



FORESTS AND FORESTRY IN FINLAND

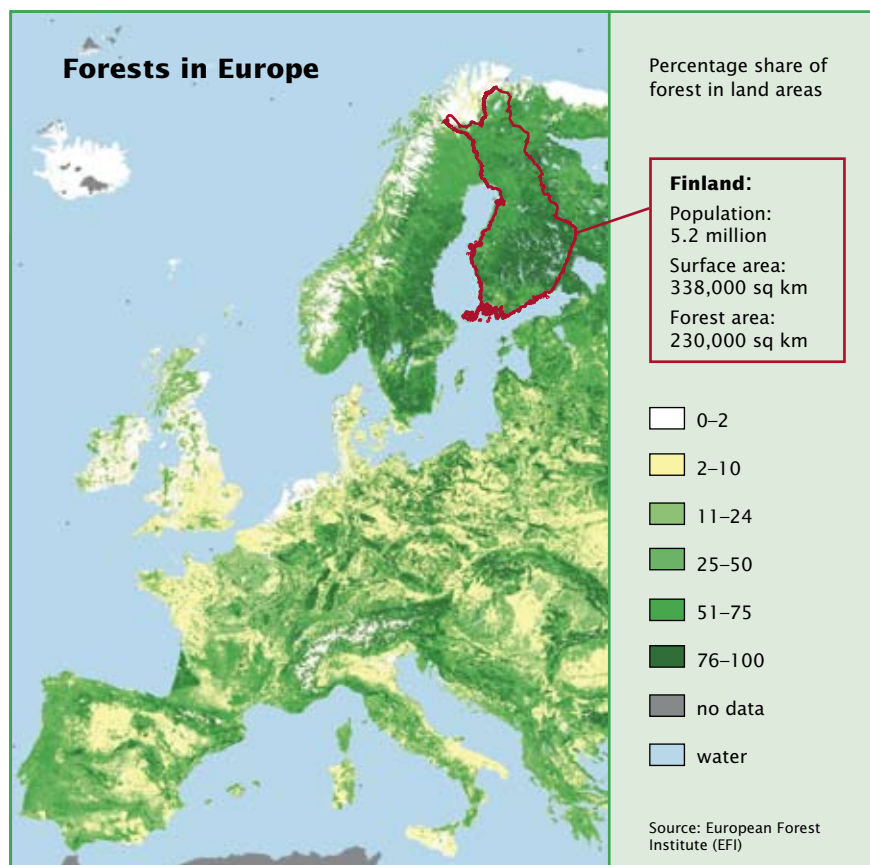
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry



LAND OF GREEN GOLD

Finland is by far the most densely forested country in Europe. Three-quarters of the land area is forest and the forest area per each Finnish resident is four hectares. In a bird's-eye view the country is dominated by green colour.

A significant share of Finland is located north of the Arctic Circle. Thanks to the Gulf Stream, however, forests grow even high up in the north. Because of the harsh climate and moraine soil, Finnish forests grow in very difficult conditions. There are altogether 30 tree species in Finland, of which the most common are pine, spruce and birch. Coniferous trees represent over 80 per cent of the growing stock.



Competitive forestry lays the foundation for economic and social sustainability. The forest sector and related industries are significant employers. The share of the forest sector in the GDP is seven per cent. When we also take account of the ecological sustainability and preserving natural values, forests truly are green gold for Finland.

Forests cover 68% of the total surface area of Finland.

FORESTS AS SOURCES OF WELL-BEING

Almost every fifth Finn comes from a family that owns forest. About 60 per cent of the Finnish forest land is owned by private citizens. Family forestry is practised with a long-term perspective, taking account of the needs of the future generations. Practically every Finnish farm has some forest.

Structural changes in Finnish society are reflected in the forest sector as well. As a result of urbanisation a growing number of forest owners no longer live in the countryside, and the share of pensioners and women among the forest owners has increased. For the owner forest is a source of employment and livelihood, but it also offers wildlife experiences and recreation.

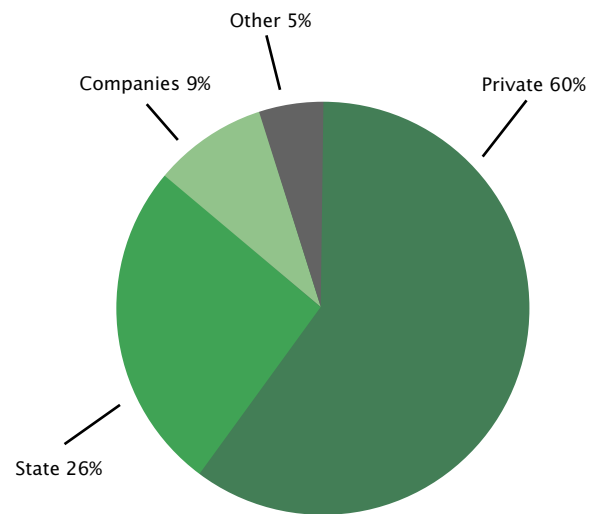
In the 1950s almost half a million Finns worked in forests. Today the forest sector is still an important employer, with about 200,000 persons working in forestry, forest industry and sectors closely related to these. Opportunities for entrepreneurship have been created, for example, in the manufacture of forest and paper machines as well as planning, design and expert services.

