

ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN FORESTERS
PRACTISING MANAGEMENT WHICH
FOLLOWS NATURAL PROCESSES



UNION EUROPEENNE DE FORESTIERS
AUX CONCEPTIONS DE GESTION
PROCHE DE LA NATURE

VERBAND DER NATURNAH DENKENDEN FORSTLEUTE IN EUROPA

PROCLAMATION OF HANOVER

Basic principles

In contrast to many other parts of the world, only rarely did the systematic management of European forests commence in untouched virgin forest. Very few areas of virgin forest in Europe had escaped exploitation or destruction by Man over the past 3 000 years or more, these being mainly in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. These few remaining virgin forests are a valuable nature heritage, which should be protected.

On the contrary, many of the forests which we see today have been systematically recreated over the last two centuries, on areas where forest had been largely removed or replaced by heathland, on former agricultural land, or where the forest had been overexploited and impoverished. This restoration has given these forests new life, with an increase in biomass, timber production, and (in some instances) biodiversity.

In spite of the increasing demands of civilisation on our land area, a relatively large proportion of many parts of Europe is currently covered by forest, and this provides a livelihood for numerous forest owners and others in related occupations. Forest is the main resource for timber industry. At the same time, these forests are the most important ecological element in many cultivated landscapes. The large area which they occupy, and their great importance in the landscape and in the ecology of the area contrast with their low profile in political and economic circles, the media, and society in general.

Proclamation

Considering the facts:

- that forests are still disappearing world wide, but their importance as a source of renewable environmentally friendly raw materials becomes more important as the world's population increases;
- that the sequestration of carbon becomes more important as a means of mitigating the trend towards global warming;
- that with increasing reduction in the environmental values of other types of land, the contribution of forest ecosystems becomes more crucial;
- that the physical and psychological benefits of recreation in the forest become more important as the stresses of modern civilisation become greater,

PRO SILVA, the European federation of foresters advocating forest management based on natural processes, at the end of its 3rd international congress in June 2000 (held under the general heading of "Man- Nature- Technology" at the Hanover EXPO 2000 exhibition) states that:

1. Successful afforestation can take place even after a long history of devastation. The pioneer planting which may be required in such circumstances will often be very simply structured, but PRO SILVA stresses that, by subsequent application of the principles of forestry based on natural processes, such plantations can be modified to produce forests with biodiversity typical of the site, large volumes of standing timber, and a high proportion of valuable trees, which will be both economically and biologically productive.

2. Forest management following PRO SILVA principles is economically favourable. The reduction in expensive inputs of energy and labour, the minimisation of risk, and the production of timber of increased average size and value result in increased income to the owner.

3. At the same time, these principles optimise the social and environmental values of the forest; and the owner is better able to take account of these matters if the forest is being managed profitably.

4. The economic advantages of PRO SILVA forestry can be obtained under all forms of ownership. The realisation of objectives and functions of the forest are complementary rather than being in opposition to each other under this type of forestry, which does not, therefore, favour any particular form of ownership.

PRO SILVA wishes to make the following points, for the attention of politicians, administrators, institutions, lobbyists, and the media:

- There is an urgent need to rationalise the relevant legislative, legal, administrative, and tax bases for forestry which uses natural processes. These matters need to be harmonised in all countries in order to enable this approach to forest management to be implemented.
- The transition from even-aged plantations, neglected coppice, scrub, or plantations of inappropriate species can sometimes be difficult and will need financial support.
- Additional afforestation should continue. This should involve ecological improvement as far as possible.
- Collaboration between forest owners needs to be promoted, in order to strengthen their social, economic, and ecological objectives.
- The importance of timber as a renewable resource needs to be stressed. Comparisons are needed between the ecological effects, use of non-renewable resources, production of waste, and the scope for recycling of products under different production methods.
- There is a need to improve public understanding of forestry and the way in which the forester can work in an ecologically acceptable way of appropriate methods of silviculture are employed