

New opportunities for forests to tackle climate change

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There is great scope to enhance the role of EU forests and the forest sector in tackling climate change according to Professor **Gert-Jan Nabuurs**, lead author of a forthcoming EFI science-policy study. Prof. Nabuurs outlined some of the study's initial findings at a ThinkForest seminar at the International Press Centre in Brussels on 13 October. Forests could compensate for up to another 10% of EU emissions, he said, if there are good incentives. "However, no single sector can solve the whole problem, and no single sector can provide quick fixes", he warned.



The ThinkForest seminar brought together policymakers, scientists and stakeholders to discuss how European forests can contribute to climate policy targets in advance of the COP21 talks in Paris in December 2015. Seminar chair and ThinkForest president **Göran Persson** sounded a note of caution about the COP21 process, saying that perhaps the United Nations framework is not a practical tool, despite its important and good work in keeping climate change on the agenda. He suggested that when it comes to decisions, we might have to look to other foras, for example the G22. "Paris will not be the end of the process", he said.

Speakers included **Audun Rosland** from the Norwegian Environment Agency who explained current climate policy and its challenges and constraints, and **Peter Wehrheim** from the European Commission who set out the options for including emissions from land use and forestry (LULUCF) in the EU 2030 climate and energy framework. It was important to harness the potential from forestry, to ensure we keep below the 2 degrees C targets, he said. "25% of mitigation of emissions can come from agriculture and forestry."

In a lively discussion, panellists and the audience debated how best to include forest and forest sector emissions and removals in EU climate policy post 2020, and what incentives and tools could be used to increase the mitigation potential of the EU forest sector. Incentives are needed at regional and national levels because 'one size does not fit all' – and it is precisely this variety amongst member states which offers great opportunities for creating win-win situations through climate-smart forestry.

It was also suggested that other policies could be explored, for example looking into the EU energy directive to encourage building more with wood. Prof. Nabuurs also pointed out that in many EU member states public money goes in the forest sector, but the effect of this against climate targets is largely unknown.

Further information

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The ThinkForest event; Towards Paris 2015: How can the forest sector contribute? ' brought together 100 scientists, policymakers and stakeholders, and was held at the International Press Centre in Brussels on 13 October.

Watch the recording of the livestream from the session: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=la0gMGq5MFs&feature=youtu.be>

Photo by Simon Pugh