

Proposal for a Council resolution concerning the objectives and principles of forestry policy

(Submitted by the Commission to the Council on 6 December 1978)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament,

Whereas it is desirable to enable the forestry sector to contribute more effectively to the achievement of the objectives of the Treaty;

Whereas certain objectives pursued at national level affect the interests of the Community as a whole;

Whereas the coordination of national forestry policies should be furthered to the extent that is necessary in order to orientate these policies towards the achievement of objectives of common interest,

HEREBY ADOPTS THIS RESOLUTION:

The policies of Member States shall pursue the objectives and respect the principles of forestry policy which are stated in the Annex.

OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF FORESTRY POLICY

1. General principles

1. Forests should be protected and managed as a renewable resource to supply products and services which are essential to the quality of life in the European Community now and in the future. The main objectives should be:

- a sustainable increase in the economic production of timber,
- the conservation and improvement of the environment,
- public access to forests for recreation.

Where practicable, these objectives should be pursued in conjunction with one another by multiple use management the weight to be attached to each being varied according to ownership and the particular needs at a given place and time.

2. Forestry policy should

- recognize the long term nature of forestry which renders sudden major changes in policy undesirable,
- take account of the distinctive characteristics and complementary roles of
 - private forests,
 - state forests,
 - other publicly owned forests,
- seek to create conditions in which efficiently managed woodlands are economically viable.

3. Forestry policy measures should be formulated and implemented with due regard to other national and Community policies, especially those concerned with:

- land use,
- agriculture,
- wood using industries,
- regional development, including employment and standards of living, especially in economically less favoured regions,
- urban and rural environment.

4. Conversely, agricultural as well as other policies with possible forestry implications should pay due regard to the functions of the forest and its effective management.

5. Within the limits set by national legislation, forest owners should be free to manage their forests as they wish.

6. Forestry policy measures should be coordinated at Community level to the extent necessary to achieve common objectives.

2. The forest estate

1. In regions where, because of climate, topography or population density the use to which a particular piece of land is put, is of special public concern, the conversion of forest land to other land use and of other land to forestry should only be undertaken after consultation between the owner, the forest authority and other authorities concerned with land use in order to ensure a fair balance between

- forestry, farming and other land use interests,
- the interests of the owner of the land and the public interest.

2. The criteria should be clearly defined which should be taken into account when considering such changes of land use. In particular woodlands should not be regarded as land reserves but in their own right on the basis of all the products and services that forests provide to the community.

3. Measures should be taken to protect forests against serious damage by fire and other calamities and to repair the damage when a major calamity has occurred.

3. Wood production

1. When deciding on forest policy measures to increase wood production the expected direct return on the investment should be only one of the considerations; others should include the possible environmental benefits of forestry and the contribution which increased wood production can make to

- regional development and the living standards of rural populations, especially in less favoured areas,
- the profitability of forest industries,
- improving the viability of forest holdings,
- cover the Community's requirements of wood.

2. The aim should be to raise the production and promote the better use of wood by measures appropriate to the particular circumstances of each country or region.

Among the measures to be considered are:

(a) silvicultural measures

- accelerating the regeneration of over-mature stands,
- more general application of timely and adequate thinnings in young stands,
- choice of species and provenances suitable for the site, application of fertilizers and other measures to promote faster growth in high forest,
- conversion into productive high forest of poor quality coppice and other woodlands of low productivity,
- additional protection against fire, storm and disease,
- afforestation of bare land which is more suitable for forestry than for other purposes,
- the planting of trees outside the forest, especially of fast growing species.

(b) Fuller utilization of

- trees that are harvested (branches, stumps, roots),
- wood and wood residues by the wood processing industries,
- waste paper through recycling.

(c) Organizational, infrastructural and institutional measures to promote efficient management, harvesting and marketing in order to reduce costs and increase revenues from wood production; such measures could include

- encouragement of associations of woodland owners,
- encouragement of consolidation of scattered small parcels of woodland which are in a single ownership,
- provision of roads and tracks to improve access to forests,
- market promotion and the monitoring of markets,

- the creation and development of appropriate wood processing industries within reasonable distance of the forests,
- the promotion of relevant research and development,
- the improvement of training and educational facilities.

3. Member States should draw up on a comparable basis and periodically review programmes relating to the measures listed in paragraph 2 giving estimates of costs and expected benefits.

