

Statement from the Committee on Environment and Agriculture

2021/22: MJU8

Communication from the Commission on a new EU Forest Strategy for 2030

Summary

The Committee has examined the Communication from the Commission on a New EU Forest Strategy for 2030 and proposes that the Riksdag file the statement. The Committee welcomes the fact that the Commission has adopted a new EU forest strategy. A strategic framework is needed which, with respect for the member states' national competence in forest matters, has the purpose of improving coordination at EU level.

In the opinion of the Committee, however, it is greatly concerning that some of the initiatives in the strategy reflect a move towards more detailed regulation, increased centralisation and a greater number of supranational elements, all of which conflicts with national self-determination. There is no mention of a common forest policy in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The Committee shares the Commission's opinion that forests play a central role in climate work and that forest resources are to be used effectively. The Committee welcomes the fact that the Commission highlights increased wood-based construction in the strategy and also agrees with the Commission that the challenges associated with loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services need to be dealt with. The Committee further considers it inappropriate that the Commission is endeavouring to steer various forest production methods. A diversity of cultivation methods based on the member states' individual conditions needs to be promoted.

The Committee does not share the Commission's assessment that strategic forest planning is deficient in the EU member states. The Committee also questions plans for the EU to develop a comprehensive data collection structure, when existing structures could be used instead. The Committee welcomes the fact that the Commission highlights the importance of research and innovation in the strategy. In the opinion of the Committee, strong forest-related research is important.

The Statement contains three separate statements of opinion (Sweden Democrats, Left Party, Green Party).

The examined document

Communication from the Commission New EU Forest Strategy for 2030 (COM(2021)572).

The position of the Committee

General comments on the strategy

Sweden has, on several occasions, stressed the importance of the Commission adopting a forest strategy for the period after 2020. This matter was also discussed during Commissioner Sinkevičius' visit to the Committee on Environment and Agriculture on 14 June 2021. To begin with, therefore, the Committee welcomes the fact that the Commission has now presented a new EU forest strategy. A strategic framework is needed which, based on sustainable forestry and with respect for the member states' national competence in forest matters, has the purpose of improving coordination at EU level. The capacity-building that has taken place on the basis of the EU forest strategy between the member states and the Commission has been valuable and useful for the development of sustainable forestry.

Sweden's position as regards forest policy has always been clear and unequivocal. Forest policy is a national competence, and when the Commission uses its right of initiative, the principle of subsidiarity must also be respected. The Committee wishes once again to stress that there is no mention of a common forest policy in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and that responsibility for forests in the Union lies with the member states. Furthermore, all forest-related decisions and policy areas in the EU must respect the principle of subsidiarity and the competence of the member states in these matters.

First, the Committee wishes to draw attention to its statement on the European Green Deal.¹ In this statement, the Committee noted that it is important that the new forest strategy after 2020 continues to stress the diversity of forests, has sustainable forestry as its point of departure, and thereby embraces both use and protection of forests as equal objectives. The Committee considered that the forest strategy should be formulated so as to promote both a growing forest industry and sustainable forestry. The Committee furthermore stated that the forest strategy should be equal to, and have the same relevance as other EU strategies, especially EU strategies on biodiversity, bio-economy and climate adaptation. According to the Committee, it is important that the biodiversity strategy contributes to measures at EU level that promote conditions for sustainable Swedish forestry, are based on existing definitions of sustainable forestry and safeguard the climate benefits of forests.

The Committee notes that Austria and other member states, prior to the Commission's adoption of the new EU forest strategy, submitted opinions on how the strategy had been prepared and on its formulation. The Committee shares the opinions put forward by these member states, primarily everything stated in the parts regarding the lack of respect for the member states' competences and the fact that forests have primarily been reduced to environmental considerations, with no regard for socioeconomic aspects.

