

FAMILY FORESTRY IN EUROPE—GENERATION BRIDGING COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The forest surface of the EU 25 amounts to 162 million ha representing some 40% of the land area. 63% of the forest area is owned by about 15 million family forest owners and private institutions.

Family forest ownership in Europe is firmly rooted in local communities contributing to economic and social sustainability of these communities. Family forest owners form a core part of social and cultural networks in rural and semi-urban areas. Their sustainable forest management is closely linked to their traditions and cultural identity that as such is highly diverse across the regions of Europe.

Family forest owners in Europe have a strong attachment to their forests as their forests belong to the family since many generations and contribute to the family's livelihood. They pursue a variety of ownership goals deriving from strong stewardship values and multiple-use forest management. The investments of family forest owners are based on a long-term perspective to the benefits of the generations to follow.

Family forest owners in Europe derived their generation bridging commitment to sustainable forest management from secure property rights. Giving the right of ownership to a large number of people leads to the creation of a variety of values. The owner's right to use and manage the multiple benefits and goods of forests contributes to a strong sense of responsibility for the conservation of this natural heritage. At the same time the variety of management aims and practices will lead to a variety in forest structures and species composition that in turn, enhance stability and ecological diversity.

Family forest owners in Europe offer an inter-generational commitment that the values linked with sustainable forest management will be enhanced and developed.

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