

Afforestation and reforestation as adaptation opportunity to fight climate change

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in San Marino, 23.10.2021

Recognizing that:

1. As part of the European Green Deal, the Commission proposed in September 2020 to raise the 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction target, including emissions and removals, to at least 55% compared to 1990.¹
2. The emissions reduction target should be delivered collectively by the Union in the most cost-effective manner possible, in order to achieving climate neutrality by 2050.²
3. The Union should continue to decrease its greenhouse gas emissions and enhance removals in line with the Paris Agreement,³ which aims to keep the global teemperature well below 2 °C and to pursue efforts to keep it to 1,5 °C,⁴ in order to avoid the catastrophic consequences of climate change.⁵
4. The European Union supports a policy target of halting gross tropical deforestation by at least 50 % compared to current levels and to halt global forest cover loss by 2030 at the latest.⁶
5. Terrestrial ecosystems play a key role in the global climate system, host a substantial fraction of global biodiversity and provide ecosystems services that are essential for humans, including food, fibre, energy, water and air purification, micro-climate regulation and protection from natural hazards.
6. Forests store more carbon than any other land-cover type per unit area and host a considerable fraction of the global biodiversity.

Acknowledging that:

1. The land use, land use change and forestry ("LULUCF") sector has the potential to provide long-term climate benefits, and thereby to contribute to the achievement of the Union's greenhouse gas emissions reduction target, as well as to the long-term climate goals of the Paris Agreement.⁷
2. Afforestation (i.e. converting long-time non-forested land into forest) and reforestation (i.e. converting recently non-forested land in forest) at a larger scale could help capture atmospheric carbon and mitigate climate change. If these two

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/european-green-deal/2030-climate-target-plan_en

² Ibid.

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eudn/2016/1841/data.pdf>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/priorities/climate-change/20180905STO11945/infographic-how-climate-change-is-affecting-europe>

⁶ https://community.era.gv.at/public/documents/2126/Council_Conclusions.pdf; ⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/forests-and-agriculture/combating-tropical-deforestation-redd-initiative_en

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/forests-and-agriculture/land-use-and-forestry-regulation-2021-2030_en

approaches are viewed as complementary, they may enable “win-win” policy options.

3. In the reference period from 2000 to 2009, the reported average removals by sinks from forest land were 372 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per year for the Union as a whole.⁸
4. Around 0.9 billion hectares (2.2 billion acres) of land worldwide would be suitable for reforestation, which could ultimately capture two third of human-made carbon emissions.⁹
5. The Crowther Lab of ETH Zurich has published a study that restoration of trees remains among the most effective method to combat climate change mitigation.¹⁰

YEPP calls for:

1. EU member states to promote sustainable forest management and practices such as afforestation and agroforestry.
2. Initiating a solid collaboration between investors, government and local stakeholders by setting the legal framework for Member States to stimulate via investments and tax relief programs projects related to the enlargement of green areas.¹¹
3. Investing more European funding for a stronger European Forest Fire System and more fire fighting tools.
4. Most importantly is to act together as a Union to impose the reduction of the CO₂ production by China, which is the first country polluting our planet, and we have to act together with Africa and Latin America to ensure that the international organisations like the WTO will impose one general rule for globalisation.

⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2018/841>

⁹ <https://www.science.org/doi/abs/10.1126/science.aax0848>

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ <https://www.kew.org/science/engage/get-involved/conferences/reforestation-biodiversity-carbon-capture-livelihoods>