

# EVALUATION OF FINLAND'S NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMME 2010

## INTRODUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### **Introduction**

Finland's National Forest Programme 2010 came out in 1999. The programme is implemented as a learning process, which is oriented and revised according to changes in the operating environment and new information. Thus the Implementation and Follow-up Plan of the programme (National Forest Programme 2010. Implementation and...2000) included a decision on a mid-term evaluation of the programme after a few years of implementation. The Department of Forestry of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry commissioned the Diskurssi Oy to conduct the evaluation as an independent party based on an invitation to tender.

The primary objective in the evaluation is to identify the most important challenges in the development of the programme and produce appropriate proposals to respond to these in order to support the implementation process as well as to revise the contents of the programme. Another objective is to compile and analyse the discussion on the Finnish forest policy in general and the National Forest Programme in particular as well as support the commitment of the different parties to the programme process and its implementation.

A development-oriented and learning approach which starts from the operators in the sector was adopted for the evaluation.

Development. A strong development orientation was chosen for the following reasons:

- The evaluation resources serve the development of the implementation process and content of the programme directly and as efficiently as possible.
- Orientation to development supports the commitment of different parties to the implementation: evaluation identifies the issues which call for improvement and in many cases also suggests possible means to do this.

Operators. The evaluation is strongly based on the views of the actors in the forest sector. The operators are harnessed to evaluate the objectives and means of the forest programme from their own perspective – as well as to consider challenges and proposals for the development of the programme. The strong role of the operators was chosen for the following reasons:

- Meaningful evaluation of a highly varied process such as the National Forest Programme calls for various kinds of expertise and skills.
- Broadly-based evaluation from the operators' perspective makes it possible to formulate a holistic picture of the challenges of the programme – as well as the views and differences in the views among the different parties.
- Participation in the evaluation gives the different parties an opportunity to learn from the process, i.e. obtain information on the problems and development issues as well as views of the other parties concerning these. At its best this kind of participation also promotes the commitment of the parties to the programme process and development work.

Learning. Valuation is constructed as a learning process, which makes it possible to bring forward new, even surprising themes, to test information, views and ideas, as well as to elaborate the most

important themes and development proposals during the evaluation process. One basic reason for the learning approach is that in a development-oriented evaluation of a highly varied process such as the National Forest Programme it would not be possible to establish the main themes and challenges in advance.

## **Implementation**

Following the learning evaluation approach, the work was not restricted to pre-established lists of themes or criteria, but the topics evolved along with the evaluation process.

Most of the data consisted of the views of the main actors in the forest sector. A wide range of planners, decision-makers, financiers, implementers, researchers and interest groups were involved in the process.

The participation of the different actors in the evaluation was constructed as a kind of delfi process: the same actors took part in the evaluation throughout the process, which made it possible for them to comment on and develop each other's views. Roughly, the interaction process proceeded as follows:

- Altogether 52 actors in the forest sector were interviewed in spring 2002, in most cases by a half-structured personal interview.
- A one-day workshop was held at the end of May, dealing with the most important development needs in the National Forest Programme based on a so-called "ignition paper" on certain main themes raised in the interviews.
- A number of opinions and proposals were sent by e-mail, and lots of discussions took place on the telephone.
- A draft evaluation report was compiled on the process so far to be commented on by the participants.

In addition to the interaction process among the actors in the forest sector, some written sources were also used: programme documents, current surveys and studies as well as the COST E19 "National Forest programmes in a European Context".

The Finnish evaluation was supported by a survey of the national forest programmes in other countries.

## **MAIN RESULTS**

### **General observations**

The National Forest Programme has been highly significant for the Finnish forestry both spiritually and in terms of concrete impacts. The programme has constituted a forum for cooperation, outlined the activities of the public sector and channelled more financing to the forest sector, as well as launched and supported development work in a number of important fields. The programme has managed to cross sectoral boundaries and to deal with "non-traditional" forest policy issues.

The harmonisation of the objectives and measures of the programme calls for further development. This concerns, in particular, the different uses of forests in relation to each other as well as to promoting the diversity of the forest nature. Work is still needed in taking all the dimensions of sustainability into account in all forest-related activities.

Forest-related activities should also be more closely linked to other activities of the society, i.e. forest issues should be incorporated into the regional development and forests should be considered as part of the other “ clusters”. The clarification of the distribution of labour between the administrative sectors and, in particular, bringing the activities to a more concrete, practical level should be continued.

Support policy is a central element in forestry, which has also given rise to a wide discussion, even conflicts. The main issues include: the use of support in general, allocation of support to different purposes, financial resources, linking support with goals, efficiency and impacts of support as well as competition procedures in support measures.

