

EU & INTERNATIONAL FORESTRY POLICY:

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN DEFRA AND FORESTRY COMMISSION: WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

1. Ministers have decided that EU and international forestry policy should be undertaken by Defra and responsibility should be transferred from EU & International Policy Branch in the Forestry Commission to EUIC in Defra. Ministers also agreed that the Forestry Commission should continue to play a role in the EU and internationally by providing advice and support to Defra (EUIC), as required. This is consistent with the handling of other policy areas and with Defra and the Forestry Commission's respective Departmental roles and relative strengths as well as their wider engagement across Government.
2. Ministers – and Defra officials - will need to continue to receive expert, evidence-based, advice, and the Forestry Commission will need to continue to be involved with developments at the EU and International levels in order to ensure that internationally agreed regulations and standards reflect national policy and practice and are implemented at the national level.
3. It is important, therefore, that EU and international forestry policy is developed through a close working relationship between Defra and the Forestry Commission. This paper sets out the basis for that working relationship.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4. Forestry policy overlaps with a number of other areas, in particular sustainable development, biodiversity and climate change. It also has the potential to contribute to the development of the green economy and to promote rural development and poverty eradication. Having the lead on EU and International policy within core Defra will help to provide coherence across these policy areas and will also ensure that forestry policy, including the promotion of the principles of sustainable forest management, is fully integrated into other objectives.
5. To achieve this Defra will work closely with the Forestry Commission and with other Government Departments, especially DFID and DECC, and with the Devolved Administrations.

KEY PROCESSES AND POLICY AREAS

6. It is important that EU and international engagement to deliver these policy objectives is coordinated to make the most of limited resources, within both Defra and Forestry Commission. It will also be important to ensure each Department contributes to the UK position using its comparative strengths, avoiding any overlap or duplication.
7. We have identified the following areas as the priorities for UK engagement:
 - EU Council Working Party on Forestry
 - EU Forestry Strategy and Forest Action Plan
 - European Commission Standing Forestry Committee
 - United Nations Forestry processes, including UNFF and FAO
 - Forest Europe

Information on the principal EU and International processes is set out in Annex A

RESPONSIBILITIES

8. The responsibility for EU and international forestry processes and forest-related issues reflects the desire of Ministers for policy to be delivered by core Defra, supported by, and drawing on the expertise of, the Forestry Commission.
9. The Forestry Commission will also use its expertise in support of **bilateral cooperation** taking account of UK priorities for engagement, implementation of sustainable forest management in the UK and the sharing of UK expertise and experience.

WORKING RELATIONSHIP

10. Although Defra will be the policy lead for EU and International policy processes this will require support and advice from the Forestry Commission and in some areas for the Forestry Commission to act on behalf of DEFRA. It is important that good communication is established and maintained between Defra and the Forestry Commission, and that clear working arrangements are in place to ensure transparency and coordination.
11. Ministers are keen that UK representation at EU and International level is proportionate, balancing effective UK participation with securing value for money for public expenditure. For example, this may involve small, joint delegations to some meetings, or representation by Defra or the Forestry Commission, in consultation with the other before the meeting. Attendance at meetings and the UK position

should be agreed in advance, with the involvement of other government departments and Devolved Administrations, and cleared by Ministers where appropriate.

COORDINATION BETWEEN DEFRA AND FORESTRY COMMISSION

12. A good working relationship between Defra and the Forestry Commission is key to ensuring that UK objectives are met. The main elements of this are:
 - Regular coordination between the main policy leads for EU and international forestry policy in Defra (EUIC) and the Forestry Commission (EU and International Branch)
 - A standing practice of collaborating on submissions, and sharing documents and information, with the department having the lead responsibility being responsible for circulating relevant papers and other information.
 - Agreement of UK lines to take in advance of meetings.
 - Agreement on UK representation at meetings.
 - Occasional team meetings between Defra (EUIC) forestry officials and Forestry Commission EU and International Branch officials to look ahead at forthcoming issues and to build and reinforce working practices and cooperation.

