

## Forests central to climate and bioeconomy transformation

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Forests and the forest sector can play an unprecedented role in meeting the Paris Agreement and EU climate policy targets. The issue was discussed at a high-level ThinkForest seminar held in Brussels on 15 March.



Finnish Minister of Agriculture and the Environment

**Kimmo Tiilikainen** stated that forests and the bioeconomy need to play a central role in meeting climate policy targets. He emphasized that the Finnish government was committed to promote the European Forest Institute's role as a bioeconomy knowledge hub in Europe.

Minister Tiilikainen explained that the Finnish government is investing in bioeconomy and sees it as key means to reach the Paris Agreement target of achieving a balance between emissions and removals by 2050. We need to phase out the use of fossil carbon, and replace it with renewable materials, he said. "A systemic change is needed to create a fossil-free society and at the same time secure economic growth. We need to develop new biomass-based products, not only timber as a construction material or traditional products. We need new biochemicals, new biomaterials, new biotextiles."

The post-petroleum era and the transition to a low-carbon economy continued to be a main theme. **Marie Donnelly**, director of the European Commission DG Energy emphasized the role that bioenergy will play in climate change policy. "We want to see advanced biofuels coming into the market place. This needs new technologies and innovations, a start for a whole new industrial focus.' And biology and forests will be the basis for this next industrial step, said seminar chair and ThinkForest president **Göran Persson**. "It's one of the most promising developments we have ahead of us."

When it comes to policies, Minister Tiilikainen said we should not focus on details and forget the big picture, calling for "more coherence on forests and land use sector-related policies". Flexibility is key to successful EU climate policy, according to **Lauri Hetemäki**, EFI Assistant Director. The more flexibility you have, the more cost-effectively you can meet your targets, while ensuring policy is fair and socially acceptable. Flexibility is also essential in order to use EU Member States' diverse possibilities to contribute to mitigation, to strengthen synergies with other policy goals and to minimize trade-offs.

Those synergies, compromises and trade-offs were discussed further by the panel and audience in a lively debate, as discussions moved to the key triangle of bioeconomy, biodiversity and climate change. How to best utilize the triple role forests and the forest sector have as a carbon sink, carbon storage and substituting fossil-based products came under scrutiny.

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The ThinkForest event 'Climate policy after COP21: Implications for the European forest-based sector' was held at the International Press Centre, Brussels on 15 March 2016. The event was hosted by MEP **Elisabeth Köstinger**, and chaired by ThinkForest president Göran Persson.

- [View the recording of the event](#)

#### *Background information*

*ThinkForest is facilitated by the European Forest Institute, an independent, science-based international organization. ThinkForest is a high-level discussion forum which brings together policy makers, the scientific community and stakeholders, building bridges on pan-European forest and bioeconomy issues. Since 2012, 16 events have been held, attended by over 900 people.*

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