4. Conservation of nature and protection of the human environment

1. As a minimum contribution to the conservation of nature and the protection of the human environment forests should be managed so as to

- maintain the long term fertility and productivity of the site,
- minimize the risk of causing damage elsewhere,
- take account of the landscape and wildlife.

2. Appropriate authorities should be authorized by legislation to initiate after consultation with the forest owner additional conservation measures where they are deemed necessary for specific purposes and especially for

- the protection against
 - erosion by water and wind,
 - desiccation and flooding,
 - avalanches,
- the conservation of habitats of species of animals and plants which are in danger of extinction and whose survival is considered important.

3. As the implementation of paragraphs 1 and 2 above may add to the costs of forest management and reduce the income, the definitions and rules concerning the implementation of these paragraphs should not differ too widely between Member States and should take account of factors such as the special requirements of economically less favoured regions.

5. Public access and recreation

1. Within the limits set by custom and national legislation, access on foot free of charge should be extended to as many forests as possible subject to reasonable and clearly defined exceptions in the interests of

- nature conservation, especially in areas where the survival of the forest is threatened by adverse environmental conditions,
- efficient forest management including protection against fire and damage from other causes,
- prevention of damage on adjacent areas, especially land that is farmed,
- the forest owner,
- wildlife management.

2. Where access is granted, the rights and responsibilities of the visitor, of the forest owner, of the State or other appropriate public authority should be governed by criteria which, subject to meeting specific national and local requirements, should be reasonably consistent throughout the Community.

3. The cost of the provision of recreational facilities in the forest beyond the mere granting of access on foot and from which no commercial return is to be expected should be borne by the State or other public bodies. Private forest owners should be under no obligation to provide or to let others provide such facilities in their woodlands.

6. Wildlife management

Subject to any Community measures which provide for more specific obligations, wildlife should be managed and controlled with the following aims in view:

- maintaining a healthy but not excessive population of as many species as are appropriate to a region and in harmony with local traditions,
- avoiding as far as possible interference with other aspects of forest management and agriculture, especially through game damage.

7. Instruments of forestry policy

1. Organization

The implementation of forestry policy in each Member State should be the responsibility of a forestry authority which is effectively organized and suitably staffed for the purpose and, given the long production cycle in forestry, not too dependent on short term fluctuations in economic and other circumstances.

2. Forestry legislation

Member States should ensure that their forestry legislation is appropriate for the effective implementation of

- national forestry policy,
- forestry policy measures agreed at Community level.

3. Taxation and incentives

Forestry taxation and financial aids for forestry should be formulated within the general national and Community procedures for taxation and the granting of incentives, so as to

- provide an incentive to efficient and stable forest management, including protection against fire and other damage.

4. Research and development

The major research and development effort should be directed to solve as cost effectively as possible the most urgent problems confronting forest management by

- careful choice of research priorities,
- cooperation and coordination at both national and Community levels, where this is likely to result in a worthwhile economy of effort,
- the promotion at Community level of selected research projects of particular importance and beyond the capacity of individual national effort.

5. Education and training

Member States should ensure that adequate education and training facilities in forestry, including refresher courses, are available either nationally or by arrangement with institutions elsewhere. The facilities should

- cover all aspects of forestry,
- seek to achieve a reasonable balance between supply of and demand for personnel,
- meet the requirements of forest owners and other employers as well as of all categories of employees,
- bring about a gradual approximation of qualifications and standards throughout the Community as a means of facilitating the mutual recognition of qualifications and the free movement of personnel at all levels in accordance with the accepted social policy of the Community.

6. Information

Member States should make use of existing forestry statistics and develop them further, applying criteria and definitions common to all the Member States, so that it will be possible:

- to make valid comparisons utilizing national statistics, and
- to group together statistics of use to the Community as a whole.

The exchange of non-statistical information on forestry in the Community should also be stepped up.

7. Consultation

Where such arrangements do not already exist, measures should be taken to ensure that frequent consultations are held within the State between the forestry authority and the organizations representing:

- public and private forest owners,
- employees,
- the primary processing industries,
- the timber trade,
- nature and landscape conservation interests.

Consultations should also be encouraged at Community level between these various types of interest which are all concerned with forestry matters.

8. Public relations

Steps should be taken to give the general public, and young people in particular, a better understanding of all aspects of forestry.