



European Network of Forested Regions Regions' views on EU's Nature restoration law

Established in 2012, ERIAFF is an informal network of regions that seeks to promote collaborations for the development of the interregional dimension of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI).

The European Network of Forested Regions is the ERIAFF thematic group that brings together regions and forestry operators committed to promoting both the innovation in forest-based sectors and the development of forest policies at European and regional levels. It is also a platform to provide information and coordinate the feedback to upcoming EU initiatives relevant for regions interested in the forest sector.

Despite forestry policy not exactly being within the jurisdiction of the European Union, in recent years the EU has undertaken numerous policy initiatives which have had an impact on national forestry policy in the countries where forestry is practiced, namely the Fit for 55 climate package, the EU Framework for Forest Monitoring and Strategic Plans, and the Nature Restoration law. These initiatives have caused concern among forestry operators within the regions and between the EU Member States that practise forestry, as the initiatives mainly concentrate on conservation and biodiversity perspectives and have not adequately considered the social, economic, and cultural impact of forestry.

However, forests and forest use have a significant impact, especially in sparsely populated regions where forests and forestry are key sources of livelihood. In these uncertain times brought about by war and energy crisis, making forestry more difficult affects already vulnerable communities.

Therefore, the European Network of Forested Regions wants to emphasize the following views:

- The European Network of Forested Regions highlights the need to balance the environmental, economic, social, and cultural sustainability of areas under restoration. The sustainable economic functioning of ecosystems must continue to be enabled while supporting biodiversity and environmental health.
- The European Network of Forested Regions points out that sustainable forest management and the promotion of biodiversity are not necessarily contradictory to one another. Carbon-wise forest management and farming techniques must continue to be developed also in the future. Thus, restoration measures should be based on the creative application on a case-by-case basis and using local and regional knowledge.
- The European Network of Forested Regions is concerned about the impact of the restoration measures on private forest owners and therefore welcomes the Commission's proposal to enhance the ecosystem services, including incentives and subsidies. Private forest owners derive their livelihoods from the natural environment under restoration measures, so additional costs and administrative burdens arising from restoration measures should be avoided or come with substantial monetary compensation. Furthermore, restoration must not lead to a situation where forest owners can no longer cultivate their forests economically.

Regions' positioning on the EU's Nature restoration law

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- The European Network of Forested Regions further stresses to consider the impact of the energy and food crises caused by the war in Ukraine, global economic instability and extreme natural conditions when deciding on the timing and flexibility of restoration measures. The right scale should also be recognised: particular attention should be placed on European regions at risk of deforestation, forest fires and desertification.
- The European Network of Forested Regions calls to utilize local knowledge while identifying and determining ecosystems with good condition. Ecosystems are diverse depending on different regions, so the standards for the six indicators of forest biodiversity mentioned in the proposal should be flexibly applicable to natural local conditions. It is important to target the restoration measures to the right places where threatened habitats occur.

On behalf of:

1. *Region of Castilla y Leon, Spain*
2. *Region of Basque Country, Spain*
3. *Region of Central-Ostrobothnia, Finland*
4. *Kainuu Region, Finland*
5. *Region of Thüringen, Germany*
6. *The regional council of Lapland, Finland*
7. *Region of North Karelia, Finland*
8. *North Savo, Finland*
9. *South Savo, Finland*
10. *Oulu Region, Finland*
11. *Region of South Karelia, Finland*
12. *Region of Catalonia, Spain*
13. *Northern Sweden European Forum*
14. *Region of Western Macedonia*
15. *Småland Blekinge Halland South Sweden*


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