



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2020)0257

The European Forest Strategy - The Way Forward

European Parliament resolution of 8 October 2020 on the European Forest Strategy - The Way Forward (2019/2157(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 on ‘The European Green Deal’ (COM(2019)0640), to the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (COM(2020)0380), and to its resolutions of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal¹ and 16 January 2020 on the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity²,
- having regard to the New York Declaration on Forests, ratified on 23 June 2014 by the European Union,
- having regard to the Commission report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 7 December 2018 entitled ‘Progress in the implementation of the EU forest strategy – “A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector”’ (COM(2018)0811),
- having regard to its resolution of 28 April 2015 on ‘A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector’³,
- having regard to the Commission communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 23 July 2019 entitled ‘Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World’s Forests’ (COM(2019)0352),
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 15 April 2019 on the progress on the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy and on a new strategic framework for forests (08609/2019),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0005.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0015.

³ OJ C 346, 21.9.2016, p. 17.

spread of invasive alien species¹ and the consecutive Implementing regulations with updates of the List of invasive species, among which also tree species,

- having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 30 October 2019 on the report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 7 December 2018 entitled ‘Progress in the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy - “A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest sector”’,
- having regard to the Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services published by the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) on 31 May 2019,
- having regard to the report of the European Environment Agency on ‘The European environment – state and outlook 2020: knowledge for transition to a sustainable Europe’, published on 4 December 2019,
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 11 April 2019 on the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy,
- having regard to the Mid-Term Review of the Biodiversity Strategy to 2020,
- having regard to the updated EU Bioeconomy Strategy,
- having regard to the 2050 Climate Strategy,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 29 November 2019 on the updated EU Bioeconomy Strategy²,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 28 November 2018 entitled ‘A Clean Planet for All: a European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy’ (COM(2018)0773),
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 16 May 2018 on the mid-term review of the EU Forest Strategy³,
- having regard to the Europe 2020 strategy, including the Innovation Union and Resource-Efficient Europe initiatives,
- having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the opinions of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A9-0154/2020),

¹ OJ L 317, 4.11.2014, p. 35.

² https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/publication/council-conclusions-updated-eu-bioeconomy-strategy-29-november-2019_en

³ OJ C 361, 5.10.2018, p. 5.

- having regard to the responsibilities of the EU Member States under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD),
- A. whereas the EU's internal and international commitments to, for example, the European Green Deal, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement and the creation of a zero-emission society, will be impossible to achieve without the climate benefits and other ecosystem services provided by forests and the forest-based sector;
- B. whereas the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union makes no reference to a common EU forest policy, and responsibility for forests lies with the Member States; whereas, however, the EU has a history of contributing, through its policies and guidelines, including Article 4 TFEU as regards energy, environment and agriculture, to sustainable forest management (SFM) and the Member States' decisions on forests;
- C. whereas forests and the entire forest-based value chain are fundamental to the further development of the circular bioeconomy, as they provide jobs, ensure economic welfare in rural and urban areas, deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation services, offer health-related benefits, protect the biodiversity and prospects of mountainous, island and rural regions and combat desertification;
- D. whereas properly funded high-quality research, innovation, collection of information, maintenance and development of databases, best practice and knowledge sharing are of the utmost importance for the future of the EU's multifunctional forests and for the entire forest-based value-chain, in light of the increasing demands being placed upon them and the need to tackle the multiple opportunities and challenges facing society;
- E. whereas forests are part of our natural heritage, which we must preserve and maintain, and whereas in order for this heritage to prosper and to be a source of biodiversity and an economic, tourism and social resource it is essential that it be well managed;
- F. whereas the Rural Development Fund, in the framework of the CAP, has provided tools and resources to support the forestry sector and should continue to do in the post-2020 CAP, through a strong focus on SFM;
- G. whereas there are 16 million private forest owners in the EU, who own about 60 % of the EU's forests; whereas the average size of privately-owned forests is 13 ha, while about two-thirds of private forest owners own less than 3 ha of forest;
- H. whereas sustainably managed forests are enormously important in guaranteeing jobs in rural areas, representing a benefit for human health while at the same time making a vital contribution to the environment and biodiversity;
- I. whereas climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in forests are interlinked inasmuch as aspects must be balanced and synergies between them encouraged, especially within Member States' Adaptation Strategies and Plans;
- J. whereas European forests and their situations differ and therefore need to be handled differently, but always with a view to improving their economic, social and environmental functions;

