



Nationales Waldprogramm für Deutschland

National Forest Programme For Germany

Results of Phase II (2001-2003)

Abridged version

History of the National Forest Programme

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 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 National Forest Programme had asserted itself.

In accordance with this concept, the dialogue process of the “National Forest Programme for 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.

Entering Phase II of the National Forest Programme

- Development of a “guide” for all actors

With the beginning of **Phase II** (2001-2003), a series of procedural rules for the further dialogue process was 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.

It was a key concept of the National Forest Programme to base this process on the broad participation of all groups interested in the forests. The objective was to make the process as binding as possible. An important basis for this was the reaching of a broad consensus, the development of concrete targets, the elaboration of a set of measures, the naming of responsible actors and the setting of a timeframe for the implementation of the measures.

Phase II also brought about a lot of results

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:

Forests and international co-operation / International trade

Within the course of the subsequent analysis of the results reached in the first process phase, it became clear that so far, there had only been statements on national forest policy and social policy issues. The National Forest Programme for Germany must, however, also do justice to its global responsibility for the promotion of sustainable forest management within the framework of sustainable development. With regard to the manifold forest policy and social policy demands on the forests, their products and interactions, the following topics with an international dimension were considered to be important for the National Forest Programme:

- Framework conditions for the conservation of forests

An important basis for the conservation of forests all over the world is to fight the causes of forest destruction. The political, social and structural problems in many countries can lead to uncontrolled and illegal logging and timber trade in the regions. The National Forest Programme names measures to improve the general framework conditions for the conservation of forests.

- International development co-operation – German contribution based on global responsibility

Development co-operation makes an important contribution to reduce the destruction of forests in the countries concerned. The National Forest Programme makes proposals for international and national development co-operation.

- Corruption, illegal logging and trade with illegally logged timber

Illegal logging and trade with illegally logged timber are a direct threat to the integrity of forest ecosystems, to the regional and national timber budgets of the countries concerned and particularly to the social and economic stability of the rural population. In the long term, illegal logging will impoverish large parts of the population the living of which is often heavily dependent on the forests. Illegal logging is not only a problem of tropical forests but also concerns boreal and temperate forests. Because illegal logging is taking place on such a large scale, the worldwide repercussions of the ensuing forest destruction also have to be taken into consideration. The countermeasures developed in this context do not only start in the producer countries but also include the buyer countries and consumer markets.

- Certification/monitoring of the timber trade chain, public purchasing policies

Previous experience has shown that certification systems have the greatest potential with respect to the fight against illegal logging and the trade with illegally logged timber. In view of the existing international interdependence of timber markets, internationally (worldwide, if possible) applicable and accepted certification systems – equally taking into account ecological, social and economic criteria – have a decisive advantage over national approaches and counteract the causes of deforestation more effectively than a boycott of tropical timber. Public purchasing policies are a further instrument to counteract illegal logging and unsustainable forest management and can have strong exemplary character.

Biological diversity; forest management and nature conservation

Forests are playing a particularly significant role for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity in Germany. Many forest ecosystems and species that naturally occur in Central Europe have specifically adapted to local environmental conditions. In Germany, a mosaic of a wide variety of ecosystems has been formed which has also been marked by forestry interventions. The biological diversity of German forests is not any more threatened by large-scale clear-cutting; Germany's total actual forest area is even increasing. The National Forest Programme process also includes the important task of ensuring the conservation of biodiversity and at the same time meeting the requirements of forest management and nature conservation. The actors have made it their job to make proposals for various topics:

- Conservation, maintenance and promotion of biological diversity

As a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Germany also has a particular international responsibility for the protection, the sustainable use and the equitable sharing of benefits (from the use) of biological diversity a considerable part of which can be found in the forests. At the conference in Rio (UNCED 1992), the industrial nations did not only commit themselves to conserve the biological diversity in their own countries but also to help other countries with the implementation of the necessary measures. The continuing loss of biological diversity often particularly affects poorer countries. Biodiversity has therefore become an important area of international co-operation.

