

Private Forestry in Finland

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Finland is Europe's most forested country. Two thirds of the forests in Finland are owned by private persons and families. The remaining one-third is divided among the state, municipalities and companies. About 730 000 Finns own forest - either directly or through their families. There are over 440 000 forest holdings in the country (over 2 hectares), with average size being around 30 hectares.

Earlier, private forest owners were primarily farmers. Today, the majority of forest owners are wage and salary earners, pensioners and business entrepreneurs, with farmers accounting for one fifth. At the same time the amount of female forest owners and city forest owners – also forest owners living in cities relatively far away from their forest holdings – is increasing. These trends already have and will have an impact on forest owners' objectives and forest management practices.

Forestry is primarily an economic activity. Both wood production and provision of services are steered by market demand. Legislation provides the framework for forest sector activities. The needs of both industry and other forest users are taken into account in the tending and use of forests with respect for the forest ecosystem. In return, Finnish forest owners expect that their ownership and decision-making rights regarding their forest holdings are respected and that sufficient prices are paid for their forest products and services.

Finnish family forestry is profitable and sustainable economic activity. The net profit of family forestry in Finland was approx. 100 euros per hectare per annum during the period 2002–2005. There is great variation across the country in the net profits due to climate, soil and distance to

mills. In Northern Finland, the net profit averaged 37 euros per hectare and in Eastern Finland it was over 135 euros.

Measured by its share of the national economy, forest industries are the second largest branch of industry in Finland, only surpassed by the electrotechnical industry. The forest sector employs about 90,000 people in Finland and generates about 5.5% of Finland's gross domestic product. One fifth of Finland's export revenue is derived from the forest industries.





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Sustainable forestry in PEFC certified forests

Family forest owners manage and use their forests in a sustainable way and offer many products and services to the rest of society. They produce raw material for the use of industry, maintain forest biodiversity and provide recreational services.

Biodiversity refers to the entire diversity of life: within-species genetic variation, species abundance, and the diversity of their habitats. Finland's forests constitute the foremost habitat type in the country's nature both in terms of their area and the number of species. About half of Finland's plant and animal species live in forests. Protection of biodiversity is part of the everyday forest management in family forestry. Increasing attention has been paid to biodiversity in commercial forests since the 1970s. In the 1990s, forest biodiversity became even more closely integrated with forestry legislation and the environmental guidelines and recommendations set for forestry.

PEFC forest certification guarantees that the wood rawmaterial comes from forests that have

been managed well and responsibly. Good forest management is ecologically, socially and economically sustainable. Forest certification covers 95% of Finland's forest area. Certification is also verification of good forest nature management.

The habitats of special importance, i.e. key biotopes, refer to those forest habitats which are more significant for biological diversity than forest habitats on average. Key biotopes include the habitats of special importance which are in a natural state or close to it as listed in the Forest Act, and the protected ecosystem types as listed in the Nature Conservation Act, and rare forest sites or sites becoming rare as listed in the Finnish Forest Certification System. Forests shall be managed and used so that the characteristics of all the above mentioned habitats will be retained.

The above mentioned work for ecological values has paid off. According to the survey of endangered species (Ministry of the Environment, 2010), the decline of endangered forest species has been reversed in Finland.