- K. whereas outermost regions contain very rich reservoirs of biodiversity and it is fundamental to preserve them;
- L. whereas biodiversity loss in forests has significant environmental, economic and social consequences;
- M. whereas soil quality plays a crucial role in the provision of ecosystem services such as water filtration and storage, and hence flood and drought protection, CO₂ sequestration, biodiversity and the growth of biomass; whereas the improvement of soil quality, for instance in some regions by converting coniferous forest to permanent deciduous forest, is an economically challenging process that takes decades;
- N. whereas the crucial role of SFM should be promoted to European society, which is increasingly disconnected from forests and forestry, underlining the multiple benefits forests provide from the economic, social and environmental, and cultural and historical viewpoints;
- O. whereas, in addition to carbon sequestration, forests have a beneficial impact on the climate, the atmosphere, the preservation of biodiversity and river and waterway management, protect soil from erosion by water and wind, and possess other useful natural properties;
- P. whereas almost 23 % of European forests are to be found in Natura 2000 sites, with the share in some Member States exceeding 50 %, and almost half of the natural habitats in Natura 2000 areas are forests;
- Q. whereas forests can both be sources of primary forest products such as wood, and provide valuable secondary products such as mushrooms, truffles, herbs, honey and berries, which are very important for economic activities in some regions of the Union;
- R. whereas European forests play an important role in improving the environment, developing the economy, meeting the Member States' needs for wood products and enhancing the wellbeing of the population;
- S. whereas agroforestry, defined as land use systems in which trees are grown in combination with agriculture on the same land unit, is a suite of land management systems which boost overall productivity, generate more biomass, maintain and restore soils, and provide a number of valuable ecosystem services;
- T. whereas the multifunctional role of forests, the considerable time they take to become established and the importance of ensuring a good diversity of species make sustainable use and the preservation and multiplication of forest resources an important European task;
- U. whereas socially and environmentally responsible hunting also plays an important role in forests and semi-forest regions, by controlling numbers of game or the spread of related diseases, such as African swine fever;
- V. whereas forests play a crucial role in the fight against soil erosion and the desertification of landmasses; whereas studies show that trees in parks and city environment have a positive effect in terms of maintaining lower temperatures as compared to treeless areas;

- W. whereas in the current programming period (2014-2020) there are measures in the CAP targeted at helping economic actors in building capacities with regard to forestry management;
- X. whereas some forestry regions have been massively invaded by pests and insects such as woodworm and various fungi; whereas natural populations of chestnut forests have been massively invaded by *Cryphonectria parasitica*, which causes a serious threat to the survival of these populations, but also in the long run threatens related human-led activities, such as the production and collection of chestnuts;
- Y. whereas the data available on forests at EU level is incomplete and of varying quality, thus hampering the capacity of coordination at EU level concerning forest management;
- Z. whereas illegal logging is ongoing also in the EU;

The past – revisiting recent implementation successes and challenges

1. Welcomes the publication of the Commission report entitled ‘Progress in the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy – “A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest sector”’ (COM(2018)0811);
2. Welcomes the actions taken by the Member States and the Commission to meet the objectives of the EU Forest Strategy and the involvement of the Standing Forestry Committee, the Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry and Cork, the Expert Group on Forest Fires, the Expert Group on Forest-based Industries and Sectorally-related Issues, and relevant stakeholders in the Forest Multiannual Implementation Plan (Forest MAP);
3. Recognises that the Commission’s 2018 report on progress of the implementation of the current EU Forest Strategy states that the strategy has been useful as a coordination tool and that, generally speaking, the ‘eight plus one’ priority areas of the strategy have been implemented with relatively few impediments, with the exception of major challenges to be addressed through biodiversity policy and ongoing challenges in the areas ‘What forests do we have and how are they changing?’, specifically concerning the public perception and information on the forestry sector, and ‘Fostering coordination and communication’, specifically concerning forest-related policies;
4. Highlights the fact that a definition of SFM was internationally agreed as part of the pan-European FOREST EUROPE process; notes that the definition has been incorporated into national legislation and into the voluntary systems, such as forest certifications, that are in place in the Member States;
5. Stresses that the promotion of SFM in the EU, as part of the EU Forest Strategy and the rural development measures implemented under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), has had a broadly positive impact on forests and forest conditions and on livelihoods in rural areas, as well as on the biodiversity of forests in the EU, and has enhanced the climate benefits offered by the forest-based sector; notes, however, that there is still a need to strengthen SFM in a balanced manner in order to ensure that forests' ecological status improves, to enhance the health and resilience of ecosystems and ensure that they are better able to adapt to changing climate conditions, to reduce the risks and impacts of natural disturbances, and to safeguard opportunities for present and future generations to manage forests, for example in such a way that forest owners'

and SMEs' objectives are realised, and to improve the quality of existing forests and woodland; considers that the EU forest strategy should include adequate instruments in this regard; points out that the Member States are obliged to undertake SFM in exemplary fashion; considers that forest management models should incorporate environmental, societal and economic sustainability, which means that the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands are such that they maintain their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions at local, national and global levels and do not cause damage to other ecosystems; stresses that acknowledging and safeguarding property rights is key to achieving a long-term commitment to SFM; notes that safeguarding and sustainably managing our forests is a core part of our general wellbeing, as they are a home for public-interest activities in the field of leisure and health as well as education, and recognises that SFM promotes the protection of European forest biodiversity; calls for the protection of primary forests with preserved structure, species richness and adequate area where such forests still persist; notes that there is no EU definition of old growth forests and calls on the Commission to introduce a definition, to be prepared in the Standing Forestry Committee, in the process of drafting the future EU Forest Strategy; stresses that there could be diverging views on the CO₂ absorption capacities of different kinds of forests, and therefore believes the new EU forest strategy should promote sustainable forest management; regrets the unsustainable practices and illegal logging taking place in some Member States despite the EU Timber Regulation, and further calls on the Member States to do more to put an end to it, and also to improve or strengthen their national legislation where necessary; urges the Commission and the Member States to take urgent action on these issues, through close monitoring and through the enforcement of existing EU laws, and calls on the Commission to swiftly pursue infringement procedures when breaches occur, as well as to follow through on illegal logging cases through all competent bodies; calls on the Commission to finalise, without delay, the fitness check of EU rules against illegal logging;