GOOD FOREST MANAGEMENT ENHANCES WOOD RESOURCES

National forest inventories give an accurate picture of the development of Finnish forests over the past 80 years. The annual increment of forests is 87 million cubic metres, of which 55 million cubic metres are harvested annually for use in the forest industry. About 15 million cubic metres exit the forests as fuel, logging waste or due to natural decay.

Thanks to good forest management, the increment of Finnish forests has been higher than the harvesting drain. Each year about 240 million euros are used for the management and basic improvement of forests. The state contributes about a quarter of this, while the rest comes from the forest owners. The state supports forest investments which would not be directly profitable for the private owner but which are considered necessary for the national economy and the development of the forest sector as a whole. Financial support is available, for example, for the management of young stands and forest nature.

Ownership of forest land in Finland



There are more than 400,000 private forest holdings in Finland, with the average surface area of 30 hectares.



PROTECTION OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

In Finland the ecological sustainability is ensured in both conservation areas and commercial forests. Of the land area of Finland 12.5 per cent is protected, and the protected area corresponds roughly to the surface area of Belgium. About 7.6 per cent of the forest land is protected, most of this in northern Finland. The first conservation areas were established about a hundred years ago. Relative to the total forests area, the area of strictly protected forests which may not be used for forestry purposes at all is the highest among the European countries. The conservation areas contribute to the protection of habitats of threatened species in old-growth forests.

Finland conducts top-quality research on the biological diversity of forests, and the results are constantly used in preserving biodiversity and reconciliation of the different uses of forests.

In commercial forests biodiversity is protected by preserving valuable habitats, such as patches of herb-

rich forest, small mires or forest brooks and their surroundings. Decaying trees and living stands are left in all felling areas to diversify the structure of the forest to be renewed and to provide food and shelter for the forest species.

In the Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland (METSU) voluntary methods for protecting valuable sites which are not protected by law have been tested. The forest owners are entitled to compensation for a commitment to protect important sites in their forests either permanently or for a fixed time period. Forest protection is also promoted through the environmental financial support for forests.

Of the Finnish commercial forests 95 per cent are certified under the Finnish Forest Certification System, which is approved by the PEFC. The FSC system is also sometimes used in Finland. The certificate is a guarantee that the raw material comes from a sustainably managed forest. The certification systems are the responsibility of the parties to wood trade.

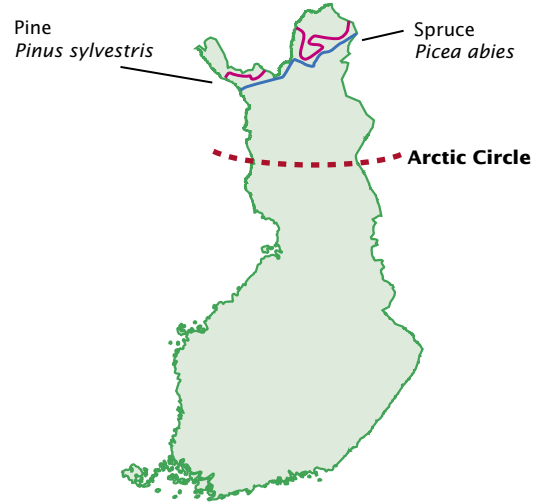


FORESTS BELONG TO US ALL

Forests are an essential element in the national identity of the Finns, as well as a source of inspiration in visual arts, literature and architecture. Thanks to the everyman's right, or the right of public access, everyone has the opportunity to find recreation, observe the nature and benefit from nature's gifts. Each year the forests yield tens of millions of kilos of wild berries and millions of mushrooms, which may be picked freely, independent of who owns the land.

In Finland we can also hike, ski, or ride a horse or bicycle freely in the woods. The majority of Finns enjoy wildlife experiences and many of us find relaxation at holiday homes. About 300,000 Finns engage in hunting.

Northern limits of the range of pine and spruce



LEGISLATION GUARANTEES SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

The Forest Act ensures the economically, ecologically and socially sustainable use of forests. The aim is to support sensible use of forests: forests which should still be growing are not overharvested and final felling is not done too early. The Forest Act applies to all forests, whether owned by the state, companies or private citizens.

The Forest Act emphasizes economic productivity, but with due respect for the multiple use of forests and environmental values. Reconciliation of the different perspectives is a challenge which forest policy needs to respond to. Success in this can be assessed through the criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management.

The long-term strategies and measures of the Finnish forest policy are laid down in the National Forest Programme. A large number of NGOs and other stakeholders have been closely involved in the preparation and further development of the programme. The Forestry Centres implement their own regional forest programmes, which derive from the national programme.

National forest policy is influenced by a number of international agreements and processes. Among other things, Finland participates in the UN Forum on Forests and is actively involved in the development of European forest policy. Finland cooperates with the neighbouring regions in Russia in support of nature protection and sustainable forestry.



