil Protection Mechanism to support prevention and preparedness actions related to forest fires		2015-2020	Relevant actions in place
b) MS should demonstrate how they enhance their forests' adaptive capacities and resilience.		BOTH		

4) Priority Area "Protecting forests and enhancing ecosystem services"

- Forests provide ecosystem services on which rural and urban communities depend, and host an enormous variety of biodiversity.

Strategic Orientation	Actions	Actors COM/MS/BOTH Stakeholders	Year of Activity/Target Date	Expected Outcome/Follow-up Action
a) Member States will, with the Commission's assistance, develop a conceptual framework for valuing ecosystem services, promoting their integration in accounting systems at EU and national levels by 2020. They will build on the Mapping and Assessment of the state of Ecosystems and of their Services.	Member States and the Commission will foster innovative mechanisms (e.g. Payments for Ecosystem Services) to finance the maintenance and restoration of ecosystem services provided by multifunctional forests (linked to MAES¹³ work - valuation work could be based on biophysical assessment/mapping under MAES; it could also build on Eurostat's forest accounts, compatible with national accounts - note that since they are compatible with national accounts, forest accounts only cover elements with a market value, including e.g. recreation value).*	BOTH and forest experts	2016-17	Outcome: Report. + Seminar on how to foster innovative mechanisms (e.g. Payments for Ecosystem Services) to finance the maintenance and restoration of ecosystem services provided by multifunctional forests.
			2017 -2018	Outcome: recommendations for possible consideration in rural development policy
b) Maintain and enhance forest cover to ensure soil protection, water quality and quantity	Integration of sustainable forest management practices in the Programme of Measures of River Basin Management Plans under the Water	BOTH		To be addressed in the evaluation of forestry measures under RD

¹³ Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem Services (MAES) <http://biodiversity.europa.eu/maes>

* Commission priority for 2015-2017

regulation by integrating sustainable forestry practices in the Programme of Measures of River Basin Management Plans under the Water Framework Directive and in the Rural Development Programmes;	Framework Directive and in the Rural Development Programmes			
c) MS should achieve a significant and measurable improvement in the conservation status of forest species and habitats by fully implementing EU nature legislation and ensuring that national forest plans contribute to the adequate management of the Natura 2000 network by 2020.	Implementation of Habitats and Birds Directives, use of RD potentials for Natura 2000 payments, adoption and implementation of management plans, inclusion of biodiversity elements in management plans.	MS	2014-2020	
	Mid-term review of Biodiversity Strategy	COM	2015-2016	
	Guide on Natura 2000 and forests.	BOTH and stakeholders	2015	Outcome: Natura 2000 & forest guidance
f) The Commission will monitor Member States' progress as regards the uptake of forest management plans or equivalent instruments and the integration of biodiversity considerations in them, including Natura 2000 conservation objectives;	Questionnaire to MS, compiled by the Commission services.	BOTH	2014-15	Outcome: MS replies to feed in SFM study, mid-term report of Biodiversity Strategy.

g) should, together with the Member States, strengthen the mechanisms for protecting forests against pests, building on increased cooperation with neighbouring countries, enhanced research and the ongoing review of the Plant Health Regime;	Revised Plant Health Regulation – <u>2015</u>	BOTH	2015	Outcome: regulation.
	COM and MS to strengthen the mechanisms for protecting forests against pests and invasive alien species (IAS); develop early warning system as well as provide early warning information for risks such as pests, diseases and IAS.*¹⁴	BOTH and forest experts	2016	Outcome: early warning system and early warning information.
Other)	The Commission will co-finance, through the LIFE programme and Civil Protection Mechanism projects that contribute towards the enhancement of the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS).	BOTH	2017	Outcome: LIFE project reports, Civil Protection reports.
Other)	Guidance on Green Infrastructure and restoration.	BOTH	2015	Outcome: guidance.

¹⁴ * Commission priority for 2015-2017

d, e, h and i)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020; 	BOTH	2015-2020	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen forest genetic resources conservation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparatory action on EU plant and animal genetic resources - Input to FAO's Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture - Contribution to EUFORGEN¹⁵ to promote conservation and sustainable management of forest genetic resources at pan-European level 	BOTH	2015-2020	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply within the EU the International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures n° 15 on wood packaging materials; 	BOTH	By 2020	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide relevant information and data to the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification to support the implementation of their Plans of Action. 	BOTH	2015-2020	

¹⁵ <http://www.euforgen.org/>

5) Priority Area "What forests do we have and how are they changing?"