6. Concludes that the differences between Member States, as well as the differences between regions within Member States, have been an important factor in considering measures at EU level;
7. Expresses its deep concern that in parts of the Union failure to implement existing EU legislation and suspicion of corruption have resulted in illegal logging and unsustainable forestry activities; calls on the Commission and the Member States to combat corruption and to fully implement the existing legislation;

The present – state of play of the EU's forests

8. Emphasises that the EU's forests, together with those of its overseas territories and outermost regions, are multifunctional and characterised by great diversity in such aspects as ownership patterns, size, structure, biodiversity, resilience and challenges; points out that forests, in particular mixed forests, offer society a wide variety of ecosystem services including habitats for species, carbon sequestration, raw materials, renewable energy, improved air quality, clean water, groundwater recharge, erosion control and protection from drought, floods and avalanches, and provide ingredients for medicinal products, as well as being an important cultural and recreational amenity; whereas all this no longer seems to be completely safeguarded, as forest owners can no longer reinvest in forests as a result of the difficult economic situation caused by

climate change and other contributing factors; notes that according to the latest estimates, only 26 % of forest species and 15 % of forest habitats demonstrated a favourable conservation status; calls on the Member States to ensure the safeguarding of ecosystems and, where necessary, to develop and enhance guidelines regarding non-timber forest products;

9. Takes note of the progress made on valuing ecosystem services under the Mapping of Ecosystems and their Services (MAES) initiative; stresses, however, that there is currently no adequate remuneration for the provision of ecosystem services such as CO₂ sequestration or fostering biodiversity or soil improvement, and that foresters who focus on converting their forests accordingly currently might be managing their forests at a loss despite the provision of substantial ecosystem services; calls on the Commission and the Member States to explore options to incentivise and remunerate climate, biodiversity and other ecosystem services appropriately in order to permit an economically viable forest conversion;
10. Notes that over the past decades the EU's forest resources have been increasing in terms of forest cover and volume, and that currently forests and other wooded areas cover around 43 % of the surface of the EU, reaching at least 182 million hectares and comprising 5 % of the world's total forests, thanks to afforestation and natural regeneration; notes that half of the Natura 2000 network is made up of forest areas (i.e. 37,5 million hectares) and that 23 % of all forests in Europe are within Natura 2000 sites, while some Member States have more than half of their territory covered by forests and are dependent on forestry; points out the importance of improving knowledge about Natura 2000 and its effects on biodiversity, forest management and other uses of land throughout the EU; notes that 60 % of EU forests are privately owned, with a high proportion of small-size forest holdings (less than 3 ha) and 40 % are publicly owned; points out that over 60 % of the productive forests in the EU, and over 20 % worldwide, are certified according to SFM voluntary standards; notes also that the share of the round wood stemming from certified forests processed by the wood-based industries globally is higher than 20 % and that this share is as high as 50 % in the EU; points out that the sector employs at least 500 000 people directly¹ and 2,6 million indirectly in the EU² and that maintenance of this level of employment as well as the sector's long-term competitiveness require constant efforts to attract a skilled and trained workforce to the sector and ensure that workers have proper access to social and medical assistance; notes that these jobs are dependent on resilient and well-managed forest ecosystems in the long term; stresses the crucial role that forest owners play in the implementation of SFM and the important role that forests play in the creation of green jobs and in growth in rural areas; in addition, highlights that EU forest owners and managers have a long tradition and experience in management of multifunctional forests; calls on the Commission to include the need for support to forest owners, including financial support, in the new EU Forest Strategy; considers that such support should be made subject to the application of SFM, to ensure a continued investment in modern technologies and in environmental and climate measures that reinforce the multifunctional role played by forests, with a specific financial instrument for the management of areas in the Natura 2000 network and creating decent working conditions; believes that such financial support should be the result of a robust

¹ Eurostat database on forestry, available at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/forestry/data/database>.

