



EFI Insights from Brussels

The EFI Liaison Office, located in the European Forestry House in Brussels, started its operations in February 2013. It aims to strengthen the cooperation of EFI with EU institutions, Member Countries and international organizations represented in Brussels. It will foster the policy-science interface regarding forest related issues and support EFI in advocating for forest research and information in Europe. The Liaison Office will regularly provide relevant information on EU policy developments as “EFI Insights from Brussels”.

Advisory Group of Forestry and Cork

EFI has a seat in the Advisory Group of Forestry and Cork (AG), representing forest research. At the meeting of the AG on June 4, several European Commission (EC) Services informed on ongoing activities affecting the forest-based sector as follows:

The new [EU Forest Strategy](#) is still under interservice consultation. After adoption, a new Forestry Action Plan should be prepared as soon as possible. The Advisory Committee on Community Policy regarding Forestry and Forest-based Industries started in 2012 an ad hoc Working Group on forest industry in the view of the economic crisis. 12 major challenges were identified and an Action Plan is under preparation that will be coordinated and presented together with the EU Forest Strategy. The AG urged for a quick finalisation and communication of the strategy to the European Parliament and European Council.

Due to very diverse positions of all parties involved, the approach on [sustainability criteria on solid biomass](#) was not decided yet. DG ENERGY wants an holistic view on the forest-based sector as framework for the discussion on this specific topic. The AG confirmed different stakeholder positions on the need for such criteria. If they have to be established, they should be the same for all kind of wood products, should be based on existing tools and criteria and stakeholders of the sector have to be involved. Such criteria have to cover all sources for energy, not only biomass.

New statistics show a sharply increased uptake of the environmental and nature conservation oriented measures within the [Rural Development Programme](#). For the new CAP 2014-2020, an agreement of the triologue is expected by end of June.

For the ongoing discussion on a [Guidance document on Natura 2000 and Forests](#), the AG raised the impact of game damage on forests as an issue to be included.

Science around [Indirect Land Use Change](#) is quite mature, but not yet ready enough to base policy decisions on it. The AG sees a need to ensure sustainable use of wood and to promote second generation biofuels.

European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability

The Europe 2020 Strategy and the post 2013 CAP reform package identified a key role for research and innovation in preparing the EU sustainable agriculture and rural development for the future challenges. The Europe 2020 flagship initiative "Innovation Union" specifies [European Innovation Partnerships \(EIP\)](#) as a new tool for fostering innovation by interlinking policies, actions and funding.

EIP Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability mainly aims at

- efficient, productive, climate and environment friendly agriculture and forestry
- steady supply of food, feed and biomaterials, both existing and new ones
- improved processes to preserve the environment, adapted to climate change and mitigation
- building bridges between research and farmers/foresters, businesses and advisory services.

EFI Director is member of the High Level Steering Board (HLSB) of this EIP, the Liaison Officer is acting as Sherpa. The main task of the HLSB is to guide the EIP by elaborating a Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) and by monitoring its implementation that will be pursued via Horizon 2020 and the Rural Development Programmes (RDP).

The EIP uses an interactive innovation model, focussing on forming demand-driven partnerships established by bottom-up approaches and linking farmers/foresters, advisors, researchers, businesses, and other actors in Operational Groups (OG). The OGs will be the key acting entities within the EIP as they are composed by actors working together in a project targeted at innovation and generating concrete results.

This EIP offers new chances for co-operation and funding within the RDP. Establishing and participating in OGs, and acting as innovation broker will offer new opportunities for EFI's units, Regional Offices and its Associate Members to contribute in a co-funded way to innovation in rural development and forestry practice. In addition, there will be also funding opportunities for research projects under Horizon 2020 (see following chapter).

EFI at Brussels level is active to include in the best possible way forestry in the SIP. At Member State level, EFI's Regional Offices and all interested Associate Members should cooperate with their national authorities responsible for RDP to include open thematic calls and/or forest call topics. This is crucial to prepare the ground for successful applications for EIP projects within the RDPs, also addressing forest related innovation challenges.

Beside this EIP, the forest-based sector is also covered by the EIP Raw Material and EIP Water with different aspects. EFI will be active in the co-ordination of the forest related activities of all three EIPs to maximise synergies at European level.

First Workprogramme for Horizon 2020

[Horizon 2020](#) is the upcoming EU framework programme for research and innovation for the period 2014-2020. The EC Services have started the preparation of the first work programme 2014/15, to be published by end of 2013. EFI is contributing forest related research and innovation topics to this process, in close cooperation with the European Technology Platform for the [Forest-based Sector \(FTP\)](#), and in due consideration of research needs identified by the EIP Agriculture.

EFI's contribution to the work programme 2014/15 is based on broad involvement of its' stakeholders, especially its' Associate Members. A call for written proposals in March 2013 resulted in about 50 forest research topics. In a workshop on June 12, priority topics were selected to be recommended by the FTP Advisory Committee to the FTP High Level Group for adoption and promotion to the EC Services. We would like to thank all the Associate Members participating in this workshop. EFI will play an active role in supporting the FTP in advocating for these topics in Horizon 2020.

For further information, please contact the EFI Liaison Office.

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