

PRESS RELEASE:

In a welcome move the new EU Forestry Strategy recognizes the role of wood in construction as a key solution to the climate change crisis, but it lacks a comprehensive approach to forests

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The European woodworking industries have been advocating for a long time for an increased recognition of the role of wood-based products to decarbonize key sectors of the economy, such as construction and renovation. The carbon absorbed from the atmosphere is stored in the trees and consequently in the products, and that effect, paired with the substitution of fossil-based and energy-intensive construction materials, can help to drastically reduce the overall carbon footprint of the building stock.

In a welcome and timely move the EU Forest Strategy, published today by the European Commission, acknowledges this key contribution and the role of the woodworking industry in helping to turn the construction sector from a source of greenhouse gas emissions into a carbon sink as set out in the Renovation Wave and the new European Bauhaus initiative and as advocated by Commission President von der Leyen¹.

The Strategy's reference to the considerable potential to increase the percentage of wood products used in construction and renovation as a replacement for "energy intensive and currently fossil fuel-based materials" is a much appreciated and correct observation.

CEI-Bois, the European Confederation of the Woodworking Industries, specifically welcomes the proposal to establish a standard, robust and transparent methodology to quantify the climate benefits of wood construction products and other building materials as an incentive towards sustainable building design and construction choices. Wood-based solutions offer a green construction material that is renewable, recyclable and has a low fossil carbon footprint.

Moreover, the Strategy rightly emphasizes the need to develop skills and empower people to successfully engage with the growth of a sustainable forest-based bioeconomy that already today benefits both rural and urban areas in Europe.

At the same time, the industry expresses concerns on the overall approach of the Strategy, which may ultimately hinder the contribution of the forest-based sector as a whole to the transition to a competitive and climate-neutral economy. The Strategy lacks a comprehensive view of forests

¹ [State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary, 16 September 2020](#)

and the forest-based sector, as it overlooks the concept of sustainable forest management as a solution to balance economic, social and environmental aspects and to preserve the multifunctional role of forests by putting too much emphasis on the passive protection of forest areas. Sustainable and active management by using suitable and variable forest management methods is needed to counteract the increasing disturbances induced by climate change, such as fires, droughts and storms as well as pest and disease outbreaks, while increasing the amount of carbon stored and providing raw materials for the bioeconomy development.

Considering that the involvement of all the forest-based sector stakeholders is essential in achieving the common objective of ensuring the European forests remain healthy, resilient and productive now and in the future, CEI-Bois calls on the Commission to fully include the woodworking industry in the forest governance framework set up at the EU level, including through the work of the Expert Group on Forest-based Industries.

Competitive woodworking industries and sustainably managed forests are heavily interlinked: both are needed to maximise the contribution of the sector towards climate neutrality, and the [concerns from the forest-based sector](#) should be heard if the EU wants to ensure the success of the new Strategy.

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About CEI-Bois

[The European Confederation of Woodworking Industries](#) (CEI-Bois) represents 22 European and National organisations from 16 countries and is the body backing the interests of the whole industrial European wood sector: more than 180,000 companies generating an annual turnover of 152 billion euros and employing 1 million workers in the EU.