



9 February 2006

## **RESEARCH IN THE FOREST-BASED SECTOR TO PROMOTE COMPETITIVENESS AND WELLBEING**

In the future research in the forest-based sector will focus strongly on areas in which the sector can improve competitiveness and increase wellbeing. Developing innovative products for changing markets and to meet consumers' needs is one such area. The goal is to increase sales in new business areas and to strengthen positions on present markets with new products and processes.

"A good example is smart papers and packaging, which combine fibre raw material and information technology. A chip with different properties or messages can be added to paper or packaging. The possibilities for smart packaging applications are enormous. A package can signal when a product has gone bad, for example, or its progress can be monitored throughout the delivery chain," says Senior Vice President R&D Lars Gädda of M-real, the chairman of Finland's National Support Group on the Forest-Based Sector Technology Platform, who spoke at a seminar on innovations in the forest-based sector in Helsinki on 9 February 2006.

"Developing smart and effective production processes is another clear focus. This includes lowering energy consumption in processes," Mr Gädda adds.

Improving the availability of forest biomass for conversion into products and energy is an important development area. Attention will be focused on the use of renewable resources and bioenergy. Mr Gädda, who was strongly involved in setting priorities, notes that the forest-based sector is in an excellent position to become a strategically important branch for Europe. Wood is already an important raw material from a climate and energy policy perspective. Products are made from a renewable raw material and can be recycled and in the end used to produce bioenergy.

Meeting challenges related to the multiple use of forests and sustainable management as well as the sector's social acceptance are also focuses. Developing wood-based products and services, improving possibilities to use wood and preserving forest resources over the long term are important themes.

The European Forest-Based Sector Technology Platform's Strategic Research Agenda was presented at the seminar. This agenda was completed after a year's work. Thousands of experts from the forest industries, research institutes,

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universities and branch organizations participated in preparing the agenda. The vision for 2030 calls for the European forest-based sector to be a technology leader that plays a key role in promoting sustainability and fostering the extended use of renewable forest resources.

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*European Technology Platforms are a new form of cooperation designed to coordinate research and financing in order to strengthen European competitiveness.*

*The Forest-Based Sector Technology Platform brings together key actors in the sector with the aim of spurring joint research efforts in Europe. It provides the forest cluster with the possibility to focus and coordinate resources for research in a way that supports companies' business objectives and creates a good foundation for improving competitiveness through R&D. The Strategic Research Agenda maps out priorities and areas in which research and development need to focus in future.*