² European Parliament fact sheet of May 2019 on the European Union and forests.

combination of financial instruments, national funding and private-sector financing; underscores the importance of averting a rural exodus and considers it essential to invest in ecosystems; welcomes afforestation and reforestation as suitable tools in enhancing forest cover, especially on abandoned land that is not suitable for food production, close to urban and peri-urban areas as well as in mountainous areas, where appropriate; encourages financially backed-up actions for using the harvested timber in proportion to the sustainable forestry stock and increasing forest cover and other wooded land where relevant, particularly in those Member States where forest cover is low, while encouraging in other Member States the preservation of forest cover in areas with accentuated ecological functions; notes that forests host a significant part of Europe's terrestrial biodiversity;

11. Observes that the area of forest in the Union is growing, inter alia as a result of afforestation, and that managed commercial forests not only bind carbon better than unmanaged forests but also reduce emissions and problems caused by deterioration of the condition of forests; notes that sustainable management of commercial forests has the very best impact on the climate, and that countries which manage their forests well should be rewarded for this;
12. Recognises that long-term public and private investment in a reinforced SFM which places equal focus on the social, environmental and economic benefits of forests and on adequate funding and compensation mechanisms can help ensure forests' resilience and adaptive capacity and help the forest sector to stay economically viable and environmentally sound, but can also contribute to achieving numerous EU goals, including the successful implementation of the European Green Deal and the transition to a circular bio-economy and the promotion of biodiversity; highlights also the need for other easily accessible, well-coordinated and relevant EU funding mechanisms, such as financial instruments or the support of the European Investment Bank in bolstering investment in forestry projects, targeting SFM and forest fire prevention and mitigation, as well as the structural funds and funds from the Horizon, Erasmus+ and LIFE+ programmes, which could provide essential support for investment and services for carbon storage and sequestration as part of the SFM, also ensuring consistency with the Green Deal;
13. Acknowledges the crucial climate benefits of forests and the forest-based sector; reiterates the need to foster the environmental, economic and social aspects of forests and forest management in a balanced manner while strengthening the overall climate benefits stemming from forests and the forest-based value chain, namely fostered CO₂ sequestration and carbon storage in wood products and material substitution; highlights the need to maintain, further promote and where possible increase CO₂ sequestration in forests to a level which enables sustainable management of all forest functions, carbon storage in situ, including in agroforests, deadwood and forest soil and wood-based products by means of active SFM; points out that over 10 % of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions are absorbed by forests; stresses the need to promote the use of wood as a sustainable construction material as it enables us to move towards a more sustainable economy; encourages the Commission to explore different market-based mechanisms in order to incentivise substitution of fossil fuels by renewable raw materials which offer climate benefits; stresses the crucial role of wood-based materials in substituting fossil-based alternatives and alternatives with a higher environmental footprint in industries such as construction, textiles, chemicals and packaging, and the need to fully take into account the climate and environmental benefits of this material substitution; further

highlights the as yet under-used advantages offered by the replacement of single-use products, notably plastic products, by sustainable wood-based products; stresses that the circular use of wood-based products should also be increased in order to improve the use of our sustainable resources, promote resource efficiency, reduce waste and extend the carbon life cycle for the deployment of a sustainable and local circular bioeconomy;

14. Welcomes, as regards the substitution of fossil-based raw materials and energy, the continuing work of promoting the most efficient use of wood following the ‘cascading principle’; calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue the implementation of sustainability criteria for biomass under the recast of the Renewable Energy Directive, and to make optimum use of the substitution effect by substituting CO₂-intensive fossil-based materials and energy; notes, however, the importance of avoiding unnecessary market distortions for wood-based raw materials when it comes to supporting schemes for bioenergy; draws attention to the fact that a foreseeable increase in demand for wood and biomass must be accompanied by SFM; emphasises, in this respect, the need to increase funding for research into the substitution of fossil fuels and fossil-fuel materials; notes that leftovers at the end of the wood value chain can be favourably used as biomass in order to substitute fossil-based heat, but that where possible timber should be kept for uses with a longer life cycle in order to increase global carbon dioxide storage;
15. Highlights the beneficial effects of forest shelterbelts, both for protecting farmland and for increasing agricultural output; strongly advocates methods to encourage farmers to develop forest shelterbelts;
16. Stresses the key role that flowering trees and bushes in natural ecosystems play for the apiculture sector, and in assisting the natural process of pollination and enhancing the consolidation and protection of deteriorated and/or rough land; urges the inclusion of such trees and bushes in EU support programmes, taking regional characteristics into account;
17. Regrets the fact that although forests in the EU are managed according to the commonly agreed principle of SFM and forest cover in the EU has been increasing over the past decades, a different approach to SFM has been developed in the context of the recently agreed Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2020 on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/2088¹;
18. Underlines the importance of resilient and healthy forest ecosystems including fauna and flora, in order to maintain and enhance the delivery of the multiple ecosystem services that forests provide, such as biodiversity, clean air, water, healthy soil and wood and non-wood raw materials; highlights that voluntary tools and legislation in place, such as the EU Birds and Habitats directives, affect land management decisions and must be respected and implemented appropriately;
19. Notes that farmers and forest owners are key actors in rural areas; welcomes the recognition of the role of forestry, agro-forestry and forest-based industries in the Rural Development Programme of the 2014-2020 CAP, and the improvements introduced through the Omnibus Regulation; encourages safeguarding this recognition in the CAP

¹ OJ L 198, 22.6.2020, p. 13.