- strengthening the forest knowledge base will give better understanding of the complex environmental and societal challenges facing the forest sector.

Strategic Orientation	Actions	Actors COM/MS/BOTH Stakeholders	Year of Activity/Target Date	Expected Outcome/Follow-up Action
<p>The Commission and the Member States will:</p> <p>a) Set up of the Forest Information System of Europe (FISE) integrating diverse information systems and data platforms into a dynamic modular system that combines data and models into applications.</p>	<p>The Commission and the Member States will set up of the Forest Information System of Europe¹⁶.*</p> <p>Running and further developing FISE</p>	<p>BOTH</p>	<p>2015 - 2016</p>	<p>Outcome: FISE in place.</p>
<p>b, d and e)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align EU forest information so that it is primarily based on data collected by Member States with EU data architecture requirements, such as INSPIRE, SEIS and COPERNICUS and follow international and regional processes; 	<p>The Commission will co-finance, through the LIFE programme and Horizon 2020, projects that :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - build on the information collected by existing national/regional forest information networks and develop and implement new methods for the collection and reporting of sustainable forest management criteria and indicators. - use new information about forests to increase their resilience to threats arising from population 	<p>BOTH</p> <p>BOTH</p> <p>BOTH</p>	<p>2014-2020</p>	<p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guidance and new methodologies for harmonised forest information - harmonised information available (in line with international reporting needs).

¹⁶ *Commission priority for 2015-2017

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve, make comparable and share forest information and monitoring, building on successful experiences, such as EFFIS, forest health, EU forestry statistics and forest accounts (Eurostat) and the EFDAC, • Develop several modules, e.g. on forests and natural disturbances like fires and pests, forests and the bioeconomy, forests and climate change and forest ecosystem services that could contribute to the EU's forestry statistics and forest accounts (Eurostat) and Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting on Forests. 	<p>changes.</p> <p>- contribute to deriving fully harmonized information from data collected by National Forest Inventories (NFI) and/or other forest information networks, and that implement advanced methodologies to demonstrate sustainable forest management at regional, national or supra-national level according to agreed criteria and indicators.</p>	<p>- Project Diabolo H2020 (harmonization and improvement of forest data)</p>	<p>2015</p>	<p>- New module on forest information, incl. forest fires and pests and diseases established</p>
<p>c) promote the further development of the EU database of forest reproductive material, including hyperlinks to national registers and maps.</p>	<p>The Commission and the Member States will promote the further development of the EU database of forest reproductive material.</p>	<p>BOTH</p>	<p>2016</p>	<p>Outcome: new database in place.</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>MAES Project; Mapping and Assessment of the state of Ecosystems and of their Services.</p>	<p>BOTH</p>	<p>2016</p>	<p>Outcome: project report.</p>

6) Priority Area "New and innovative forestry and added-value products"

- a coherent and ambitious EU forest-based research area will stimulate innovation across the forest sector.

Strategic Orientation	Actions	Actors COM/MS/BOTH Stakeholders	Year of Activity/Target Date	Expected Outcome/Follow-up Action
a) The Commission will assist Member States and stakeholders in transferring technological and scientific knowledge to forest practice and the market, in particular through Horizon 2020 and the European Innovation Partnership on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability, supporting the development of new products with higher added-value;	The Commission will assist Member States and stakeholders in transferring technological and scientific knowledge to forest practice and the market, in particular through the projects financed through FP7 and Horizon 2020, and the periodic evaluation of framework research programmes. The work done under Forest-based Sector Technology Platform is also very relevant in this context.	BOTH	2014-2020	Outcome: reports and projects implemented.
	The Commission will assist Member States and stakeholders in annual reporting and analysis of the European Innovation Partnership on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability, as well as the European Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials.	BOTH	2014-2020	Outcome: projects implemented
	Active engagement in ongoing ERANETs like FORESTERRA, SUMFOREST and WoodWisdom-Net+ ¹⁷ .	BOTH	2014-2020	ERANETs and JPIs in the relevant fields

