



# Newsletter

**Finnish Forest Industries Federation**

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**All working together on the use and management of Finnish forests**

Paper and wood

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## **All working together on the use and management of Finnish forests**

**Democracy works in Finnish forestry in a way that other countries take as an example. The review of the National Forest Programme covering the period up to 2015 is now under way. This huge task is done together with various stakeholders: forest owners, forest industry companies, workers in the sector, seven different ministries, forest research institutes, Metsähallitus (the body that manages the State's forests), hunters, the scout movement and nature conservation organisations. The same stakeholders likewise have inputs into the planning, implementation and monitoring of the Regional Forest Programmes.**

**After the National Forest Council has completed processing the National Forest Programme, it will be submitted to the Government and will most probably become the foundation of the forest programme of the new Government in spring 2007.**

National plans for the management of Finnish forests have been made since the 1960s. Agreement on forest policy and strategy as well as on the use and management of forests is reached through a process in which all involved stakeholders are working for. The needs and aims of the various stakeholders are being taken into consideration. In addition to Finnish citizens, also representatives of nature conservation organisations have an input into the drafting and implementation of national and regional forest programmes.

### **National Forest Council is an important discussion forum**

Decisions concerning the economic, ecological and social uses of forests are made by the Government of Finland after these matters have been discussed by the National Forest Council, the members of which represent various stakeholders. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has the principal responsibility for the programme. The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry chairs meetings of the Council. Planning and implementation of regional forest programmes is entrusted to 13 Forest Centres, which are subordinate to the Ministry and are assisted in their work by Regional Forest Councils.

The National Forest Council meets four times a year. It is first and foremost a discussion forum. Another function of the Council is to serve as a bridge between the public and private sectors. It also monitors and directs implementation of the National Forest Plan and promotes cooperation in forest-related matters between various sectors of administration.

Both the national and the regional programmes are constantly being developed in accordance with new research results as well as with the demands of the time. The regional programmes help make it easier to review and revise the national one, because thanks to them up-to-date information applicable to the whole country is constantly available. Correspondingly, the national policy determined by the Government is implemented through the regional programmes.



### **In constant flux**

Secretary General **Marja Kokkonen** of the National Forest Council says the national and regional programmes are in a state of constant flux. They become out of date sooner than was the case in the past and at the same time the need for more comprehensive and more detailed programmes is growing.

"The changes taking place in our operating environment influence the use of forests. Recently, aspects relating to the environment and globalisation have taken a significant role."

### **Regional forest programmes have a strong local role**

The regional forest programmes are drafted and implemented in accordance with the Forest Act. They not only guide the use and protection of forests in their area, but also have fairly detailed influences on all of the forest sector's activities.

"Economic and recreational uses of forests and the way in which they are managed, safeguarding employment in the sector and the conditions vital for industrial and business activities as well as ways of increasing ecological and social sustainability are taken into the consideration in the same way as with the national programme," says Ms. Kokkonen.

Networking and cooperation with local organisations and authorities have a strong role when the regional forest programmes are drafted. Also residents have their say at the consultation forums that are arranged for them during the planning process. Discussions in newspapers and via the Internet provide citizens with further channels through which they can get their views across.

"Because people enjoy a statutory 'Everyman's right' to pick wild mushrooms and berries as well as to walk and hike on anyone's land without permission, forest-related matters naturally interest Finns. However, the land owner's permission is needed to hunt, light an open fire or drive a motor vehicle in a forest," Ms. Kokkonen reminds us. "The fact that the economic prosperity of the Finns has traditionally been based on forests also sustains a wide-ranging discussion."

### **Positive spirit of cooperation**

Several hundred persons participate in the work of the national and regional forest councils and their working groups. The implementation of the programmes, as well as reaching the targets set to programmes is followed constantly.

"Impact targets have been set for the programmes and often local targets as well. For example, development of biodiversity in the forests as well as trends in recreational use, utilisation of domestic wood and the development of employment are all things for monitoring in all programmes," explains Ms. Kokkonen.

A topical example of implementation of the National Forest Programme is the Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland (METSO). A variety of conservation means based on the voluntary participation of forest owners are currently in



progress mainly in privately-owned forests in the region. It has been found that the fastest way to achieve progress in forest protection is through voluntary measures.

"The preconditions for getting pilot programmes under way in various parts of Finland have been good," says Ms. Kokkonen. "A positive spirit of cooperation that will help us in our search for solutions is alive and well in the regions. The system also makes it easy to transfer experiences that we have found useful in one place to other parts of the country as well."

### **Report of participatory processes in Finnish forest conservation**

The report was published in January 2006 and it examines four important processes dealing with forest use and conservation that were under way in Finland in 2005.

The report describes the different phases of the processes and the participation of the stakeholders. The examined processes are:

- 1) the steering and planning system for state-owned forests,
- 2) the reconciliation of forestry and reindeer husbandry in northern Finnish Lapland,
- 3) the Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland (METSO) and
- 4) conservation of old-growth forests in northern Finland.

For more information on the report, please go to the address of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry <http://www.mmm.fi/tiedotteet2/tiedote.asp?nro=2046>  
Report: [Participatory processes in Finnish Forest Conservation](#)