2021-2027 and in the implementation of the European Green Deal;

20. Highlights the suitability and viability of the two-step approach to verifying the sustainability of forest biomass, as agreed in the recast of the Renewable Energy Directive; notes that this should be achieved by continuing the halted development of non-end-use-specific sustainability criteria by the Standing Forestry Committee and the Commission;
21. Recognises the role of forests as regards provision of recreational values and forest-related activities such as harvesting of non-wood forest products, e.g. mushrooms and soft fruit; takes note of the opportunities for enhancing biomass removals in terms of forest fire prevention via grazing, but also notes that wildlife grazing has a negative impact on seedlings and therefore points to the need for sustainable management of grazing fauna;

The future – the crucial role played by the post-2020 EU Forest Strategy and the European Green Deal in meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

22. Welcomes the recent publication of the Commission's European Green Deal, and looks forward to the upcoming post-2020 EU Forest Strategy, which should be aligned with the European Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy; furthermore considers that stepping up the circular bio-economy is an essential approach to achieving a low-carbon society in the implementation of the Green Deal; points out the importance of further enhancing the potential of forests in order to reach the objectives of the European Green Deal, and of the development of the circular bio-economy while guaranteeing other ecosystem services including biodiversity;
23. Welcomes the Commission's 2020 Work Programme, and especially the acknowledgment of the new EU Forest Strategy's contribution to the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; stresses, in this regard, that in future, forests should not be considered as the only type of CO₂ sink as that would give other sectors less of an incentive to minimise their emissions; highlights, in addition, the need for concrete and effective actions in climate adaptation strategies and plans, incorporating the synergies between mitigation and adaptation, which will be crucial to lessening the detrimental impacts of climate change on disturbances such as forest fires and their negative effects on the rural economy, biodiversity and provision of ecosystems services; underlines the need for more resources and development of science-based fire management to tackle the effects of climate change in forests; notes that in order to preserve forests' biodiversity and functionality, together with the need for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and as also recognised in the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation, deadwood in the forest constitutes microhabitats on which numbers of species are dependent;
24. Reiterates that forests and the forest-based sector significantly contribute to the development of local, circular bio-based economies in the EU; emphasises the crucial role of forests, the forest-based sector and the bio-economy in achieving the goals of the European Green Deal and climate neutrality by 2050; stresses that in 2015 the bio-economy represented a market estimated to be worth over EUR 2,3 trillion, providing 20 million jobs and accounting for 8,2 % of total employment in the EU; notes that

every euro invested in bio-economy research and innovation under Horizon 2020 will generate about EUR 10 in added value; points out that achieving the EU's goals for environment, climate and biodiversity will never be possible without forests that are multifunctional, healthy and sustainably managed applying a long-term perspective, together with viable forest-based industries; stresses that under some circumstances there are trade-offs between protecting the climate and protecting biodiversity in the bio-economy sector and particularly in forestry, which plays a central role in the transition towards a climate-neutral economy; expresses its concern that this trade-off has not been sufficiently addressed in recent policy discussions; points out the need to develop a coherent approach to bring together biodiversity protection and climate protection in a thriving forest-based sector and bio-economy; stresses the importance of developing and ensuring a market-based bio-economy in the EU, e.g. by incentivising innovation and development of new bio-based products with a supply chain making effective use of the biomass materials; considers that the EU should encourage the use of timber, harvested wood products or forest biomass in order to stimulate sustainable production and jobs; calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage the return of materials of biological origin, including wood waste, to the value chain, by encouraging eco-design, further boosting recycling and promoting the use of secondary raw materials comprising wood for products before their potential incineration at the end of their life;

25. Stresses the need to give full and real political support to the forestry sector and stresses, in this regard, that an ambitious, independent and self-standing EU Forest Strategy is needed for the post-2020 period in parallel with other relevant sectoral strategies; notes that since agroforestry can have both agricultural and forestry characteristics, the EU Forest Strategy needs to be coordinated with the Farm to Fork strategy; calls for a new EU Forest Strategy that builds on the holistic approach to SFM, taking into account all of the economic, social and environmental aspects of the forest-based value chain, and ensuring the continuity of the multifunctional and multidimensional role played by forests; stresses that an EU Forest Strategy that is coordinated, balanced, coherent and better integrated with the relevant EU legislation related to forests, the forest-based sector, including the people who directly or indirectly work and live in the forest and the forestry sector, and the multiple services they provide, needs to be developed, given the growing number of national and EU policies directly or indirectly affecting forests and their management in the EU;
26. Calls on the Commission to make every effort to ensure, in the implementation of the Regional Development Fund, that, in particular, initiatives aimed at putting a stop to biodiversity loss in forests, promoting mixed and native species planting and improving forest management are fostered, and that projects are implemented and funding is targeted;
27. Takes the view that the EU Forest Strategy should act as a bridge between national forest and agroforest policies and EU objectives relating to forests and agroforests, recognising both the need to respect national competence and the need to contribute to wider EU objectives, while coherently addressing the specificities of both private and publicly owned forests; calls for action to ensure long-term stability and predictability for the forestry sector and the whole bio-economy;
28. Stresses the importance of evidence-based decision-making with regard to EU policies relating to forests and to the forest-based sector and its value chains; calls for

consistency of ambition of all forest-related aspects of the European Green Deal and the Biodiversity Strategy with the post-2020 EU Forest Strategy, particularly with a view to ensuring that SFM has a positive impact on society, including connectivity and representativeness of forest ecosystems and ensuring long-term and stable benefits for the climate and the environment, while also contributing to the achievement of the SDGs; highlights that any possible EU guidelines related to SFM should be developed in the framework of the post-2020 EU Forest Strategy;

