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# Press release

## New EU Biodiversity Strategy could put at risk forest-based sector contribution to the Green Deal

Brussels, 20 May 2020

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As part of the European Green Deal, The European Commission published today its new Biodiversity Strategy, titled “Bringing nature back into our lives”. The document presents the key points for the protection of biodiversity in Europe, including a proposal for land protection, which is set to increase from 26% today to at least 30% by 2030. One third of the whole network of protected areas should be covered by strict protection. This suggested increase in protection targets for land would come on top of existing measures and good practices.

*“The proposal seems to miss that biodiversity is looked after in all areas, not only in protected ones, and **is already part of sustainable forest management**. These targets must be carefully reconsidered as they would decrease sustainable mobilisation of locally sourced raw materials in the EU. This would put at risk advancing the resilient circular economy and EU’s climate neutrality objectives”* said Jori Ringman, Director General at Cepi, the Confederation of European Paper Industries.

The European paper industry has released [a joint statement](#) together with its partners in the forest-based value chains explaining why sustainable forest management should be seen as an opportunity to safeguard biodiversity. We think it should play a key role across the world in enhancing the condition of ecosystems. Sustainable forest management assures the delivery of raw materials, of non-wood forest products and of ecosystem services like habitats, clean air, water purification and erosion prevention.

Legally sourced, certified primary raw materials from sustainably managed forests are prerequisites for the European paper industries. Cepi agrees on the importance of ensuring prospects for the development of biodiversity and highlights the crucial need to tackle global deforestation which is a significant problem: it causes an increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and has a negative impact on biodiversity. It is mainly driven by agriculture and urban sprawl and can be best tackled with development policies.

*“We have many decades of track record in sustainable sourcing and traceability that, together with sustainable forest management, contribute to enhancing the health and resilience of European forests. We support the Commission’s plans in creating more forests in Europe, tackling climate change and fostering a green and resilient recovery from COVID-19 crises. Viable and*

*sustainable forest-based industries with healthy nature can be our strongest asset in the fight against the climate change”, said Mr Ringman.*

The European paper industry has a strategic interest in keeping forests in an optimal state of health and growth in Europe. They provide the sustainable raw material that enables us to offer a wide range of renewable and recyclable wood fibre-based solutions for many sectors, from personal care to textile, green chemistry, and pharmaceuticals.

The European paper industries are committed to use wood that has been legally harvested and comes from responsibly managed forests. This is reflected in the reality: 92% of the wood consumed by the European paper industry is from Europe, the rest being imported mainly from Russia and Belarus. In 2018, 74% of the wood supply to the paper industry is from forests certified either [FSC \(Forest Stewardship Council\)](#) or [PEFC \(Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification\)](#). 90% of the external purchased pulp is certified. The success of these programs shows that they are suitable tools to verify sustainable management, including biodiversity protection.

The Commission is planning to publish a new EU Forest Strategy that should serve as the main policy tool to integrate European forests and the forest-based sector into the EU Green Deal. It should take the form of a holistic, multi-dimensional and inclusive strategy that will ensure an effective further development of the EU instruments related to forest management (such as adaptation, damage prevention, forest restoration, afforestation, Forest Information System for Europe). The elements included in the Biodiversity Strategy released today can complement an EU Forest Strategy, but further elaboration of their impact should take place before setting legally binding targets.

**Note to editor:**

For more information about Cepi or its position on the EU Biodiversity Strategy, please contact Ulrich Leberle, Raw Materials Director, at [u.leberle@cepi.org](mailto:u.leberle@cepi.org)

**About Cepi:**

Cepi is the European association representing the paper industry. We offer a wide range of renewable and recyclable wood-based fibre solutions to EU citizens: from packaging to textile, hygiene and tissue products, printing and graphic papers as well as speciality papers, but also bio-chemicals for food and pharmaceuticals, bio-composites and bioenergy.

We are a responsible industry: 92% of our raw materials are sourced in Europe and certified as sustainable, 91% of the water we use is returned to the environment, in good condition. We are the world champion in recycling at the rate of 71,6%. At the forefront of the decarbonisation and industrial transformation of our economy, we embrace digitalisation and bring 20 billion value addition to the European economy and €5.5 billion investments annually.

Through its 18 national associations, Cepi gathers 500 companies operating 895 mills across Europe and directly employing more than 180,000 people.