Q&A: Per-Olof Wedin

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What products can be made with wood?

Wood is a great material for making products of various forms and aesthetics that are of high quality and resistant to damage. Nowadays, innovation and technology allow us to make almost anything out of wood. We all know that paper, panels and furniture are made from wood. But not everyone is aware that wood fibers can be used in many other products such as cosmetics, textiles, bio-plastics and even medicines. In the future, we will be able to make things from wood that are unimaginable today.

Why should we use wood?

Why not? It is a feedstock that we have in Europe and it would make us less dependent on imports. Wood from sustainably-managed forests is a renewable and environmentally-friendly material. Forests grow by consuming atmospheric carbon, while wood products store carbon and together with bioenergy are a substitute for non-renewable materials and fossil fuels. Using wood instead of other materials and fuels is very good for the climate and actually by using more wood we contribute to mitigating climate change, allowing us to develop a low-carbon economy.

> Together, EUSTAFOR member organizations employ about 100,000 people.

Are there enough trees to do all this?

European forests are constantly growing both in size and in the volume of wood they can make available for use. As foresters, it is our duty to carry out long-term management planning in order to ensure the production capacity and resilience of forest ecosystems as a whole, including many other forest ecosystem services such as regulating the water cycle and climate and providing biodiversity as well as cultural and landscape services and values. Constant innovations in sustainable forest management and wood mobilization will continue to ensure a sufficient wood supply to support the development of the bioeconomy in Europe.

What are the specific contributions of state forest managers?

European state forests belong to all citizens and it is our mission and duty to manage these incredible and diverse resources on their behalf. State Forest Management Organizations manage over 49 million hectares of land, which represents around 30 percent of EU forested land. We are committed to responsible forest management, which will fulfill the various needs of society at large. Employing approximately 100,000 people, EUSTAFOR members together provide about 120 million m^3 of wood to downstream value chains.

What challenges lay ahead for the forestry sector?

Moving towards a low-carbon economy, we need to shift from non-renewable to renewable materials and energy. Therefore it is important to allow for the mobilization of our forest resources. In this regard, forest owners and managers are key actors of the economic transition because they provide raw materials for the bio-based industries.

EU policy should support the use of wood and foster innovation in the forest-based sector while EU forest owners and managers need to make their expertise and knowledge available, so that the full potential of European forests can be effectively acknowledged and unlocked. In addition, the European bioeconomy should be based on domestic resources in order to decrease our dependence on large-scale imports of non-sustainable resources and goods.

Forests are at the core of the transition towards a low-carbon economy. Let's make them part of the solution!

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MANAGING STATE FORESTS RESPONSIBLY