29. Highlights the need to take into consideration the links between the forest-based sector and other sectors, such as agriculture, and their coordination within the circular bio-economy, as well as the importance of digitalisation and investing in education, research and innovation and biodiversity preservation, which can positively contribute to further solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation and job creation; notes that forests are an integral part of sustainable development;
30. Stresses the importance to rural society of agroforestry systems, which are very low-density and barely economically viable, taking into account that annual income is complemented by other activities, such as livestock farming, tourism and hunting, which need to receive enough financing to prevent desertification and overexploitation;
31. Stresses that due to climate change and the effects of human activity, natural disturbances such as fires, droughts, floods, storms, pest infestations, diseases and erosion are already occurring today and will occur more frequently and intensely in the future, causing damage to forests in the EU, and that this will call for risk and crisis management tailored to each scenario; emphasises, in this context, the need to develop a robust post-2020 EU Forest Strategy, as well as risk management measures, such as reinforcing the European disaster resilience and early warning tools, with a view to being better prepared and better preventing such events, increasing forests' resilience and making them more climate-resistant, for example by strengthening the implementation of sustainable and active forest management and through research and innovation, which will make it possible to optimise the adaptability of our forests; recalls that according to the European Environmental Agency the main sources of pressure on forests in the EU include expanding urban areas and climate change; stresses also the need to offer better support mechanisms as well as financial resources and instruments for forest owners to apply prevention measures as well as restoration of affected areas, such as reforestation of deteriorated land that is not suitable for agriculture, also having recourse to special disaster funds, including through extraordinary intervention, such as the European Union Solidarity Fund; calls for the need to ensure coherence between the EU Forest Strategy and the European Civil Protection Mechanism; calls on the Commission and the Member States to set up an emergency mechanism, and believes it is essential to include support for silvopasture (forest grazing) within the agroforestry measures and to encourage Member States to implement it in the next Rural Development (RD) programme; underlines the need for more resources and development of science-based fire management and risk-informed decision-making, taking into account the socio-economic, climate and environmental roots of forest fires; calls for the introduction of a response component for climate change-related common challenges;
32. Calls on the Member States to design initiatives for preserving and where necessary establishing high conservation value (HCV) forests, with the necessary mechanisms and instruments for incentivising and, where applicable, compensating forest owners, so that

knowledge and science can advance vis-à-vis these forests, alongside the preservation of natural habitats;

33. Recognises the role of biodiversity in ensuring that forest ecosystems remain healthy and resilient; highlights the importance of the Natura 2000 sites, which offer the possibility to provide society with multiple ecosystem services, including raw materials; notes, however, that technical advice and fresh sufficient financial resources are needed to manage such areas; stresses that economic losses caused by protection measures should be fairly compensated; highlights the importance of the pragmatic integration of nature conservation into SFM, without necessarily enlarging the protected areas and avoiding additional administrative and financial burdens; supports the establishment of networks created on the basis of Member States-driven initiatives to this end; calls on the state or regional actors to negotiate the repopulation of riverside forests, where relevant, with specialised stakeholders, with the aim of creating biodiverse habitats, after the creation of which ecological services, such as absorption of harmful substances which circulate through groundwaters, will be developed; stresses the results of the evaluation study of the impact of the CAP indicating where CAP instruments and measures have the potential to be more significant contributors to biodiversity goals, and encourages the exploration of ways to improve the existing tools; also encourages further research into the relationship between biodiversity and resilience;
34. Observes that nearly 25 % of the total area of forest in the EU belongs to the Natura 2000 network;
35. Notes that the negotiations conducted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and supported by the Food and Agriculture Organisation foundered on the issue of a legally binding, pan-European agreement on forests, given that the Russian Federation withdrew from the negotiating process; continues, however, to support robust instruments to boost SFM at pan-European and global level;
36. Highlights that a growing number of EU policies address forests from different directions; encourages the completion of the ongoing process established by the current EU Forest Strategy to develop a non-end-use-driven sustainability approach with the close involvement of the Standing Forestry Committee and the Member States, building on the two-step approach of the recast Renewable Energy Directive; believes that the two-step approach could be used in other policies aiming to ensure the sustainability criteria of forest biomass and the cross-sectorial coherence of EU policies and reward ecosystem-related achievements, in particular the socially significant climate-related achievements of forests; at the same time, acknowledges that forestry in the EU already operates to the highest sustainability standards; notes that the sustainability approach for forest biomass must take account of the need for competitiveness of wood as compared with other raw materials; highlights the importance and encourages the use of market-developed tools, such as the forest certification systems in place, as suitable means of proof to verify the sustainability of forest resources;
37. Stresses the crucial importance of forest and agroforestry measures under the CAP and other forestry measures, as well as ensuring fair and competitive market conditions within the EU, for the successful development of a sustainable circular bio-economy, while implementing the EU Forest Strategy; recalls the need for continuity and for explicit and improved forestry and agroforestry measures under the 2021-2027 CAP; points out that further cuts in the CAP budget would have a negative effect on