Like previous forest strategies, the Committee considers that there is added value in having a common forest strategy where environmental and climate issues have high priority. We currently face major challenges, where forests are an important part of the transition to a modern, climate neutral, resource-efficient and competitive economy, and exchange of both knowledge and experience between the member states is needed. Healthy and growing forests contribute to biodiversity, rural development and sustainable forest bio-economy.

In the opinion of the Committee, the proposals announced in the strategy need to be accompanied by thorough analyses of the consequences for the EU and for individual member states. The member states' forest areas and national preconditions vary considerably, which is why it is important to take into consideration these varying preconditions and achievements in this area, as and when regulation is considered at EU level. In similarity with when proposals are presented in other policy areas, the Committee considers that the strategy's proposals need to have a scientific basis and be based on the best available facts, both at EU level and at member state level.

As the Committee initially stressed, national self-determination in forestry matters must be safeguarded. In the opinion of the Committee, it is therefore most concerning that some of the initiatives in the strategy move towards more detailed regulation, increased centralisation and a greater number of supranational elements, all of which conflict with national self-determination. It is at the national level that the preconditions exist for an effectively formulated forest policy which can take into consideration national and regional conditions. These conditions vary considerably between member states, and that is why these decisions should be taken at the national level.

The Committee is aware that the strategy is not binding in itself, but notes that the Commission has announced proposals and measures that may come to be binding at a later stage. It is therefore important that the Commission assesses and justifies each individual initiative from the perspective of the Treaty-bound principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, and how they relate to national self-determination. The Committee will be following progress on this matter closely.

The Committee notes that the forest strategy was discussed both in the Environment Council on 6 October 2021 and in the Agriculture and Fisheries Council on 11–12 October 2021, and that a majority of the member states then underlined the importance of taking into account and reinforcing the multifunctional dimension of forests and the role of forests in climate work, biodiversity and bio-economy. The Committee furthermore notes that several member states put forward that the strategy does not ensure a balance between the three pillars in forest sustainability (environmental, economic and social). Several member states also expressed concern about an increased administrative burden and centralisation, and stressed the importance of national competence in forest-related matters. The Committee hopes that the Commission will take the member states' opinions into account and let them be reflected in upcoming work and proposals.

In continued work on the strategy, the Committee expects the Commission to pay heed to the joint experience of developing sustainable forestry that exists in the forest-dense member states. One example of such capacity-building is the meeting on 4–5 October 2021, when ministers responsible for forestry in Sweden, Austria, Finland, Germany, Slovakia and Slovenia exchanged experiences of work with sustainable forestry. This resulted in a joint statement where, among other things, the importance of using Forest Europe's definition of sustainable forestry was stressed. The ministers also underlined the importance of recognising the broad expertise and knowledge regarding forestry and the forest-based sector in Europe as the key to future-orientated solutions. The ministers committed to promote cooperation, coordination and joint activities between member states, the Commission and other important partners in the pan-

¹ Statement from the Committee on Environment and Agriculture 2019/20: MJU17 Communication from the Commission on the European Green Deal.

European region on matters relating to forest policy. In the opinion of the Committee, these exchanges of experience are very valuable in efforts to develop sustainable forestry.

In this scrutiny statement, the Committee wishes to highlight some opinions and comments on the most important parts of the forest strategy and to give a picture of work with sustainable forestry in Sweden.

A forest-based circular bio-economy

Like the Commission, the Committee considers that forests have an essential role in climate work and in the EU's transition to a climate-neutral, modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. The climate benefits of forests consist of the forest as a carbon sink and a source of sustainably produced raw materials that replace fossil-based products. In a growing bio-economy, sustainable removals of raw wood materials, as well as biodiversity, carbon storage and social values must be secured. In the opinion of the Committee, it is possible to reconcile active use of forests with maintained, good biodiversity. Sweden's vision for Swedish forest policy is that our forests are a national asset and a renewable resource that is to be managed in such a way that it gives good, sustainable yields, at the same time as biological diversity is preserved. Our forest policy is based on an equal relationship between environmental goals and production goals. In efforts to achieve these goals, the active participation of forest owners is of central importance. The Committee wishes to underline the importance of forests from a sustainability perspective.