- Close-to-nature forest management

Scientific studies have shown that naturally managed non-coniferous and mixed forests can have a similarly great variety of plant and animal species as comparable "natural forests" that have not been managed for several decades. This also applies to rare species but does not rule out that some specialised species with particular needs are dependent on largely unmanaged woodland areas. Certain, partly rare species are even promoted by forestry activities and the related opening-up of the canopy. Germany does not have any native forests as reference areas for the natural biological diversity of forests.

Based on the longstanding experience of a large number of forest holdings as regards the use of ecologically sound forest management methods, all *Laender* have in recent years developed concepts for a close-to-nature forest management. These concepts are based, to varying degrees, on the use of natural processes and self-adjusting mechanisms. Ecologically sound forest management serves to achieve various objectives and should therefore not only be assessed with regard to its ecological but also to its economic impacts.

- Forests and wild game

In many forests, too large cloven-hoofed game populations are still hampering the development of structurally diverse forests and their selective browsing is causing a depletion

of species, particularly of trees and shrubs. Hunting offers a possibility to use natural resources in the forests and must fulfil sustainability criteria. Hunting practice and hunting regulations must comply with these criteria.

- Nature conservation and biotope networking

Measures for the conservation of species and biotopes form part of regular forestry activities (e.g. the conservation and promotion of rare tree and shrub species, the tending of forest edges, the reduction of coniferous tree species near water bodies, the creation of bat roosting sites, the participation in species conservation programmes or the continuation of historical forms of forest use). In addition, there is a need for protected areas of varied sizes and conservation categories the utilisation of which is restricted to a varying extent, depending on the conservation purpose. In Germany, there is a system of conservation areas (particularly national parks, nature conservation areas, natural forest reserves and biosphere reserves) which are to represent all natural forest communities. A total of 20% of all woodlands in Germany are high-quality conservation areas. In addition to protected areas and biotopes, forest areas managed in a semi-natural way which do not have a legal conservation status are also important elements of a large-scale biotope network system in the countryside. The objectives of the National Forest Programme also include the conservation of forest ecosystems with all typical animal and plant species, including the genetic diversity of these species, in their natural surroundings as well as the identification and reduction of gaps in the existing network of protected areas and biotopes.

- Genetic diversity of forest trees and forest shrubs

Strategies for the conservation of the genetic diversity of forest trees and forest shrubs are aimed at the preservation and the sustainable use of existing genetic resources. The most important measures to secure forest genetic resources, also in terms of the area covered, are the natural regeneration of suitable stands and the use of source-identified and adjusted propagation material for necessary planting. The “Concept for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Forest Genetic Resources in the Federal Republic of Germany” (2000) identifies measures to secure our forests in the future. The measures that can be derived from this concept are co-ordinated by the Federal/*Laender* Working Party “Conservation of Forest Genetic Resources and Forest Seed Legislation” and documented regularly in status reports.

- Research requirements

The research organisations of the federal government and the *Laender* as well as the institutions of higher education are working on large-scale research projects on forest ecosystems and the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity of forests. This research work has already produced extensive results. But due to the complexity of forest ecosystems, the current state of knowledge is not yet sufficient in many fields.

- Possible financial incentives

Technical requirements and restrictions going beyond statutory provisions require appropriate compensation and indemnification schemes. In addition, nature conservation on a contractual basis is of utmost importance as it offers the possibility to reach a consensus with forest owners on a voluntary basis.

Selection of forest policy instruments

The various forest and forestry strategy recommendations formulate the objectives and contents of forest development in Germany. These represent the common and consensual positions on forest policy issues adopted by all stakeholders in the NFP process. The field of action “selection of forest policy instruments” reveals solution concepts for the institutional implementation of these proposals. The policy instruments follow the key concept of the National Forest Programme, i.e. to develop an economically, ecologically and socially sustainable forest management which is as close to nature as possible.

This abridged version will not go into further detail of the technical and budgetary aspects.

Economic significance of forestry and forest industries

Because most sites are in the direct vicinity of the relevant raw materials, the domestic forestry and forest industries have an as yet not sufficiently used potential for structural development and the safeguarding and creation of jobs in rural, but also in urban, areas. Wood is by far the most significant renewable raw material and bioenergy source and, by nature, has numerous ecological advantages.

