



First Forest Policy Forum Convenes in Brussels

18 September 2024

The new Forest Policy Modeling Forum, taking place on 18-19 September, brings together policymakers and modelers at the EU and Member State level to discuss ex-ante modeling needs and support forest policy for a better climate, improved biodiversity, and a striving bioeconomy across the EU.

European forests cover more than 40% of the EU territory; they play a key role in sustainable development and the well-being of EU citizens. They contribute to absorbing greenhouse gas emissions, hosting biodiversity, supplying biomass to the EU bioeconomy, and directly or indirectly employing people in rural communities. They also contribute to clean air and water, as well as represent important cultural and recreational value.

While the demand for the services provided by forests is only expected to grow, they are impacted by the threats associated with climate change and increasing natural disturbances.

Seeking to provide a platform for the discussion of future forest policies and the corresponding modeling needs in the EU, the IIASA-coordinated Horizon Europe project ForestNavigator is organizing the first Forest Policy Modeling Forum in Brussels. The Forum is organized in collaboration with the European Commission Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA) and will provide an opportunity for knowledge exchange between policymakers and modelers at the EU and national scales.

"The complex interplay between a multitude of societal goals, different spatial and temporal scales, and the dynamics in socio-economic and environmental change make system modeling approaches crucial for the policy makers. However, to ensure the best use of these complex models, transparent dialogue is needed," explains Petr Havlik, IIASA Biodiversity and Natural Resources Program Director. "While the EU legislation sets the framework and relevant targets, the implementation of forest-related policies happens at the Member State level. Establishing consistent modeling approaches between the EU and the Member States, and among the Member States themselves will enhance the effectiveness of the policy processes."

To facilitate dialogue about such approaches, researchers from the different institutions, decision makers from European Commission Directorates, national authorities, and agencies will lead panel presentations and discussions related to consistent policy and modeling advancements. In addition, researchers will provide updates on EU and national model developments exploitable for policy support, as well as conduct a multi-model exercise aimed at enhancing consistency between national and EU models in the context of climate mitigation policies.

"The main purpose of this Forum is to ensure liaison between the researchers who provide forest policy model-based assessments and the policymakers who use them," says Fulvio Di Fulvio, a senior research scholar in the Integrated Biosphere Futures Research Group of the IIASA Biodiversity and Natural Resources Program. "For us, this is a unique opportunity to understand the needs of policymakers in terms of modeling and model developments, as well as discuss the newly arising policy questions. For the policymakers, this is an opportunity to learn about the existing and future capabilities of our models."

The Forum will rely on an innovative high-tech online platform, the IIASA Policy Accelerator. This dedicated IT infrastructure hosted in the ForestNavigator Portal is being designed for open access for sharing data and model developments, automated model deployment, and the visualization of modeling results.

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