For centuries, forests have been Sweden's most important natural resource. More than half of Sweden's area is covered by forest. Active cultivation of our forests in Sweden has created a doubling of growing stock over the last 100 years, and has thus increased carbon sequestration. Swedish forests will have the greatest long-term benefits in climate efforts if we can use their growth to replace fossil products – the substitution effect. A long-term perspective is important for forests in climate efforts, as lead times are long in the sector and the climate benefits of forests are needed in the long term, i.e., after 2050 too. In the opinion of the Committee, the transition to a fossil-free, non-toxic and circular bio-economy is vital, both in ensuring that Sweden can achieve its environmental and climate objectives and the global goals in Agenda 2030, and to maintain the competitiveness of the business sector on the global market.

In the opinion of the Committee, it is positive that the Commission stresses the role of long-lived wood products as part of the climate solution. Harvested forest should, to as great an extent as possible, be used for wood products. However, the Committee considers that the decisive role of short-lived wood products, including forest-based energy, in the transition to climate neutrality, should have a more prominent position in the strategy. Wood-based products, both short-lived and long-lived, and energy production from wood are required for everyday needs, and to replace products and energy produced from fossil raw materials. In this context, the Committee also wishes to highlight the land use, land use change and forestry regulation (LULUCF) and the regulation amending this regulation proposed as part of the Fit-for-55 package. In the opinion of the Committee, the formulation of new proposals must respect the fact that forest policy is a national competence and must be in line with sustainably active forestry.

The Committee shares the Commission's view that forest resources should be used efficiently and in accordance with the principles of a circular economy. In order to ensure a green transition and reconstruction of the economy after the pandemic, the Committee considers that work with the transition to a circular economy needs to be accelerated. The transition will strengthen the competitiveness of the business sector, create jobs for the future and reduce emissions and strain on the environment and on nature. Sweden has, as one of the most innovative countries in the world, every possibility of managing this transition.

The Committee notes that the Commission considers that forest raw materials should be used in line with the cascading principle. In the opinion of the Committee, detailed regulation in accordance with the cascading principle is not appropriate in achieving an efficient use of forest resources. Furthermore, the Committee notes that the strategy focuses, to a great extent, on various types of measures relating to supply, but that it largely lacks a discussion on how to create demand and, along with this, competitive companies, jobs and sustainable growth based on the forest-based value chain.

The Committee welcomes the fact that the Commission highlights the importance of increased wood construction. Sweden has a long-standing tradition of building with wood and, in the opinion of the Committee, continued development of wood construction is an important element of the transition to more sustainable construction, with a reduced climate impact. Since 2018, Sweden has staked out a direction for industrial wood construction from sustainably produced forest raw material in order to increase the climate benefit, housing construction, exports and employment throughout the country. The Swedish Government has also presented a number of long-term and targeted measures to promote more sustainable construction that can contribute to reduced environmental and climate impact and the transition to a circular economy. In the opinion of the Committee, it is important to increase knowledge of wood construction, to spread examples of good practices and to stimulate innovation and development in the area in order to accelerate the transition to a circular and bio-based construction.

In this context, the Committee also wishes to highlight the importance of the forest certification organisations in efforts to promote sustainable forestry and sustainable wood products. Robust forest certification systems with strict sustainable standards play a major role in work with sustainable forest management. The work that the two established systems for certification of forests in Europe, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), do for sustainable forestry is valuable and should, in the opinion of the Committee, have been given greater prominence in the forest strategy.

Regarding nature tourism, the Committee agrees with the Commission that there is significant potential for growth in this field. In the opinion of the Committee, ecotourism is an important and growing industry. Sweden has invested in enabling a transition and development for a sustainable visitor industry, and specific funds have been earmarked for ecotourism.

