

Call for evidence for a European climate resilience and risk management initiative

CEPF Feedback

In the midst of the worst wildfire season ever recorded in the EU, it is undeniable that the impacts of climate change have started to unfold and continued investments in resilience prevention and preparedness are needed more than ever.

Beyond wildfires, the rate, magnitude, frequency, and geographical location of climate-induced natural disasters happening in the EU is vastly expanding. The damages and human fatalities resulting is dramatically increasing. Forests and the forest-based value chains, as all other ecosystems and sectors, are under increasing pressures whether by e.g. prolonged drought or floods, windstorms, or secondary disturbances such as pest and diseases outbreaks.

Noting that the scope of the future initiatives will span on many varied sectors and their respective priorities, the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF) welcomes an improved EU approach to climate resilience and preparedness comprising of both legislative and non-legislative actions.

Resilient ecosystems are a prerequisite of any goals or objectives. Putting this long-term view as the main and first building block is essential. For this, all relevant aspects must be reviewed and considered.

The changes faced by forest ecosystems are far beyond any precedent and too rapid for natural adaptation. Support and investments in locally suited active forest management are required. Increasing adaptative capacity and resilience of managed and unmanaged forest, as well as other wooded land, is a must for climate proofing them and for contributing to disaster prevention. E.g. lack of management and land abandonment have been the biggest aggravating factor in the Iberian Peninsula wildfires of this fire season.

Moreover, prevention of disasters, and adequate preparedness and emergency response, will decrease the risk of secondary disturbances and hence reduce further ecosystem deteriorations.

Investments and support in concrete actions should be preferred over more administrative actions such as additional risk assessments or big scale monitoring framework. Especially on large scale monitoring, the level of confidence and relative emergency could misdirect actions.

Concrete and appropriate funding sources and opportunities will need to be provided in an unbureaucratic way, e.g. within the next CAP. Other financial instruments to manage exposure to risk in forests should be explored and assessed, such as more concrete opportunities and utilization of forest insurances in the EU, including of greater areas, so as to decrease exposure to risk in risk prone areas.

Actively managed resilient forests that are well-adapted can provide for a virtuous circle for climate change mitigation and resource security in the EU. Revised climate policies and especially the LULUCF Regulation should promote, instead of a continuous emphasis on static sink increasement, a holistic approach integrating the forest-based value chain in climate policy via the substitution effect of its products via biogenic carbon. A thriving local bioeconomy can provide the incentive and finance for active management toward resilient and well adapted forests, and those forests can deliver the natural resources for the forest and forest-based sector to provide major climate mitigation benefits contribution



to carbon storage, sequestration, and substitution. Cooperation of stakeholders across the value chain will further support this.

To support active forest management, local expertise is sometimes insufficient in the face of the level of change of climatic conditions. For this, use of existing knowledge exchange mechanisms such as the pan-European forest risk facility ([FoRISK](https://forisk.org/)¹) and the [Climate-ADAPT](https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en)² platform should be promoted and reinforced.

Furthermore, legal framework and policies may hamper possibilities of adaptation of sustainable forest management (SFM) practices to changing climatic conditions (e.g. limitations of proactive management or transfer of forest reproductive materials). Revision of legal framework and policies for them to support adaptation should also consider protected and protective areas.

Consideration for the adequate levels of action will also be crucial. Given the different risks and scale faced across the EU, there will be a need to work at different scales.

¹ pan-European forest risk facility (FoRISK) - <https://forisk.org/>

² European Climate Adaptation Platform Climate-ADAPT - <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en>