

Introduction



Figure A: FOREST EUROPE Signatories

The *State of Europe's Forests 2011* report provides an overview of the status and trends of forests and sustainable forest management in Europe in the period 1990–2010. It is prepared for the FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe Oslo, Norway 14–16 June 2011, as a continuation of reporting on European forests for FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conferences.

This report was jointly prepared by the FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit Oslo, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the European Forest Institute (EFI) and with significant support from the governments of Finland, France, Norway and Switzerland.

The State of Europe's Forests 2011 report covers the 46 FOREST EUROPE signatory countries and the European Union (Figure A). In order to display regional differences, FOREST EUROPE countries are grouped into six country groups (Figure B). Major parts of Europe's forests are located in the Russian Federation, accounting for almost 80 percent of the region's total forest area. The Russian Federation is therefore presented as a separate country group.

The report describes in a highly structured and documented way the status and trends of Europe's forests, based on information supplied by governments and international data providers. The data presented has been provided by individual countries through joint FOREST EUROPE/UNECE/FAO enquiries on quantitative and

qualitative indicators and by international data providers, namely the International Co-operative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests (ICP-Forests), the EC-Joint Research Centre, Bioversity International, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT) and the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section. Data quality and completeness has improved since earlier reports, but vary significantly, depending on the specific indicator and countries' conditions. Due to changes in data collection and reporting methodology, data and analysis are not always comparable to previous reports.

The State of Europe's Forests 2011 report consists of three substantive parts. The first two parts are structured according to the pan-European criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, which consist of quantitative and qualitative indicators covering all central aspects of sustainable forest management. Part I reflects changes in quantitative indicators over time for the six criteria, i.e. forest resources and their contribution to global carbon cycles; forest ecosystem health and vitality; productive functions of forests; biological diversity in forest ecosystems; protective functions in forest management; and other socio-economic functions and conditions. Part II focuses on qualitative indicators and provides an overview of the policies, institutions and policy instruments for sustainable forest management in the FOREST EUROPE signatory countries and the European Union and presents changes by policy area.

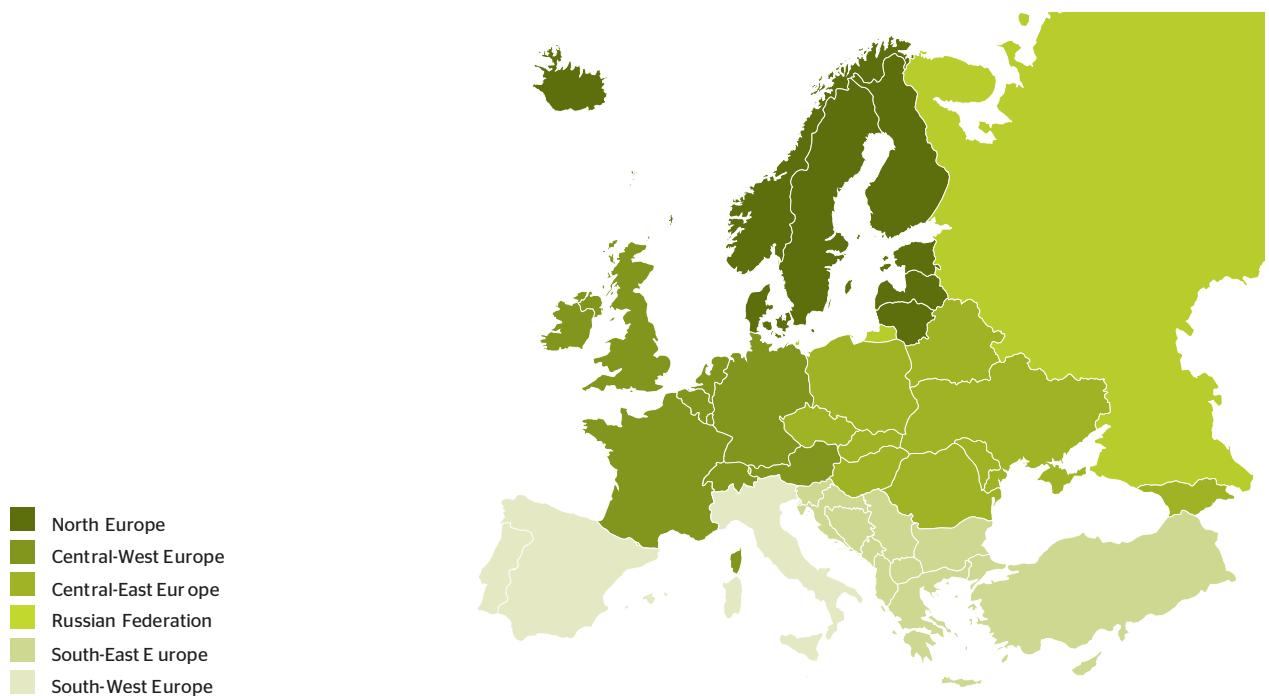


Figure B: FOREST EUROPE Country Groups

The first two parts, focusing on information on quantitative and qualitative indicators for sustainable forest management, do not specifically address the overall extent to which forest management in Europe is sustainable. Part III of the report, sustainability assessment and policy challenges, is an attempt to address and evaluate the sustainability of forest management.

It offers an experimental method to assess sustainability of forest management in Europe, providing preliminary results by country groups. The intention is that this approach will stimulate widespread discussion on the nature of sustainable forest management; how to assess it and facilitate further improvements. Furthermore, part III presents four future major challenges and opportunities for the forest sector, all highly complex: Contributions by forests and forest management to climate change mitigation, wood for energy, protection of biodiversity and in amplifying a low-carbon, green economy. For each of these areas, part III synthesizes the relevant data which has been made available by the State of Europe's Forests 2011 report and briefly summarizes the main challenges facing policy-makers.

The overall aim of this report is to provide policy and decision-makers and stakeholders with up-to-date information on the status and trends in forests and sustainable forest management in Europe. As it presents the most recent, objective and harmonized data on sustainable forest management in Europe, it can also provide a solid basis for future political commitments on forests and forest related issues.

The Joint Pan-European Definition of Sustainable Forest Management

Sustainable management means the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way and at a rate that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfill, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems.

Additional material:

Supplementary material and source data to the State of Europe's Forests 2011 report are accessible from www.foresteurope.org and www.unece.org/timber (<http://live.unece.org/forest/fr/outputs/soef2011.html>).