The Committee notes that on 4 June 2021, the Commission adopted the first delegated act with screening criteria for the two climate-related objectives which are to be established in accordance with the EU Taxonomy Regulation². In this Regulation, which was adopted in June 2020, the Commission is given the authority to adopt delegated acts with technical screening criteria. The Commission announces in the forest strategy that it intends to review, complement and update the technical screening criteria for forestry and bioenergy where necessary to take better into account biodiversity-friendly practices that are under development, such as close-to-nature forestry. The Commission further states that it will consider including sustainable activities related to harvesting, production and use of wood products in the forthcoming delegated acts on other environmental objectives. In the light of this, the Committee wishes to point out that Sweden has objected to the delegated acts with technical screening criteria for the climate objectives. The Committee considers that the Commission's excessively narrow definitions risk being counter-productive in work with a transition to sustainable development.

In this context, the Committee wishes to point out that Sweden voted against the Taxonomy Regulation when it was to be adopted in June 2020. The Committee wishes once again to bring attention to the objections that Sweden expressed regarding the Regulation in relation to sustainable forestry and forest policy:

- The internationally agreed definition of sustainable forestry that applies within Forest Europe has not been included in a clear and unequivocal way, which may lead to an inconsistent use and application of sustainable forestry.
- The treaties make no mention of a common forest policy in the EU.
- Responsibility for forests lies with the member states.
- All forest-related decisions and forest-related policies in the EU must respect the principle of subsidiarity and the member states' competence in this field.

In this context, the Committee also wishes to comment on the increasing number of delegated acts and their impact on the national parliaments. The Committee sees with concern how the democratic process is being bypassed when delegated acts with significant content are adopted by the Commission. Many of the technical matters that are submitted to the Commission for adoption as delegated acts have, in the opinion of the Committee, significant implications for the member states and their companies and go beyond just complementing or amending certain non-essential legislation. The increased use of delegated acts entails, in the opinion of the Committee, more closed processes where the member states and the European Parliament have limited opportunities to influence the formulation of the regulatory frameworks. The Committee would like to underline how important it is that EU legislation is formulated clearly through well-grounded and defined delegations to the Commission.

Climate change and biodiversity

First, the Committee wishes to point out that the global community needs to cooperate in order to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The nature in which threatened species live must be protected and natural habitats restored. A thriving natural environment also serves as strong protection against climate change. In the light of this, the Committee agrees with the Commission that the challenges associated with the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services needs to be addressed. Biodiversity is a precondition for maintaining ecosystem services and forest resilience, which are decisive for ecosystem productivity over time.

² Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of 18 June 2020 on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment, known as the Taxonomy Regulation, is a framework regulation to determine which economic activities are to be considered environmentally sustainable in the taxonomy. For a specific economic activity to be classified as environmentally sustainable, it is to contribute significantly to one or more of six established environmental objectives, not cause significant harm to any of the other objectives and fulfil certain minimum sustainability requirements. The conditions for "significant contribution" and "significant harm" to various economic activities is to be specified in greater detail in technical screening criteria. These are to be established by the Commission in delegated acts to the Regulation.

Sweden's ambition is that forest areas in particular need of protection are not to be harvested but maintained, primarily voluntarily, where flexible forms of protection are used in as far as this is possible. Land owners will receive compensation if use of their forests is restricted. In this context, the Committee wishes to highlight the ownership structure in our Swedish forests, which is divided between central government and private ownership. Compared to other member states in the EU, large parts of Sweden's forests are privately owned, which is why compensation to land owners is important. Efforts to protect privately-owned forests are largely based on voluntary commitments. Sweden's forest policy is based to a great extent on freedom under responsibility, and forest owners are expected to take measures beyond those required by law, which is part of the sectoral responsibility. This means that measures required to maintain the natural and cultural heritage assets of our forest areas are the joint responsibility of the public agencies and forestry industry. The objectives are to be reached through cooperation between different forest policy methods such as advice and education, state protection of forest land and central government support, as well as voluntary measures by forest owners, for example, in the form of pre-commercial thinning at the thicket stage and voluntary protection of forest land. The Committee wishes to highlight that forest owners undertake considerable measures for nature preservation.