EU FORESTRY

In the EU the UK's aims are to ensure: the subsidiarity principle is observed in relation to forests, as well as a robust and equitable approach to tackling illegal logging; that UK businesses are not put at a competitive disadvantage by weaker implementation in other Member States; the principles of sustainable forest management are intrinsic to the EU approach; and that other policy objectives, concerning climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development are properly reflected in EU positions on forests.

These aims are achieved through the following bodies and processes:

- **EU Council Working Party on Forestry:**

This is the principal vehicle for agreeing policy related to forestry within the EU. It is the forum for reaching agreement on common EU positions ahead of multilateral meetings e.g. UNFF, Forest Europe, and for discussion of the EU's regulatory approach to illegal timber - FLEGT and EU Timber Regulation.

- **The EU Forestry Strategy/EU Forest Action Plan**

The EU Forestry Strategy provides a framework for forest-related activities in support of sustainable forest management. Firmly based on the subsidiarity principle, it facilitates the coordination of the forest policies of individual member states and developments within other EU policies relevant to forests.

The EU Forest Action Plan is the means for implementing the strategy and has four main goals – to improve and protect the environment, improve long-term competitiveness, contribute to the quality of life and foster coordination and communication.

- **European Commission Standing Forestry Committee (SFC)**

The Committee is comprised of representatives of the forestry administrations of the EU Member States. Its principal role is as an advisory body to the European Commission on forest issues, providing a link between the development of EU policies that affect national forest policy and practice and to facilitate the exchange of information. In support of the EU Forest Action Plan there have been a number of occasions where the SFC has taken on specific policy-related tasks related to emerging policies, for example on climate change. In such cases it is important that the Forestry Commission and Defra work closely together. The Committee has also established a number of ad hoc sub-committees to take forward specific activities from the EU Forest Action Plan.

INTERNATIONAL FORESTRY

Internationally the UK's objectives are to ensure: a balanced approach to sustainable forest management; a robust and equitable approach to tackling illegal logging; that UK businesses are not put at a competitive disadvantage; and that other policy objectives, concerning climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development are properly reflected.

UNITED NATIONS

The **United Nations** encompasses a number of forestry processes at the global and regional level. The principal policy body is the **UNFF (United Nations Forum on Forests)** a universal member, intergovernmental policy forum which meets every two years. It has discussed the possibility of a global legal agreement on forests, and has negotiated a "Non-Legally Binding Agreement", as well as agreeing principles of forest management, which build on the Rio Forest Principles. It is also a forum for discussing financing for forestry. As part of the International Arrangement on Forests the United Nations also established the "**Collaborative Partnership on Forests**", a grouping of 14 international and UN agencies and organisations with an interest in forest policy and practice.

The **FAO** is the UN's main agency for forest-related activity, including the Global Forest Resource Assessment, and the "State of the World's Forests". The FAO's "Strategy for Forests and Forestry" aims to "strengthen country capacities and overcome the obstacles to sustainable forest management by providing reliable information, policy advice and technical assistance". Its **Committee on Forests (COFO)** meets every two years and is a mixture of policy discussion and technical exchanges of information.

The **UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO's European Forestry Committee** provide the regional focus for forest information and practice. Their integrated programme of work "provides a platform for topical policy discussions, taking into account the changing policy environment, notably as regards climate change and bioenergy. It promotes the role of forests in mitigating and adapting to climate change".

FOREST EUROPE

Forest Europe (or the "Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe") is a pan-European policy process, involving 46 countries including all EU Member States, for the sustainable management of the continent's forests. It provides a framework for collaboration on forest issues and has agreed pan-European definition for sustainable forest management, as well as criteria/indicators and guidelines. It also provides a regional contribution to a range of global bodies that consider forests. Ministerial meetings take place roughly every four years, the most recent one was held in Oslo in

June 2011, after which the lead responsibility for the process passed from Norway to Spain.