investment in SFM and on achieving EU forest sector objectives; considers that SFM should have a visible place in the new CAP strategic plans; emphasises the need for a reduction of administrative burdens in the EU forestry measures and in state aid generally, for example in order to boost woody vegetation promotion and preservation linked to landscape features and policies associated with Pillar I and II payments, and by allowing block exemptions making it possible to react promptly to challenges to forests; is worried at the same time that horizontal Rural Development Programme (RDP) measures such as ‘Young farmer’ do not include forestry activities, at least in some Member States;

38. Highlights the benefits of the association between grazing and forest management, namely fire risk decrease and reduced costs of forest maintenance; considers that research and knowledge transfer to practitioners in this regard are crucial; highlights the value of traditional extensive agroforestry systems and the ecosystem services they deliver; calls on the Commission to coordinate the EU Forest Strategy with the Farm to Fork Strategy so as to achieve these goals and to promote EU-wide specialised training programmes, in order to make farmers aware of the benefits and the practice of integrating woody vegetation with agriculture; takes note of the low uptake of the numerous measures within the 2014-2020 RD Regulation designed to support the deliberate integration of woody vegetation with farming; recognizes the capacity of agroforestry to boost overall biomass productivity in specific areas, and underlines that mixed ecosystems produce more biomass and absorb more atmospheric carbon;
39. Stresses that the Union should allocate sufficient funding to measures for the forest-based sector, corresponding to the new expectations of that sector, including investment in the development of forest areas and in improving the viability of forests, maintaining networks of forest roads, forestry technology, innovation, and processing and taking into use forestry products;
40. Calls on the Member States to align their various strategies and plans for forestry management so that the respective targets can be followed and corrected accordingly in due course, instead of creating administrative mosaics which then threaten achieving the goals set in their strategic documents;
41. Regrets the omission in the CAP proposal for the 2021-2027 programming period regarding agroforestry; considers it fundamental that the next CAP regulation should recognise the benefits of agroforestry and continue promoting and supporting the establishment, regeneration, renovation and maintenance of agroforestry systems; calls on the Commission to promote the uptake of agroforestry support measures by Member States in their Strategic Plans;
42. Welcomes the initiative announced by the Commission on the ‘Farm Carbon Forest’, aiming to reward farmers who commit themselves in projects intended to reduce CO₂ emissions or to increase CO₂ storage in order to contribute to the objective of ‘zero carbon’ in 2050, in the context of the new Green Deal;
43. Underlines the essential role of high-level research and innovation in fostering the contribution of forests, agroforestry and the forest-based sector to overcoming the challenges of our time; stresses the importance of the EU’s post-2020 research and innovation programmes, recognises the role of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research, and notes that research and technology have come a long way since the EU

Forest Strategy was introduced in 2013; stresses the importance of encouraging further research into, inter alia, forest ecosystems, biodiversity, sustainable substitution of fossil-based raw materials and energies, carbon storage, wood-based products and sustainable forest management practices; calls for the continued funding of research into soils and their role in forests' climate change resilience and adaptation, biodiversity protection and enhancement, as well as the provision of other ecosystem services and substitution effects, and for gathering data on innovative methods of protecting and building resilience of forests; notes with concern that the data on primary forests remain incomplete; stresses that more research and funding would make a positive contribution to climate change mitigation, safeguarding forest ecosystems and boosting biodiversity, sustainable economic growth and employment, especially in rural areas; takes note of the Commission's recommendation that a strong capitalisation of innovation along the value chain would help to support the forest-based sector's competitiveness; welcomes in this regard the EIB's new climate ambition to fund projects that can boost opportunities for the forest-based sector, which plays an important role in the substitution of fossil-based materials and energies; commends the forest-related research and innovation already undertaken, especially under the Horizon 2020 and LIFE+ programmes; applauds those cases where the results contribute to the development of the sustainable bio-economy, seeking a balance between different aspects of SFM and underlining the multifunctional role of forests; calls on the Commission to invest in, and where necessary, intensify research on finding a solution to the spread of pests and diseases in forests;

44. Calls on the Commission to take initiatives, in concert with manufacturers of forestry machinery, to improve the environmental design of that machinery in order to reconcile a high level of protection for workers with minimum impact on the soil and water in forests;
45. Is concerned that the total surface area of forest has greatly diminished globally since the 1990s; highlights the fact that global deforestation and forest degradation are serious problems; emphasises that the EU Forest Strategy should exert an influence in the global political context and include the EU's external objectives and action on promoting SFM worldwide, both bilaterally and through multilateral forest-related processes, placing the emphasis on measures to stop deforestation worldwide including supporting legal, sustainable and deforestation-free production and supply chains which do not result in human rights violations, and to ensure the sustainable management of forest resources; points out that policy initiatives should be developed to tackle issues outside the EU, with a focus on the tropics, while taking into account the different degrees of ambition as regards to environmental policy in different tropical countries, and the drivers of unsustainable practices in forests from outside the sector; stresses the need to implement traceability measures for imports and encourages the Commission and the Member States to foster cooperation with third countries so as to consolidate higher standards of sustainability; stresses the need to foster the implementation of the EU Timber Regulation and the FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) action plan in order to allow better prevention of the entry of illegally-felled or sourced wood, which constitutes unfair competition for the European forestry sector and on the EU market; reiterates the need for certification systems and for the inclusion of specific provisions of SFM in trade agreements; calls for a coherent and systematic interpretation of the EUTR due diligence system;
46. Stresses the importance of education and a skilled, well-trained workforce when it