- Forestry

The forestry sector in Germany is structured in very small units. It is dominated by private owners of small forests (approx. 1 million enterprises) with parcel sizes less than 1 ha. About 214,000 forestry enterprises have parcel sizes between 1 and 10 ha, approx. 26,000 enterprises own woodlands of more than 10 ha and 1,400 enterprises manage more than 1,000 ha.

The existing problem of this largely small-scale forestry is further increased by the current concentration processes in the forest industries as larger timber enterprises are demanding a more concentrated supply of wood, particularly with respect to mass products. The smaller quantities of wood offered by the owners of small forests are therefore hardly marketable.

- Forest industries

In 2001, the approx. 60,000 timber enterprises in Germany processed about 180 million m³ roundwood equivalents and realised a total turnover of approx. €85 billion. Foreign trade has traditionally been characterised by import surpluses; net imports in 2000 amounted to approx. 10 million m³ roundwood equivalents. If this sector is looked at out of context, one tends to significantly underestimate its importance to the national economy and the labour market. The products generated in this sector represent essential inputs for subsequent stages of

production. Primary forestry production in particular produces a series of positive external effects that nevertheless do not appear in the national accounts. This further increases the tendency to underestimate the relevance of this sector.

- Tapping of potentials

A considerable part of Germany's raw material potential has so far remained unused. Only about 50% of the available wood quantity has been used so far. On the one hand, wood is used as an important raw and basic material. On the other hand, there is a potential demand for wood as (renewable) source of energy. Environmental and climate protection concerns and, last but not least, questions with regard to assuring the availability of supplies, have awakened the Member States' desire to promote renewable energies as an alternative domestic source of energy, as opposed to imported fossil energy, in the years and decades to come. Renewable energies belong to the fastest growing sectors in the European Union. In addition to ecological advantages, there are also economic benefits in the form of the creation of new jobs and a strong domestic export industry.

The National Forest Programme provides strategy recommendations for the further development of forestry and forest industries, equally taking into account the economic, ecological and social demands of owners and society.

New role(s) for the forest?

The demands made by society on the forests have in the meantime gone far beyond the traditional supply of services provided by the forestry sector. Although traditional services are still in demand (primary production, right to access forest areas, traditional forest functions), new demands have become obvious. With the formulation of new tasks to be fulfilled by the forestry sector in Germany and new services expected to be rendered by the forests, including the resulting changes to the role that forests are playing in our society, a new view to forests and forestry is to be promoted and possible new developments are to be revealed. The NFP process formulates possible new concepts of the forest as well as its new functions.

- Wilderness – a new concept of the forest?

The need of an increasingly urban society for wilderness as a contrast to urban life can offer new prospects for the forest and the people working in the forest sector. Nowhere else can this need be satisfied more easily. But wilderness cannot be the new concept for the entire forest area. In many areas, e.g. on former industrial sites, the "wild forest" can be an important alternative. The forestry sector should therefore integrate the wilderness concept into its system of objectives, realise it in line with the respective local situation and communicate this objective to the people.

- Rediscovery of the landscape – forests as part of a "new cultural landscape"

The forestry sector will in the future be confronted with the task of having to strengthen the role of the forest within the scope of the "(re)discovery of the landscape" and to participate

more intensively in the realisation of large-area landscape design. With the EU agricultural policy reform of 2003, EU rural development support will be widened. This offers the opportunity to significantly improve the provision of environmental services by the forestry sector and the marketing of these services.

- The forest as “scenery” for our leisure society?

Forest ownership and forest management will in the next few years continue to be confronted with the manifold demands made by society on the forests. Forest owners and forestry personnel should increasingly focus on taking the people along with them into the forests and not to define the people as a burden and a problem. This can also help to increase public awareness for the distinctive features of forest ecosystems and the repercussions of public recreational activities. New courses should therefore be set to get the forest users with their most diverse interests involved in forestry planning activities. This can be done with the help of innovative participation processes.

- The forest as an “outdoor education park”

The demand for forest educational projects and outdoor adventure is expected to continue to rise in the future. Forest owners and forest administrations also take great interest in developing community knowledge and understanding of forest environments, including their economic aspects. In this context, co-operations between all categories of forest ownership should be envisaged in order to be able to meet this demand at the local level in a target-group oriented way.

What’s ahead?

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.