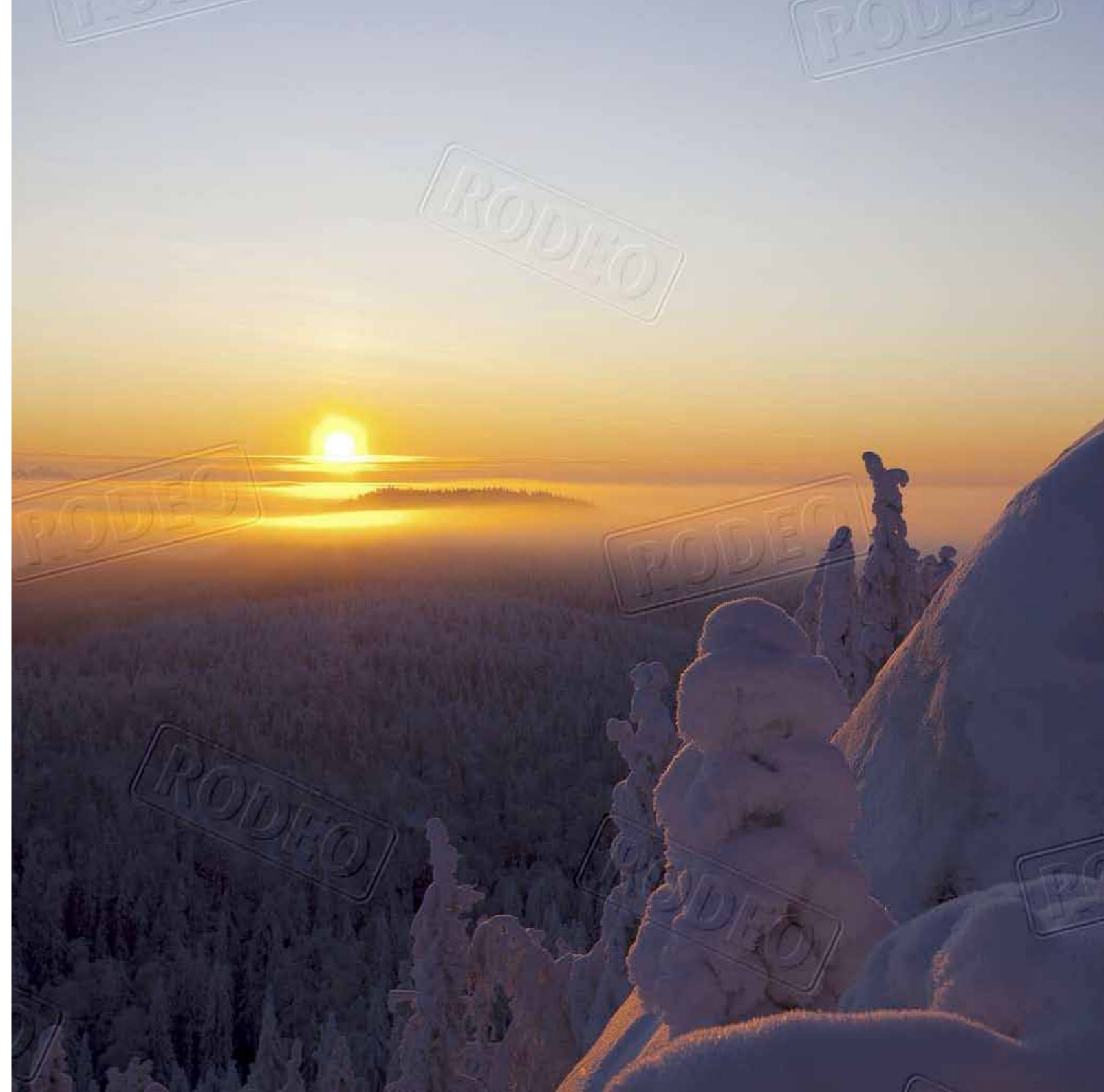
Forest protection in Finland – voluntariness is the key

Forest biodiversity is preserved by ensuring the preservation of biodiversity in commercial forests and by sufficient network of conservation areas. Traditionally, the protection of areas has been based on decisions taken by the relevant authorities and then the areas have been redeemed by the state.

Compared with the total forest area, the area of such conservation areas is larger in Finland than in any other European country. Conservation areas in Finland are mainly areas subject to strict protection, and as a rule the practicing of forestry is forbidden in such areas.

The Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland (METSO), approved by the Government in 2002 represents new thinking in forest protection. METSO is based on voluntariness and forest owners own willingness to protect their forests. METSO focuses on increasing the share of protected forest in southern Finland.

METSO has been a success. Voluntary protection of forests increases the acceptability of protection of forests among forest owners and makes the attitude climate more favorable towards protection of forests. Forest owners have been active in adopting voluntary means. The supply of private forest area for protection has continuously exceeded the budgetary resources.





Everyman's rights and landowners' rights

Everyman's rights of access, based on the ancient customs, have their origins in the Finnish society of the past. This was characterised by the predominance of agriculture and forestry. At this time access to the forests and their resources and collecting of natural produce were necessities of life.

Everyman's rights mean that everyone is entitled to enjoy the bounties of nature, including picking of wild berries and wild mushrooms irrespective of whose land they happen to grow on. Forest

owners provide this opportunity free of charge. There are two fundamental preconditions for making use of everyman's rights: they need to be occasional or temporary and must not cause nuisance or damage.

Everyman's rights are so-called yielding rights. In other words, one cannot demand that a landowner should restrict his legal operation in his forests, e.g. felling operations and forest regeneration, for the sake of everyman's rights. Should a landowner decide to dedicate a part of his land to a special use, everyman's rights have to yield.



Forest producers in Finland

Forest producers in Finland have organized their collective action through local Forest Management Associations (FMA) for over 100 years. At the moment, there are more than 100 associations in Finland covering the whole country and employing around 1,000 experts in sustainable forest management services. Forest management associations can meet all the service requirements of forest owners from planting to timber sales and marketing.

The Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK) is the trade association of rural producers representing the interest of Finnish farmers, forest owners, rural entrepreneurs and rural people. MTK has 156,000 members. MTK works for the economic and social status

of its members, development of rural businesses, environment management and protection of private property. MTK is also active in international forest policy fora together with forest owners' international organizations CEPF (Confederation of European Forest Owners) and IFFA (International Family Forestry Alliance)

The Finnish model of private forest owners associations is appreciated in all over the world. MTK has initiated twinning projects in Mexico and together with AgriCord in Ethiopia and Vietnam. By supporting the creation of forest producers' own organisations, the projects aim at enhancing sustainable forest management practices which in turn improve the livelihood of rural people and contribute to poverty eradication.