### **Use of forests**

The level of roundwood production set as the target in the National Forest Programme is considered quite appropriate, and the development objectives for energy use of wood and mechanical processing found strong support. The development of multiple use of forests, especially tourism and recreational use, should be concretised. The development of the use of wood for energy, mechanical wood processing and multiple use of forests should be more closely linked to regional development work.

### **Biodiversity and forest management**

Since the work of the so-called Metso Committee for the action programme aimed at securing forest biodiversity in southern Finland, western parts of the province of Oulu and south-western parts of the province of Lapland, many aspects of the environmental and biodiversity issues have been called to question. The most important topics are: conservation, allocation of funding between forestry and biodiversity, total impact of the felling of mature spruce stands and changes in the taxation, support for the building of new forest roads and possible errors and negative impacts of ditch cleaning and supplementary ditching. These questions must be addressed in a systematic way – and very likely new approaches and working methods will be needed.

The National Forest Programme outlines a wide range of forest management issues, and in most cases the presentation is considered quite appropriate.

### **National Forest Programme as a process**

The National Forest Programme was deliberately, and quite successfully, constructed as a broadly-based, learning strategy process. It was considered, however, that during the implementation the process had become increasingly “rigid”. It was suggested that dynamics and learning elements should be increased in the implementation, including innovation, active sounding of the future, study of alternative development paths as well as more active and diversified monitoring – all of these together with more active communication and deeper cooperation.

The Forum for Innovation envisaged in the National Forest Programme should be started. The development work relating to the programme should be improved: new development needs should be identified in a more systematic way, operators should be activated to think up new project ideas, the transmission of innovation to development projects should be promoted, research skills should be connected to development work, projects to be developed should be prioritised in a systematic

way, models of action developed in the projects should be tested in practice and the practical application of models which have proven feasible should be encouraged.

Many of the actors involved called for more systematic anticipation of the future and study of alternative development paths, in particular, the sounding of domestic and international trends and study of different scenarios. The participation of researchers in the programme process should be reinforced, research results should be utilised in a more systematic way and the survey of research needs and orientation of research according to these should be developed.

Impact assessment and follow-up produce vital basic data for the programme process. Both of these are central tools for taking into account the perspective of sustainable development. In the implementation phase especially the assessment of the impacts of individual implementation processes and development of the follow-up were considered important.

The impact assessment of the National Forest Programme should be developed and harmonised, for example, based on the experiences gained in the development work concerning the assessment of the impacts of the regional forest programmes. The follow-up system of the National Forest Programme should produce data on the realisation of the objectives and measures, impacts as well as changes in the operating environment. The follow-up systems of the National Forest Programme, regional forest programmes and elsewhere in the forest sector should be harmonised and the distribution of labour should be clarified.

Broadly-based cooperation was considered one of the core elements and a success factor of the National Forest Programme. One of the main challenges was to develop ways of dealing with conflicts.

The participation of the different administrative sectors in the practical implementation and financing of the programme should be reinforced. The National Forest Programme should be more strongly incorporated in the activities and strategy processes of other administrative sectors.

The distribution of labour between the Forest Committee and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, including their role in the coordination and administration, should be clarified. The National Forest Committee would probably be the most appropriate forum for discussion on the main outlines of the forest policy and possibly for making decisions on these.

The systematic management of information in support of the National Forest Programme – compilation, processing and utilisation of information – should be developed. Important information for the steering of the National Forest Programme is produced in the follow-up, impact assessment, anticipation of the future and study of alternative development paths as well as special studies and surveys – also in the context of the regional forest programme processes. A regular and analytical survey of the current situation to be developed based on the follow-up reports might be an appropriate way of compiling the highly diversified follow-up and other information needed in the management of the National Forest Programme.

### **Regionalisation of the National Forest Programme**

The future of the National Forest Programme depends a great deal on the success in the programme implementation on the regional level. Regional forest programmes should be more closely incorporated into the other regional development work, e.g. the regional development programmes.

Impacts on regional development should be assessed in connection with the other impact assessment.

The outlines for international issues are in general considered appropriate. The evaluation of international development trends and threats and their impacts on Finland should be developed.

## **MAIN CHALLENGES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- **Compilation and concretization of the development work in the multiple use of forests, mechanical processing and use of energy wood and linking this more closely to regional development.**
- **Improving the treatment of ecological conflicts.**
- **Holistic evaluation of the support measures for forestry as part of the steering of the forest policy: e.g. allocation of support, clarification of the objectives and assessing the impacts of support.**
- **Development and utilisation of innovation, development activities, future orientation and follow-up in the programme process.**
- **Clarification and reinforcing the steering and coordination of the National Forest Programme.**
- **Developing the activities of the regional forest programmes and regional forest committees as part of the regionalisation of the National Forest Programme.**