comes to the successful implementation of sustainable forest management in practice; calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue to implement measures and to use existing European instruments such as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European training programmes (ET2020) to support generation renewal and to compensate for the skilled workforce shortage in the sector;

47. Calls for the importing of illegally acquired timber to be included in trade agreements, with sanctions to be imposed in the event of infringements;
48. Calls on the Member States and the wood industry to make substantial contributions to ensure that as many areas are reforested as are deforested;
49. Stresses the need to further develop the EU-wide Forest Information System for Europe (FISE), taking into account existing systems, under the shared responsibility of all the relevant Commission Directorates-General working on different topics covered by FISE; believes that the coordination of this instrument should be undertaken by the EU Forest Strategy; stresses the importance of providing real-time, comparative, science-based and balanced information on European forest resources while monitoring whether forests and natural reserves are well managed and preserved if required, and while aiming at forecasting the impact of natural disturbances resulting from climate change and their consequences, with environmental and socio-economic indicators for the development of any forest-related EU policy; notes that national forest inventories represent a comprehensive monitoring tool for assessing forestry stocks and take into account regional considerations; calls for the EU to create a monitoring network for European forests to collect information at local level, linked to Copernicus earth observation programmes;
50. Welcomes the trend toward digitalisation in the sector and calls on the Commission to consider the implementation of an EU-wide digital wood-traceability mechanism for data gathering, consistent transparency, ensuring a level playing field, and reducing uncompetitive behaviour and deliberate wrongful action in the wood trade, within and outside the EU, through a verification system; further takes the view that such a verification system would improve compliance, limiting and combating financial fraud, while hampering cartel practices and dismantling illegal logging logistical operations and movements; further encourages exchanges of good practices with Member States which have already implemented such reforms at national level;
51. Underlines that the Member States have competence and a central role in the preparation and implementation of the post-2020 EU Forest Strategy; calls on the Commission's Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) to support Member States in this task; stresses the importance of the exchange of information and the parallel involvement of relevant stakeholders, such as forest owners and managers, in the Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry and Cork, and of maintaining its regular meetings and increasing coordination and synergies with the SFC; urges the Commission to involve Parliament in the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy at least on an annual basis; calls for the strengthening of the role of the SFC in order to ensure coordination among relevant stakeholders and policies at EU level; in addition, stresses that local and regional authorities have a key role to play in strengthening the sustainable use of forests and, in particular, the rural economy; highlights the importance of strengthened

cooperation between Member States in order to enhance the benefits of the new EU Forest Strategy; furthermore, calls on the Commission and its Directorates-General with forest-related competences to work strategically to ensure coherence in any forestry-related work and enhance the sustainable management of forests;

52. Urges the Member States to prioritise continuing high-quality vocational training in eco-construction and timber-related trades, and to provide the necessary public expenditure and investment in the field in order to anticipate the future needs of the EU's timber industry;
53. Recalls the pledge of the Commission concerning zero tolerance of non-compliance; stresses that a number of infringement cases currently open against Member States address irreplaceable values of European forest ecosystems, and urges the Commission to swiftly act in these cases;
54. Urges the Commission, in coordination with the Member States' labour inspection services, to verify that the machinery placed on the market and used by the timber industry complies with Directive 2006/42/EC on machinery and that it is equipped with a sawdust extraction and collection system;
55. Is convinced that the EU Forest Strategy should promote and support the sharing of best practices as regards the implementation of SFM, vocational training for forest workers and managers, results in the forest sector and improved cooperation among Member States regarding cross-border actions and information sharing, in order to ensure the growth of healthy European forests; furthermore, stresses the need for improved communication regarding the importance of sustainable management of forest areas, together with the possibility of extending, implementing and coordinating information campaigns on the multifunctional nature of forests and the many economic, social and environmental benefits provided by forest management at all relevant levels of the EU, in order to make all citizens aware of the richness of this heritage and of the need to manage, maintain and sustainably use our resources to avoid any conflicts in society;
56. Encourages the Member States to urge their respective forestry stakeholders to reach out to a broader segment of the population through educational tools and programmes, both for students and for people of other age groups, stressing the importance of forests both for human-led activities and for preserving biodiversity and varied ecosystems;
57. Notes that digitalisation and sustainable technologies play a key role in providing added value in the further development of the forest-based sector; calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage knowledge and technology transfer and sharing of best practices, on, for example, sustainable and active forest management;

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58. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.