



Nationales Waldprogramm für Deutschland

**Questions and answers
regarding the National Forest Programme for Germany**

BMVEL, Bonn, January 2004

1. What is a NWP?

A National Forest Programme (NWP) is a socio-political dialogue-process. Within this process the environmental, social and economic benefits of forests are analysed and, in line with as national priorities, strategies and measures for sustainable forest management, are presented and published in a transparent matter involving all relevant interested parties.

The following principles are taken into account in the elaboration of a NWP:

1. national sovereignty and responsibility in the exploitation of resources,
2. consistency with the constitutional and regulatory framework of the country,
3. consistency with international agreements and conventions,
4. participation of all interested parties,
5. integral and intersectoral approach,
6. long-term and iterative process.

In line with these principles, the allocation of responsibilities between the Federal Government and the *Laender* is taken into consideration in the elaboration of the NWP for Germany. The NWP is being developed for the federal level and does not interfere with *Laender* competence in the forest sector. The *Laender* are involved in the NWP elaboration and may use the results of the process at federal level for *Laender* activities. In addition, some *Laender* also elaborate their own Land Forest Programmes according to the above principles.

Cooperation in NWP is open to all groups, active throughout Germany, which address forest issues. Current technical topics are to be discussed on a partnership basis, different views exchanged and ultimately a consensus reached (if possible). The quality of arguments and the readiness for a consensus play an important role in the process. This does not affect the responsibility of forest owners for their property nor that of the Federal Government and the *Laender* for the exercise of functions within their remit.

2. Why is a National Forest Programme (NWP) elaborated in Germany?

By adopting a general model for sustainable development, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (UNCED) also launched an intensive international dialogue on forests. To address the topic of global forest management, conservation and sustainable development, UNCED adopted Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 (Combating Deforestation) and the Forest Principles.

To put the forest-related decisions adopted by UNCED into concrete form and translate them into action, the international community elaborated and adopted some 270 recommendations for action on promoting sustainable forest management within the framework of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (1995-1997) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (1997-2000).

The concept of [National Forest Programmes](#) (NWP) was developed as a key instrument to implement these recommendations, whilst taking the specific country requirements and conditions into account.

Germany made a political commitment to implementing these recommendations for action. By elaborating a National Forest Programme Germany meets these commitments. The implementation in Germany is also designed to encourage other countries to take similar measures.

3. How was the NWP elaborated in Germany in detail?

In September 1999, the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry (BML; now Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture – BMVEL) for the first time invited associations, federations, institutions and representatives of the *Laender* to participate in an open discussion process as regards time and content on the future orientation of German forestry policy.

This invitation was preceded by international commitments: On the occasion of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the International Community for the first time in history agreed upon international rules on the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests all over the world (Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 and the Rio Forest Principles), including the guiding principles of the intersectoral plans/programmes and the participation of interested groups and stakeholders in their formulation and implementation. In the years before Rio, forestry action programmes, particularly in tropical countries, had repeatedly been doomed to failure because as pure sectoral programmes, they did not address the causes of deforestation and forest degradation lying outside of the forest sector.

In addition, these programmes were often planned and conducted by the competent forestry authority “from top to bottom” so that the manifold, and partly conflicting, needs of the population were not always sufficiently taken into account. The concept of intersectoral and participatory plans and programmes was further developed in the follow-up process of the Rio Conference. Five years later, the term NWP had asserted itself.

In accordance with this concept, the dialogue process of the “National Forest Programme Germany” was launched at topical round tables with the broad participation of **interested federations**. First of all, fields of action had to be jointly selected. This was then followed by an analysis of the initial situation in each field and the determination of the respective needs for action.

The following fields of action had thus already been tackled in **Phase I** (1999/2000):

- Forests and society
- Forests and biological diversity
- The role of forests in the global carbon cycle
- The importance of wood as a renewable resource

- The contribution of forestry and forest industries to the development of rural areas

All in all, a total of 148 recommendations for action were made in these five fields of action.

Upon completion of Phase I, several topics remained undealt with. In addition, the procedures applied met with criticism from some actors and it appeared that several topics had not yet been dealt with intensely enough. The critics particularly found fault with the fact that the defined needs for action did not include concrete timeframes and actors.

With the beginning of **Phase II** (2001-2003), a series of procedural rules for the further dialogue process was amicably introduced in a jointly developed “**Guide for the Organisation of the National Forest Programme**” to make the process more transparent and efficient in the future.

In regard of reopening issues from Phase I it was stipulated that its results shall remain valid and only be complemented by the results of Phase II. Beyond having regard to actual development it was an important objective to improve the commitment of the actors.

Based on the results of Phase I, the following fields of action were either tackled for the first time or dealt with in a differentiated form within Phase II:

- Forests and international co-operation / International trade
- Biological diversity; forest management and nature conservation
- Selection of forest policy instruments
- Economic significance of forestry and forest industries
- New role(s) for the forest?

So far, a total of 182 recommendations for action directed at the Federal Government, the *Laender* and the federations have been made. In spite of the initial efforts made by all actors, it has – with the exception of the first topic – not been possible to concretely specify the responsible actors or timeframes for all topics. It will therefore now be important that all actors check at their respective level how they can contribute to the implementation.

A monitoring phase is planned for the years to follow. This monitoring will critically accompany the implementation of the recommendations for action in the above-mentioned sense and also provide fresh impetus to their implementation.

4. How will NWP be implemented?

NWP is a programme elaborated by the stakeholders with aims constituting policy guidelines and recommendations for action based on them. To implement the consensual proposals for action from the NWP

process, the stakeholders use the instruments available to them. The results from the NWP process reached by consensus should also be incorporated into the Federal Government sustainability strategy.

5. Who is involved in the NWP process, how does the round table cooperation work?

Active participation in the NWP process is open to all groups addressing forest issues, which are active nation-wide. Based on the experience gained in the first NWP round, procedural and organisational issues for the further process were laid down in a manual. Accordingly, all stakeholders in the process secure the necessary negotiating mandate of their association or their institution. The dialogue is based on a partnership based on trust with a maximum degree of transparency and consensus. Diverging opinions may be documented upon request. The jointly developed **“Guide for the Organisation of the National Forest Programme”** contains the “rules” that direct the whole dialogue process.