In this context, the Committee also wishes to point out that the state-owned company Sveaskog is a positive example of work with sustainable state-owned forestry. The company has drawn up a new long-term direction for 2021–2026 for sustainable forestry, with the ambition of leading the way for the EU biodiversity strategy in Sweden. The direction aims to increase biodiversity and to strengthen resilience against climate impact in forest lands and to increase growth in order to, at least, maintain timber supplies to the industry. The Committee wishes to stress that state-owned forestry should set an example for sustainable forestry and should pay significant regard to the natural and cultural heritage.

The Committee shares the Commission's opinion that the EU and its member states need sustainable forestry in order to deal with the challenges of the future, and welcomes the fact that the Commission emphasises multifunctionality of forests in its strategy. However, the Committee considers that there is no clear connection to the approach in Agenda 2030 on the three dimensions of sustainability as integrated and inseparable, which has led to an unbalanced view of these. In the opinion of the Committee, this has resulted in a strategy that deals with just a small part of the contributions that our forests and forestry make to society. Important dimensions such as enterprise, jobs, competitiveness, funding opportunities, demand for forest raw materials and the importance of forestry for rural areas are not covered. In the opinion of the Committee, economically, socially and environmentally sustainable forestry is of considerable importance to a sustainable society.

Sweden has a policy that seeks to achieve sustainable forestry, and where safeguarding and balancing the various assets of our forests is a central element. The Committee intends to closely follow the EU initiatives that may come in conflict with national self-determination and the principle of subsidiarity, or which risk limiting opportunities to formulate cost-effective policies.

The Committee notes that the Commission sees a need to create economic incentives for forest owners and others active in forestry in order to improve the quantity and quality of forests in the EU, and that the Commission is exploring support programmes for ecosystems services more closely. In this context, the Committee wishes to put forward that support systems that are connected to the EU budget should be avoided. In general, the Committee considers that measures in the EU forest strategy should not drive costs in the EU budget. The Swedish position is that the expenditure volume in all policy areas should be kept as it is and that new expenditure should be financed by means of reprioritisations within the given framework.

Like the Commission, the Committee considers that climate change poses a challenge to forests and forestry. It is therefore positive that the Commission highlights measures to deal with climate change in the strategy. In the opinion of the Committee, it is important that forest management is planned with current and future climate change in mind. The Committee agrees that it is important to increase forest resilience, in particular by means of climate adaptation, in order to ensure that forests, over time, can fulfil all their functions and serve as a basis for multidimensional uses. In this context, the Committee wishes to highlight the Swedish Forest Agency's ongoing efforts to adapt our forests to climate change. The Agency has analysed the vulnerability of forests and forestry to climate change and has, after consulting the sector, drawn up impact goals and proposals for adaptation measures. The goals aim to maintain forestry with even supply levels and a good economy. They also aim to counteract any negative impact on other social assets and to facilitate climate adaptation of reindeer husbandry.

The Committee further wishes to highlight the importance of wetlands for the climate and for biodiversity. Wetlands have a unique biodiversity and provide good access to clean water. They also store huge volumes of carbon in the form of peat. In recent years, Sweden has made considerable investments in constructing and restoring wetlands, and the Swedish Forest Agency has also been given the assignment of regenerating drained wetlands in order to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

