

KRAJOWY SEKRETARIAT
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On 8 October 2021, on the initiative of the **National Secretariat for Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry of Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarność"**¹ an international conference was held in Warsaw under the title: "The future of forest management in Poland in the context of EU biodiversity and forest strategies 2030".

The conference was held under the **Honorary Patronage of the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda**², and was co-organized by the Minister of Climate and Environment³ and the Director General of the State Forests⁴.

It was attended by 160 participants, scientists and practitioners, as well as NGO's representing forestry, nature conservation and wood industry. Representatives of Estonia, Germany, Italy, European Association of the Sawmill Industry & European Confederation of Woodworking Industries (EOS&CEI-Bois), The European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR), European Socio-Economic Committee (EESC), European Federation for Hunting and Conservation (FACE), German Forestry Association (DFV), German Forestry Council (DFWR e.V.) came from abroad.

The conference was opened by: **Tomasz Markiewicz**, vice-President of Union of European Foresters (UEF), **Zbigniew Kuszlewicz**, chairman of KSZNOŚIL NSZZ "Solidarność", ministers: **Paweł Satek**, Presidential advisor for environmental protection, climate policy and sustainable development, **Michał Kurtyka**, Minister of Climate and Environment, **Jan Krzysztof Ardanowski**, Chairman of the President's Council for Agriculture and Rural Development, **Edward Siarka**, Government Plenipotentiary for Forestry and Hunting, Ministry of Climate and Environment, **Małgorzata Golińska**, Chief Nature Conservator, Ministry of Climate and Environment, **MEP Anna Zalewska** (ECR) and **Józef Kubica**, Director General of the State Forests.

The presentations were made by:

- **Franziska Schier** (Institute of International Forestry and Forest Economics, part of the federal Thünen Institute), discussing the potential effect of relocation on the forest and forest product markets from regional to global level.
- **Dr. Konrad Tomaszewski** (an expert of NSZZ "Solidarity"), forecasting the socio-economic effects of possible implementation of the strategy in Poland, he stressed the risks associated with the reduction of market and non-market output produced by the State Forests, in particular pointed to the impossibility of continued operation of the forest fund, and thus

¹ <https://www.solidarnosc.org.pl/aktualnosci/wiadomosci/zagranica/item/20781-miedzynarodowa-konferencja-na-temat-strategii-bioroznorodnosci-2030>

² <https://www.prezydent.pl>

³ <https://www.gov.pl/web/klimat/o-przyszlosci-modelu-ochrony-srodowiska-lesnego>

⁴ <https://www.lasy.gov.pl/pl/pro/informacje/aktualnosci/miedzynarodowa-konferencja-ws-strategii-bioroznorodnosci-2030-za-nami>

a threat to the existence of a unique model of functioning of the State Forests, The Commission has proposed an alternative approach to pro-climate measures through the development of the concept of Forest Carbon Farms, as well as indicating that an alternative to including large areas of forest under strict protection should be the further professionalization of multifunctional sustainable forest management.

- **prof. Tomasz Zawiła-Niedźwiecki** and **prof. Jarosław Socha** (Committee of Forest Sciences and Wood Technology of the Polish Academy of Sciences), discussing the natural and economic effects of the implementation of the EU Biodiversity and EU Forest strategies for 2030, appealed for respecting the achievements of science in creating European policy and for restoring the importance of cooperation and information transfer on the line of the "science-policy-practice", of which the "science" part is neglected in the process of creating EU biodiversity and forest strategies.
- **Aigar Kallas** (Director General of the State Forests of Estonia and Vice President of EUSTAFOR)⁵, shared with the audience the experience of the State Forest Management Centre (RMK) in managing state forests in Estonia in the context of expected impact of the new EU policies. He also presented EUSTAFOR's policy messages and recommendations for both the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the EU Forest Strategy 2030.
- **Georg Schirmbeck** (Chairman of the German Federal Forestry Council), **Bogdan Witkowski** (German Forest Association), noting the coherence of the Polish and German positions, proposed to consolidate efforts to elaborate a joint European declaration on multifunctional forest management and invited a Polish delegation for a working meeting in Berlin in January 2022 to concretise future joint actions.
- **Jarosław Kuczaj** (FACE Policy advisor), pointing to the international conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992) and the Bern Convention (BC, 1979), which in their objectives refer to the conservation of biodiversity and the need for sustainable use of its resources; he stressed the important role of hunters, who have always been active in improving biodiversity in Europe⁶.
- **Silvia Melegari** (EOS&CEI-Bois), presenting the consequences of implementing a forest strategy and biodiversity for the wood industry in Europe, stressed the importance for an holistic vision when dealing with forests related issues. Attenuation of the greenhouse effect includes increased use of wood as an ecological material for building, furnishings and insulation material but also as a source of renewable energy. While one might not connect healthy forests with the commercial use of wood, they are actually connected. Income from wood is essential for forest owners to invest in sustainable forest management and to enhance their resilience. In turn, ensuring a sustainable wood supply enables the transition to a circular bioeconomy.
- **Rafał Gruszczyński** (The Polish Economic Chamber of Wood Industry), discussing the threats that the published strategies pose for the Polish wood sector.
- **Tadeusz Majchrowicz** (Deputy Chairman of the National Committee of NSZZ "Solidarność" and member of the EESC), declaring support from trade unions for sectors so important

⁵ <https://eustafor.eu/eustafor-speaks-in-warsaw-on-eu-forestry-and-biodiversity-policy-objectives-2030/>

⁶ <https://www.face.eu/2021/10/high-level-conference-on-the-eu-biodiversity-strategy-2030-and-the-eu-forest-strategy-in-poland/>

for ensuring jobs in Poland and emphasizing the role of small and medium-sized enterprises in the national economy (60% of wood processing plants is SME).