Annual timber flow in Finland, million m³



Source: Finnish Forest Research Institute

BACKBONE OF FINNISH ECONOMY

The role of forestry in the economy and employment is greater in Finland than in the other parts of Europe. The success of Finnish forest industry is largely founded on the diversified forest cluster. Sectors that are closely linked to the forest industry include technology, chemical industry, transport and the supply of energy.

The forest sector is highly significant, not only in the national economy but also regionally. Forestry and forest industry are important employers in rural areas.

Finnish forest companies are among the largest in the world. In recent years their international operations have grown rapidly. The most important products are paper, paperboard and wood products. The output has been growing constantly, and today about a quarter of the roundwood is imported. Investments in environmental protection have been successful as they have led to a significant reduction in the emissions to the waters and air.



RENEWABLE ENERGY FROM WOOD

The unrenewable natural resources of the world are diminishing, which means that forests as a renewable resource will be even more valuable in the future.

Wood yields environmentally friendly energy. The carbon dioxide released when burning wood is bound to the growing stands. At present wood accounts for about a fifth of the Finnish energy production. Most of the wood energy comes from by-products of the forest industry.

FINNISH FOREST RESEARCH AND EDUCATION HIGHLY VALUED INTERNATIONALLY

The top-quality Finnish forest research is widely recognised in international contexts. The Finnish Forest Research Institute is the largest research institute in the forest sector in Europe. Universities, other research institutes and forest companies carry out important forest research and development work. The European Forest Institute (EFI) is located in Joensuu in eastern Finland.

Finland has long traditions in education and training in the forest sector, both at the university level and in the training of forest professionals. There is also demand for Finnish forest-related education and training outside Finland.



THE MINISTRY DIRECTS AND DEVELOPS FOREST POLICY

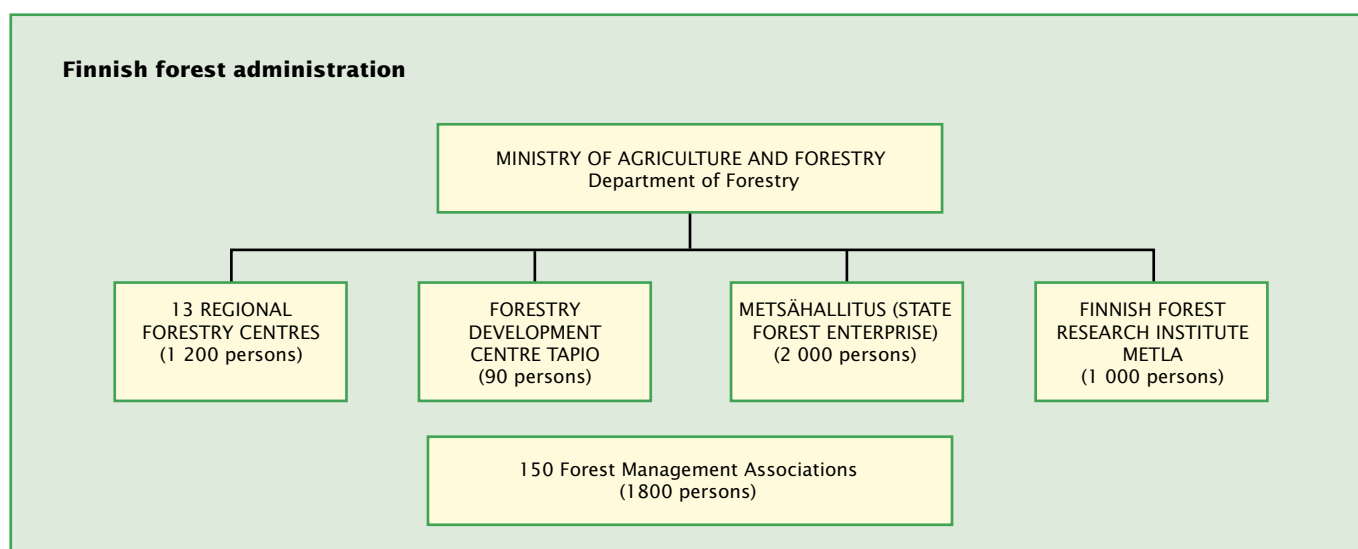
The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is responsible for the policy of sustainable use of renewable natural resources in Finland. The Department of Forestry directs and develops Finnish forest policy with the aim of promoting the competitiveness of forest-based industries and the position of Finland as a leading expert and developer in the field of sustainable forest management.

The task of the 13 **Forestry Centres** located in different parts of the country is to promote forestry and enforce forest legislation locally.

The Forestry Development Centre Tapio develops national cooperation between the Forestry Centres and produces expert and development services in support of sustainable forest management.

Metsähallitus is a state enterprise which manages the state-owned lands and waters. The basic task of Metsähallitus is to promote environmentally friendly, customer oriented forestry and protection of forest nature.

The Finnish Forest Research Institute Metla supports the sustainable use and management of forests through research.





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