¹⁷ <http://www.foresterra.eu/>
<https://www.sumforest.org/>
<http://www.woodwisdom.net/>

<p>c) The Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) will be used to strengthen coordination of research and innovation work between the EU, Member States and stakeholders;</p>	<p>The Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) will be used to strengthen coordination of research and innovation work between the EU, Member States and stakeholders, through its instruments (e.g. foresight, collaborative/strategic working groups, etc.) and communication tools. The work of the Bioeconomy Panel is very relevant in this context.</p>	<p>BOTH</p>	<p>2014-2020</p>	<p>Outcome: reports.</p>
<p>b and d)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate on advanced research and modelling tools to fill data and knowledge gaps; • Ensure that results and good practices are disseminated. 	<p>BOTH</p>		

7) Priority Area "Working together to coherently manage and better understand our forests"

- Coordination, cooperation and communication will contribute to achieving policy coherence and consistency.

Strategic Orientation	Actions	Actors COM/MS/BOTH	Year of Activity/Target Date	Expected Outcome/Follow-up Action
<p>a) Ensure that the Standing Forestry Committee's work builds on other EU policies relevant for forests and the forest sector, ensuring that managing EU forests remains multifunctional.</p> <p>Improvement of coordination and Policy Coherence</p>	<p>Elaboration and implementation of a Multi-Annual Implementation Plan (Forest MAP). *</p>	<p>BOTH</p>	<p>2015</p>	<p>Outcome: plan in place and implemented by MS, COM and stakeholders.</p>
	<p>- Ensuring that the SFC, in accordance with the mandate defined by Council Decision of 29 May 1989 (89/367/ EEC) provides early and enhanced input into policy making through appropriate co-ordination with all relevant Commission services and cohesion of forest-related issues, contributing to policy coherence.*</p> <p>- Working together with other relevant COM committees depending on subject (such as the Civil Dialogue on Forestry and Cork, main multi-stakeholder platform for discussing issues related to forestry and sustainable forest management or the F-BI Expert Group, main platform for issues related to industrial value chains or the Expert Group on Natura 2000 management for forest and Natura 2000 related issues).</p> <p>- Systematic transmission of SFC Opinions to relevant DG's.</p>	<p>BOTH</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>	<p>Enhanced coordination and policy coherence</p>

*Commission priority for 2015-2017

b) Explore options for better coordination of sustainable forest management, harmonised forest information and cooperation between and with Member States;	Enhancing the role of the SFC by actively involving it in elaborating guidance and recommendations. Establishing a SFC annual work programme with concrete targets and deadlines (based on the Multi-annual Implementation Plan).	BOTH		
c) Create a European Forest Bureau Network (National Forest Inventories – NFI) to develop harmonised criteria for NFI information.	Create a European Forest Bureau Network (National Forest Inventories – NFI) to develop harmonised criteria for EU-wide reporting on NFI information. Development of methods for NFIs	BOTH MS	2016	Outcome: network in place.
d) Improve public information about forests and wood, and build on the EU Forest Communication Strategy	Transmission of relevant information on EU policy development relevant for forests to the UNECE/FAO forest communicators' network.	BOTH Forest-based sector	2015-2020	
e) Further assess public perception of forests (via a Eurobarometer survey by 2015).	The Commission will further assess public perception of forests (via a Eurobarometer survey - TBC).	BOTH	2016	Outcome: report.
Other: Raising awareness, knowledge and visibility of sub-sectoral issues having impact along the overall forest-based value chains on image.	Various sectoral initiatives: events and information campaigns	Forest-based sector	2015-2020	Outcome: events and information campaigns

8) Priority Area "Forests from a global perspective"

- Consistency between EU and Member State policies, objectives and commitments on forest-related issues at international level must be ensured.