• **Fr. prof. Stanisław Ormanty** discussing the issue of the philosophy of nature in relation to some ideological ideas of the dictatorship of environmentalism, asking the question: does nature need to be protected from man, or is it to serve man? He called for a clear articulation of truth, concluding that "bitter truth is better than sweet illusions".

The conference was summarized by **Paweł Sałek**, Presidential advisor for environmental protection, climate policy and sustainable development, combining conference conclusions with the legislation in force in Poland and the European Union. While stressing the need to respect the results of scientific research.

During the deliberations and lively discussion, the participants of the conference formulated conclusions, which were summed up by the Commission composed of: **Piotr Borkowski** (EUSTAFOR), **prof. Bogdan Brzeziecki** (Warsaw University of Life Sciences - SGGW) and **prof. Piotr S. Mederski** (Poznań University of Life Sciences - UPP). The Commission divided the conclusions into general and detailed ones, concerning the impact of the adopted strategies on the environment and on the economy.

I. General conclusions

1. According to much scientific research, nature protection may not be effective in sustaining a high level of biodiversity in the forest ecosystems of the temperate zone. Nature protection in forest ecosystems may yield negative results (i.e. the recession and extinction of some species), especially in areas under strict long-term protection (i.e. over several decades).
2. The conversion of vast areas of coniferous forests (as, for example, in Poland) needs human intervention, and designating these stands as protected areas will lead to their decomposition caused by insect outbreaks and pathogenic fungus.
3. The enlargement of areas excluded from utilisation as proposed in the EU Biodiversity Strategy is endangering the environmental (lower biodiversity) and economic functions of forests. Additionally, the enlargement of protected areas in Europe on the proposed scale will lead to extensive forest utilisation beyond Europe, especially in tropical forests.
4. The requirement for strict protection of 10% of the land area in many countries, including Poland, would have to be implemented mainly at the expense of forests. At least 40% of the forested area would have to be taken out of use. This would have enormous negative social and economic consequences. The impact of the reduction in timber harvesting would reduce the State Forests' revenue by nearly 40%.
5. The reduction in the harvesting of raw timber will reduce employment by over 200 000 people, particularly in the timber industry, and lead to the marginalisation of the Polish timber industry internationally.

II. Detailed conclusions

II.1. Impact on environment:

1. The introduction of strict nature protection does not impact positively on biodiversity, since, in fact, it very often reduces the overall level of biodiversity. The exclusion of vast forest areas from

utilisation is recognised as harmful, as, in the context of many examples from other regions in the world, long-lasting biodiversity in nature requires human intervention.

2. Active human intervention is also recognised as crucial in the adaptation of forests to climate change. Active forest management is also necessary in order to maintain the forest's function of mitigating against negative changes in the climate.

3. The challenge of the present times is not to further increase the area of 'protected areas' and the area under strict protection; the real challenge is to improve and implement as widely as possible the methods of forest management in practice, which favour the conservation of its truly multifunctional character.

4. In view of the high threat to the forest stands of Poland from foliofagous and cambiofagous insects and the considerable risk of launching large-scale die-off processes as a result of abandoning active protective measures, it is necessary to undertake actions aimed at reducing the proposed range of forest areas under passive protection.

5. Stands with a species composition inappropriate to the soil conditions (usually coniferous forests) should be converted to mixed forests, close to natural forests with a species composition matching the soil conditions. This forest management issue is especially important in the face of climate change and dying forests. Under the proposed strategy aimed at passive nature protection, it will not be possible to continue with forest conversion.

II.2. Impact on industry:

6. Limited timber harvesting will make the market situation even more uncomfortable since high prices and a deficit of timber is already being observed.

7. Limitations in timber harvesting will lead to longer transport distances, higher transport costs and, eventually, higher carbon footprint.

8. A lower supply of timber will have a particularly negative impact on the sawmill industry; 40% less timber will cause the bankruptcy of 90% of timber enterprises due to the large share of small to medium-sized enterprises within the forest-based sector.

9. A reduction in timber harvesting will negatively impact on employment in the timber sector, especially in rural areas where timber is one of the few sources of business activity.

10. The eventual limited access to timber will mean that the Polish State Forests' budget will go into deficit, resulting in a conflict with the self-financing principle of the State Forests, as stated in the Polish Parliament Act on Forests issued in 1991.

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