In the opinion of the Committee, protection of forests and multidimensional use can contribute to both strengthening the forest resilience and to growth which can create and maintain high natural values. The member states have varying

preconditions, and a variety of cultivation methods therefore need to be promoted. Forestry and its preconditions vary in different member states, which is why, according to the Committee, it is necessary that the member states are given scope to choose their own management and cultivation methods, without restrictions. In the opinion of the Committee, the member states need as broad, varied and member-state adapted a toolbox as possible, in order to be able to contribute in a cost-effective way to overall EU objectives. Clear definitions need to be established and drawn up with flexibility, so that measures and regulations can be adapted to the member states' varying conditions. The Committee considers that each member state is best equipped at the national level to ensure that the full capacity of the forests is taken into account with the purpose of promoting a richly varied and sustainable use of our forest lands. The Committee therefore considers it highly inappropriate that the Commission attempts, in the strategy, to steer various production methods.

In this context, the Committee notes that the Swedish Forest Agency has adopted a new definition of the term non-clearcut forestry, as the Agency has identified a need for a cross-agency approach to non-clearcut forestry. In the opinion of the Swedish Forest Agency, the lack of a common definition has made it difficult to measure and follow-up the scope of non-clearcut forestry in Sweden. The Agency considers that the definition should serve as a complement to FSC Sweden's forestry standard continuity forestry. The Committee considers that this working method can be highlighted as an example of good practice for how definitions and standards for forestry can be adapted to the unique conditions of each member state.

The Committee notes that the Commission proposes in the strategy that new criteria and indicators are identified for forestry, and that threshold values should be established, in particular with regard to ecological aspects. The Committee wishes to point out that Forest Europe has, for several years been working to establish indicators for sustainable forestry together with the member states, the European Commission, researchers and stakeholders (Sustainable Forest Management). The Committee therefore sees no need to establish new indicators and definitions.

The Committee further wishes to stress the importance of working with protection of forests and areas of value in order to promote different values such as biodiversity, cultural environment, outdoor activities, reindeer husbandry, hunting, fishing and the visitor industry. Sweden has taken extensive measures to protect valuable forests and in order to increase environmental considerations in forestry. Resources have, among other things, been invested for protection and care of valuable nature, for care of nature reserves and national parks, for efforts to combat invasive species, for game management and for work to restore and construct wetlands.

The Committee notes that reporting of protected nature plays a major role in the member states' work with biological diversity and for the member states' ability to fulfil international goals and commitments with regard to protection of nature. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has, in cooperation with the Swedish Forest Agency, compared and described how Sweden and a selection of countries report on protected areas in international contexts to the European Environment Agency and has noted that the reports differ. There are many instruments that protect nature without them being officially recognised protected areas, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), but which are nevertheless of great importance for biodiversity. The Swedish model for nature conservation of forests includes, for example, formal protection, voluntary set-asides and general consideration as a whole. However, this entire area is not included in the reporting of protected areas. In the opinion of the Committee, Sweden should report protection of nature in accordance with the IUCN's reporting system, in order to be able to compare Sweden's international commitments more fairly with other EU member states.

The Committee is positive to the fact that the Commission wishes to increase tree planting in the EU, but considers that these efforts must be conducted in a way that takes into consideration the member states' national conditions. In Sweden, for example, it is a statutory requirement that new forest is planted when forest is harvested, a requirement deriving from Sweden's first modern forest act from 1903, and which reflects efforts to ensure long-term, sustainable timber supply. In the opinion of the Committee, the strategy lacks a discussion from the Commission on cost-effectiveness and added value for individual member states in relation to the ambition to increase tree planting.