Strategic Orientation	Actions	Actors COM/MS/BOTH Stakeholders	Year of Activity/ Target Date	Expected Outcome/Follow-up Action
a and b) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure consistency between EU and Member State policies and commitments on forest-related issues at international level. • Promote sustainable forest management across Europe and globally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued active involvement of the EU in relevant international forest-related multilateral fora at the global (UNFF, FAO, ITTO, UNFCCC, CBD, CITES, UNCCD UN-DESA/DSD) and at regional level. - Enhanced consistency between EU and Member State policies and objectives/commitments on forest-related issues at international level. 	BOTH Plus Council Working Party on Forestry	2015-2020	EU and MS positions reflected in international forest-related multilateral fora at the global and regional levels SFM study and Study on biomass imports from North America (ENV)- see e))
	At an appropriate time, using as a basis for potential further consideration the outcome of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee work, the EU will explore possible ways to find common ground on the Legally Binding Agreement on Forests.	BOTH Plus Council Working Party on Forestry	At latest by 2020	

c) Ensure continued support for global efforts to fight illegal logging through the FLEGT Action Plan;	Review of the EU Timber Regulation.	BOTH	2015	Outcome: Commission report to the Council and the EP. Outcome: Independent consultancy report.
	Evaluation of the FLEGT Action Plan (2003-2014)	COM	2015	
	Continued support for global efforts to fight illegal logging through the FLEGT Action Plan, particularly through - Negotiation and implementation of FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) between the EU and producer countries - Support to producer countries for FLEGT implementation	BOTH	2014-2020	Outcome: new VPAs in place and implementation of existing agreements. Outcome: ongoing development assistance to developing countries plus possible report.
d) Support developing countries in their efforts to improve forest policies and regulations, strengthen forest governance, value and monitor forest ecosystems, and address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation through REDD+.	Carry out a feasibility study on a possible EU action plan on deforestation and forest degradation and consider possible follow-up in line with 7 th EAP (follow up to assessment in (e) below).	BOTH	2015-16 (feasibility study to be launched in 2015 possible follow-up)	Outcome: report.
	Follow-up to Commission Communication COM(2014)64 on the "EU Approach against Wildlife Trafficking" (also covers plant and tree species) and related stakeholders consultations.	COM	2015-2016	Outcome: communication.

e) Assess the environmental impact of EU consumption of products and raw materials likely to contribute to deforestation and forest degradation outside the EU.	Assess the environmental impact of EU consumption of products and raw materials likely to contribute to deforestation and forest degradation outside the EU -	BOTH	2014 (study report Dec 2013, conference May 2014)	Outcome: report.
	Study on the environmental implications of the increased reliance of the EU on biomass for energy imported from North America.	BOTH	2015	Outcome: report.

9) HORIZONTAL

Actions	Actors COM/MS/BOTH Stakeholders	Year of Activity / Target Date	Expected Outcome/Follow-up Action
MID TERM REVIEW of the EU Forest Strategy	BOTH and stakeholders	2017-2018	Outcome: report.
Report to the Council and the European Parliament regularly on progress made	COM	2015-2020	
EU Forest Director-General Meetings; give guidance to the implementation of EUFS and this plan.	BOTH	2015-2020	

ANNEX 2. Acronyms

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CDG F&C	Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry & Cork
CETA	Comprehensive Trade and Economic Agreement
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COR	Committee of the Regions
COSME	EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
7th EAP	7th Environment Action Programme
EFDAC	European Forest Data Centre
EFFIS	European Forest Fire Information System
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIP	European Innovation Partnerships
Era-Net	Networking the European Research Area
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
F-BI EG	Expert Group on Forest-based Industries and Sectorally Related Issues
FISE	Forest Information System for Europe
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
Forest MAP	Forest Multi-Annual implementation Plan of the EU Forest Strategy
FP7	7th Framework Programme for Research
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organisation
JRC	Joint Research Centre
JTI	Joint Technology Initiative
LBA	Legally Binding Agreement
LULUCF	Land use, land use change and forestry
MAES	Mapping and Assessment of the state of Ecosystems and of their Services
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NFI	National Forest Inventories
PPP	Public Private Partnership
REDD+	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conservation of

	forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks
RD	Rural Development
RDP	Rural development programme
SCAR	Standing Committee on Agricultural Research
SFC	Standing Forestry Committee
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SPIRE PPP	Public Private Partnership on Sustainable Process Industry
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
UN-DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UN- DSD	United Nations Division for Sustainable Development
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement