(English version)

Question for written answer E-003291/25
to the Commission
César Luena (S&D)
(25 August 2025)

Subject: The declining carbon capacity of EU forests

Published by *Nature* magazine ([1]), a recent study by scientists from the Commission's Joint Research Centre warns that, due to a rise in logging, forest fires, droughts and infestations, the net CO_2 uptake of forests in the EU averaged 332 million net tonnes per year between 2020 and 2022, down almost 33% from 2010-2014. The fact that EU forests are declining as carbon sinks could jeopardise the Union's 2050 climate goals and its efforts at achieving carbon neutrality.

In the light of the above:

1. What is the Commission's assessment of the factors — which include fires, droughts, pests and intensive forest management — that are reducing the carbon capacity of EU forests?

2. What forestry policy measures — including climate-resilient management, ecological restoration and species diversification — will the Commission put forward to bolster the resilience of EU ecosystems?

3. How does the Commission assess the fact that the proposal for an EU forest monitoring law is being substantially weakened in Parliament and the Council — in line with what is advocated by conservative groups and Member States with a clear stake in forest industries — and what impact does it think that undermining this essential tool will have on achieving the Union's climate goals?

Submitted: 25.8.2025

Answer given by Mr Hoekstra on behalf of the European Commission
(20 October 2025)

The land sector is EU's perhaps most important natural resource. It provides food and material for the bioeconomy, sustains a wealth of biodiversity and regulates climate.

Forests in Europe are vital for the climate transition, and the Commission shares the concern regarding the declining trend of the annual carbon sink between 2016 and 2022 ([1]).

One of the key objectives of the ongoing evaluation of the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry Regulation is to better understand the driving factors behind the declining sink, such as natural disturbances and management practices. It is nevertheless clear that climate change increases pressures on forests through droughts, fires, storms and pests.

Several initiatives seek to strengthen the incentives to enhance forest sinks, including to boost their resilience. This includes, among others, the Carbon Removal and Carbon Farming Certification Framework ([2]) and the Nature Restoration Regulation ([3]).

Collaboration with foresters and other actors across the forest-based value chain must continue to reverse this trend and promote long-term resilient forests for the EU bioeconomy and climate.

High quality, comparable and timely data is a prerequisite for efficient and evidence-based policy making. This is why the Commission proposed a Forest Monitoring Law ([4]) in November 2023 to create a common EU framework for improved monitoring.

With cost-efficiency and simplification as guiding principles, the proposal builds on making good use of existing advanced technologies such as satellites.

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[1] [1]https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-025-08967-3

([1]) EU Biomass supply, uses, governance and regenerative actions, Joint Research Centre, Figure 84: https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC140117.

([2]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L_202403012.

([3]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1991/oj/eng.

([4]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023PC0728.

At the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of 23 June 2025, the Commission in its statement expressed major concerns about the draft Council position, following which it may consider withdrawing the proposal.