Monitoring, reporting and data collection

The Committee notes the Commission's ambition to present a legislative proposal on a forest observation, reporting and data collection framework, which will establish an EU-wide integrated framework for forest monitoring. As previously stated by the Committee, detailed regulation of sustainable forestry should be avoided at EU level. The Committee also opposes the proposal on strategic forest planning containing the member states' strategic visions for their forests and the forest-based sector, as well as demands for forestry plans. The Committee considers that forest planning at EU level should be avoided. The Committee does not share the Commission's assessment of the shortcomings regarding long-term vision and strategic forest planning in the EU member states, and that the Commission therefore should establish common structures for this purpose at EU level. The majority of the EU member states have long-term visions in the form of national forest programmes, or similar arrangements. Sweden has a national forest programme where the vision

is: “Forests – our ‘green gold’ – will contribute to creating jobs and sustainable growth throughout the country, and to the development of a growing bio-economy.” According to the Committee, the forest programme’s various activities and dialogues contribute to promoting a growing forest industry and sustainable forestry. In the opinion of the Committee, implementation of the forest strategy should focus on encouraging voluntary and national initiatives and exchange of experience.

Like the Commission, the Committee considers that the existing data need to be improved in several member states, among other things, in order to be able to monitor the effects of climate change. When national data which are reliable and of good quality are available, however, these should be used. Furthermore, the Committee sees no added value in the EU developing a comprehensive structure for data collection. This would simply risk causing an additional administrative burden for the forest industry, without yielding corresponding benefits. Instead, the Commission should use existing structures, both internationally and in the member states. Increased exchange and cooperation with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the national forest inventories would lead to greater cost-effectiveness and a smaller administrative burden.

The Committee also notes that, at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council on 11–12 October 2021, several member states questioned the value of the proposal on forest observation, reporting and data collection in the EU, stating that many countries already had national forest inventories.

Research and innovation

In the opinion of the Committee, research and innovation and their implementation will play a significant role in achieving the ambitions of the European Green Deal, including the forest strategy. European research cooperation, with the framework programme Horizon Europe at the forefront, is of great importance in achieving the green transition. In the opinion of the Committee, it is through research that new, sustainable methods and innovative solutions can be developed. In order to balance and integrate social, economic and environmental sustainability in line with Agenda 2030, research is needed for development of non-toxic, circular and bio-based solutions that respect the planet’s limitations and protect human health, as well as the environment. Research and innovation are also needed to secure a climate-adapted and competitive primary production, including a good and secure supply to sustainably produced biomass from the forest.

In the light of this, the Committee welcomes the fact that the Commission highlights the importance of research and innovation in the forest strategy. A strong forest research agenda is important in order to deal with future changes in our world. However, the Committee does not consider that new research cooperation structures need to be developed. Already existing cooperation such as the European Forest-based Sector Technology Platform is, in the opinion of the Committee, a sufficient platform for continued work.

Work with existing EU acquis

Like the Commission, the Committee considers that measures need to be taken to deal with illegal harvesting of trees. It is of fundamental importance that EU acquis is observed in a correct and uniform way so that the rules have the intended effect. The Committee therefore welcomes the ongoing review of the EU Timber Regulation and the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) action plan. However, the Committee wishes to underline how important it is that the changes and proposals that are drawn up are appropriate, that supranational regulation is avoided and that the administration that is required to follow the acquis is kept to a minimum.

Sustainable cultivation and preservation of forests is a priority issue in Sweden’s international cooperation. The forest and its value chain are to contribute to global sustainable development and implementation of Agenda 2030. Sweden is actively involved, among other things, in the UN Forum on Forests, where a strategic plan is being drawn up for the forest-related goals in Agenda 2030. Sweden’s ambition is to be at the forefront when it comes to forest protection and sustainable forestry. Sweden wants to help to lead development of a global, growing, bio-economy and a globally sustainable development and climate adaptation. Sweden also wants to contribute to responsible and sustainable forestry in other countries. Among other things, Sweden seeks to promote long-term ownership and use of land, active dialogue with knowledge-bearers and stakeholders at various levels and greater equality and decent working conditions in the forest sector. More responsible and transparent enterprise, as well as sustainable production and consumption, are important when it comes to forest products.

The overall assessment and proposal of the Committee

In the light of what the Committee on Environment and Agriculture has stated above in its position, the Committee proposes that the Riksdag put the statement on file.