

Rede MinDir Clemens Neumann

- Anlass:** UNOG Library Talk Forests: the Roots of Sustainability
- Termin:** 21 March 2013
- Ort:** Genf, Palais de Nations, Room B-135, 1st floor
- Thema:** Towards a green economy: putting sustainable forest management in context
- Teilnehmer / Teilnehmerinnen:** Botschafter Fitschen, Sven Alkalaj (ECE Executive Secretary) plus staff (Paola Deda und Team), Fachgäste aus Genf, Medienvertreter, auf dem Podium s. Rednerliste.
- Rededauer:** 10 Minuten

Clemens Neumann
Towards a green economy: putting
sustainable forest management in context

Salutation!

I would like to thank the organizers for inviting Germany to this event.

It is a great pleasure for me to speak to you today.

In Germany, the UN General Assembly's decision to declare the 21st of March as the International Day of Forests was welcomed with considerable enthusiasm since it raises the profile of this day - formerly known as the "Day of Forestry" organized by FAO.

In my country, this day attracts a great deal of attention; there are numerous events being organized under the umbrella of this date.

At the same time, this first International Day of Forests falls on the 300th anniversary of the first mentioning of the term "sustainability".

It was in the year 1713 that Hans Carl von Carlowitz from Saxony came up with his concept of sustainable forest management. It was the spirit surrounding this concept which gave rise to modern forestry in Germany. Germany is therefore often referred to as being the cradle of sustainability.

Von Carlowitz was one of the "early movers" at that time. He began to realize what for most foresters is common knowledge base today: that timber harvesting must be linked to increment and that the forest is more than just a wood supplier. It is a multi-talent – a natural habitat and water filter, a workplace and playground and ultimately our number one climate protector.

Over the course of history, forests have been faced with multiple influences with both negative and positive developments:

They have been changed and in some cases degraded by massive interventions not only for raw materials and energy supply, but also for livestock fodder and litter or tanning.

Additionally, large areas of forest suffered during and after the two World Wars. Nowadays, forests are facing threats from emissions and climate change.

At the same time, other forests were tended and protected for hunting, for recreation, for their beauty, and later on for their economic value. And new forests were established with great effort.

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In Germany, talking about forests and forest management means to a great extent talking about someone else's property. Millions of people in rural areas are deeply engaged in forestry by virtual ownership, often following decades or even centuries of family tradition.

The first nature conservation area in Germany was established in 1836. Today, biodiversity issues take precedence over forestry operations in approximately 25% of the forest area. 17% of the forest area is covered by the "Natura 2000" EU protected area network. Over the total forested area, the incidence of rare flora, fauna and habitats is fostered by targeted measures.

In spite of the multiple demands placed on forests, Germany holds a large total growing stock of timber despite generally being a country poor in raw materials.

The forest-based sector doesn't lag far behind other major economic sectors in terms of turnover and jobs. More specifically, forest-based industries play a major role in rural employment structures because the sector is mainly composed of small and medium-sized enterprises located outside urban centers.

What are the new developments?

One of the biggest future challenges is the dichotomy between an increasing demand for timber on the one hand and the effective conservation of forests and nature on the other:

On the one hand, Germany will continue to require a productive forestry sector as well as an energy-efficient wood-based industry .

On the other hand, the demands for additional set-aside or wilderness areas in the historically cultivated landscapes of Germany are constantly increasing.

In the light of

- the EU's ambitious climate and energy targets,
- the German government's recent decisions to end nuclear power generation by 2022 and

- to reinforce renewable and low emission materials and energies,

timber is enjoying an unexpected revival as a valuable domestic source of construction material and bioenergy fuel.

The German Energy Concept reflects the political determination to restructure the energy sector towards a bio-economy.

The targets are:

By 2020: 18% share of primary energy demand and 30% share of electricity to be provided by renewable energy.

By 2050:

- 60% share of renewable energy, of which 30% is from biomass.
- 50% reduction in overall energy use.
- 80 – 95 % reduction of GHG emissions.

A recent study regarding the EU's future wood potential and future demand scenarios identified a possible shortfall of up to 315 million cubic meters per year in 2030 if wood mobilization is not able to keep pace.

Against this background, there are ongoing discussions and scientific debate about the best possible strategy for facing the challenges of the future and for balancing the different needs within society.

What are the answers?

Two years ago, Germany launched its National Forestry Strategy 2020. The main features of this new strategy are:

- striking a new balance between the demands upon and the capability of forests,
- retaining the multi-functionality objective for German forests, covering their value for the economy, for the environment and for recreation,
- but also maintaining and enhancing the conditions for non-state forest owners to manage forests profitably.

In terms of forest utilization, the aim is to strike a balance between carbon sequestration and a more intensive use of timber and bioenergy that takes the substitution effect into account. This goes hand in hand with raising the efficiency of the whole process chain along the cascades of different product levels while also increasing the share of long-life wood products.

But we also need to look at the international level.

Today, our countries are intensively linked through:

- global trade patterns and close economic relations,
- shared concerns about increasing environmental threats to natural resources and biological diversity,
- shared development goals.

In the light of this, our shared forest-related objectives should be:

- that the multiple contributions of forests to poverty alleviation, food security and rural livelihoods as well as to environmental conservation, climate protection and a green economy are more widely acknowledged at all levels,
- that forests are safeguarded and fostered through multi-functional, sustainable forest management which takes all the existing and potential products and services provided by forests into account,
- that international cooperation to achieve these objectives is enhanced.

Germany therefore promotes initiatives towards setting up international law on sustainable forest management. We welcome the good progress in the negotiations on a European Forest Convention. In our view, the European initiative also has the potential to motivate negotiations at the global level.

In the light of this, Germany is ready to support the implementation of the Forest Convention in Europe by offering the necessary arrangements for hosting the Secretariat.

Ladies and gentleman,

300 years after von Carlowitz developed his striking idea of sustainable forest management from a purely local perspective, it is now time to take an equally important step at the international level.

Forests are a real treasure. We need to scale up our efforts across national borders in order to maintain them as important environmental assets and as a key factor on the road towards a green economy.

Thank you for your attention!