



U E A A NEWSLETTER

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Latest News

UEAA and the New Forest Strategy of the EU Commission

The EU has lately become increasingly active in issues related to forestry. According to the general EU rules matters related to forests are within the competence of the member states and not for the EU institutions. However, as part of the EU Green Deal several legislative acts within the area of environmental protection are having spillover effects on forest policies.

The New Forest Strategy was adopted by the EU Commission in July 2021. It focuses mainly the environmental aspects and the important role that forests can play in the mitigation of climate change as well as in reversing the decline of biodiversity. Although these goals are broadly accepted the new strategy has been criticized for i.a. neglecting the economic aspects of the active use of forests for wood based products.

The UEAA , through its Steering Committee, made a statement on the New Forest Strategy in October 2021 just before the EU Agricultural Ministers were discussing the strategy.

The UEAA statement (available on www.UEAA.info) , while supporting the ambitions regarding the mitigation of climate change and protection of biodiversity, criticizes the strategy for its scientific base which is patchy and biased, neglecting the vast pool of knowledge and experience from forest management in the member states, with their different types of forests, that has been built up during centuries. The reports referred to are mainly internal EU documents, selected in order to support an already chosen political direction. There is no analysis of the economic consequences of the changes in forest management that are suggested.

The UEAA (a group with some representatives from the Steering Committee) also had a meeting end of november with the forest team in the EU Commission Directorate General for Agriculture to present our statement. We had a constructive discussion and will have a new contact in April.

It needs to be explained that strategies like the New Forest Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy are not legally binding. They are forward looking and policy orienting documents that are adopted by the EU Commission. The Council of Ministers can give their opinion by adopting Council Conclusions. In the case of the Forest Strategy this is dealt with by the EU Ministers for Agriculture. Such conclusions are not legally binding but send a rather important political message. They are adopted by unanimity so every member state must agree.

What remains to be seen is which legislative proposals with potential impact on forest management that the EU Commission will put forward. Some are already in the process of being decided.

This is the case for the climate related LULUCF (land use and land use change and forestry) regulation which suggests i.a. binding targets for forests as sinks for CO₂.

A new legislative act about Restoration of Nature will be proposed shortly by the EU Commission. This is a follow up of the EU Commission Strategy for Biodiversity. The proposal will then be discussed by the Council of Ministers for Environment as well as the European Parliament.

The Commission is now inviting comments on a legislative proposal concerning Certification of carbon removals.

Another legislative proposal is expected, probably next year, concerning a coordinated EU framework for the monitoring of forests.

Import of wood products with the aim of preventing deforestation. These rules will request sustainable forest management and could have an impact also on forest management practices in the EU.

So we can expect a number of important EU decision making processes with impact on forest management in the coming years.

Can the UEAA and its members of the UEAA influence these processes? Yes, in several ways. The general views already expressed by UEAA are relevant for most of these legislative acts. Individual members can also give their input at the different stages of the decision making.

The first possibility is when the commission is inviting to a public consultation while the legislative proposal is being prepared. This is a very open process where any organization or even individual persons can express their views on the so-called Road Map presented.

The Swedish Academy for Agriculture and Forestry has recently established a system for keeping track of these public consultations and selecting the most important ones for giving input.

When the legislative acts have come to the next phase in the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament the way to influence is by contacting the respective governments and members of EP.

Hopefully the UEAA and its members can play a constructive role in improving the scientific basis of the European decisions regarding the way we manage our forests.
