

# Responsible farm and forest management

- MTK's environmental promises



A long-term, over-generational collaboration with nature is the core of our business. For us, it is important to give farm and its environment to future generations in better conditions, according to our values - through expertise, transparency and cooperation for equality. The basis for our environmental program are the planetary boundaries and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030).



**Agriculture and forestry play an important role in achieving sustainable development goals.**

Finland is the most heavily forested country in Europe and the northernmost agricultural member state in the EU. We have learned to work with challenging and varying climatic and soil conditions. We count on an up-to-date and future-oriented research, made under our conditions, and see that as a basis of sustainable environmental policy.

It is imperative that our business is profitable, so that we can invest in the latest technology, adapt different environmental measures and make most use of digitalization in our site-specific environmental work.

Agriculture and forestry are influenced by numerous environmental instruments. Their target is to set activity to a generally acceptable level and minimize harmful environmental effects. An open and constructive interaction with the land-users and land-owners is important to redeem the social acceptability.

## We safeguard biodiversity

Looking after biodiversity in forests and agricultural environment is an important part of regular forestry and agriculture. Increasing the amount of coarse woody debris and taking care of crop rotation are examples of our work for the benefit of nature. Controlling invasive alien species requires actions, to which the whole society must engage.

Forestry and agriculture need to be in balance with nature conservation. Economical and other losses, caused to landowners because of conservation must be compensated. Processes concerning biodiversity protection must be as cost-efficient as possible, and they also have to respect property rights by being landowner-oriented.



We are constantly improving our methods, so that different aspects, related to ecological sustainability are better and better taken into consideration. Landowners' pursuits related to nature conservation shall be supported. Forest protection based on voluntariness and full financial compensation has proved to be an effective means in safeguarding biodiversity in forests without confrontations.

## Ecosystem services

Ecosystem services refer to tangible and intangible commodities that are divided into three main categories (provisioning, cultural, regulation and maintenance services), which are essential prerequisites for human well-being. The role of agricultural and forestry producers providing ecosystem services must be acknowledged, and their active measures must be funded and appreciated.

## We take care of productivity and purity of the cultivated soils

Resource efficiency means producing more with less. Thus, soil growth factors must give their best. The productivity should not be undermined in the interests of environmental protection, but all elements of fertility need to be in balance: the physical (water, soil structure), chemical (nutrient, pH, limited harmful substances) and biological (biota and organic matter).

Finland's soil is one of the cleanest ones in Europe, and that is how it should be preserved. In soil improvement and fertilization, the exact contents of all recycled materials should be known, in order to avoid new risks of contamination. The product descriptions must be more accurate and include information on the origin of the raw material.

To prevent soil erosion from the fields and forests, flood protection measures and sufficient basic drainage are needed. The whole society should bear responsibility for applying these climate change adaptation measures, as extreme weather events and heavy rainfalls by climate change are a challenge to the productivity of our soil.



Our aim is to add crop diversification and soil organic matter. We can improve soil productivity by crop rotation, by avoiding soil compaction, by liming and by drainage. The most productive parcels are suitable for efficient crop production, while the poorer ones can be used for maintaining biodiversity. The soil use optimization maintains the ability of our fields to produce high yields with good quality, and to reduce adverse effects of agriculture on climate or waters. We work on to increase farmers' knowledge, as well as profitability of the farms, so that the soil remains clean, healthy and productive.

## We protect our waters

We encourage farmers and forest owners to maintain good water status and to improve it by reducing eutrophic nutrient and erosion load, by preventing run-off of harmful substances into waters, and by participating in restoration of water bodies.



An essential tool for agricultural water protection is the agri-environment payment scheme with its measures. We need a corresponding system also in the future, in order the costs of environmental measures not to be sole responsibility of the farmers. Measures relating to soil structure, water management, and plant cover will become more important, as climate change increases rainfall outside the growing season and reduces the positive impact of frost on soil structure. Measures concerning utilization of manure and biodiversity remain important.

Key water protection measures in forestry include measures that reduce nutrient and erosion load into waters during maintenance ditching and soil tillage. The costs of forestry water protection need also to be compensated by the society.

To improve the efficiency of water protection, the measures should be targeted regionally, or even on a farm level. The measures should be cost-effective and well-matched to the everyday work at the farm. We cooperate, and encourage our members to cooperate with research and authorities, in order to find the best solutions for water protection.

## We solve energy issues

We promote the efficient utilization of rural bioenergy and other renewable energy in electricity and heat production, as well as low-emission traffic fuels. The most significant source of rural bioenergy is forest biomass. Agricultural bioenergy sources include livestock manure, other animal by-products and field biomass, such as grass. Their utilization requires investment subsidies at the farm level, and favorable industrial and environmental legislation.



To exploit rural bioenergy resources, a decentralized power and heat production system is a fundament. Large energy plants using fossil fuels need to be converted into ones using bioenergy and other renewables. We encourage using solar, wind and hydropower in energy production. We recognize the importance of peat as a fuel improving domestic energy security of supply, for as long as coal and other fossiles are imported to Finland.

We encourage emissions from agricultural production to be reduced by improving the energy efficiency and energy self-sufficiency of farms, and by increasing individual production of renewable energy. We develop MTK member services to support the members' ability to provide sustainable renewable energy services to the society.

### Circular economy close to breakthrough

The basic idea of the circular economy is to achieve economic growth without harmful environmental load. Circular economy is one of the key solutions to enhance the use of renewable energy, and mitigate climate change. This means, among other things, favoring services instead of products, and recycling of materials as far as possible in a cost-effective and climate-friendly way.

## Everyman's right in Finland

Nature is a value to our members, and therefore we offer public access to the countryside. The freedom to enjoy the countryside is accompanied by an obligation to leave the environment undisturbed and to preserve Finland's rich natural heritage for future generations to enjoy. Public access is temporary, occasional and causes no harm to property. It is reasonable to ask the landowner's permission to do business activities on a private land. This avoids conflicts and respects private property. As new types of nature-based business models emerge and become common, MTK ensures that interpretations of everyman's rights stay up-to-date in a way that protects private property.



## We are climate service providers

We encourage production of sustainable commodities that can replace raw materials most damaging to climate. Forests are one of the most important carbon capturers in the world. Finnish forests are vast carbon sink. The vigorous forest carbon sink is best protected by active and sustainable forestry. Keeping forests productive and ensuring that renewal takes place, we make sure that forests bind more carbon than they release. We promote replacement of non-renewable raw materials by wood, as wood-based products like wooden houses operate as efficient and long-term carbon storages.



The agricultural fields bind carbon to growing plants and soil. Nitrogen released from arable crops, and methane emissions from livestock farming can be reduced by good practices, such as manure placement and split application of nitrogen. Soil carbon can be improved with dense and deep rooting crops and soil amendments. We influence research so that we can learn more about the factors affecting climate change and adaptation to it. We will continue providing information to our members.

Climate change brings challenges, because floods, crop-diseases and pests will be increased in the future. Rural livelihoods need to be compensated for supplying climatic benefits and for emerging losses, due to adaptation. We are promoting development of voluntary market mechanisms, related to these issues. We call for adoption of scientific facts as the basis of forest carbon policies, which highlight the importance of active forestry as the fundament to maintain vigorous forest carbon sinks. This must be guaranteed in the international agreements, as well as on the national and regional policies.

## We value our land

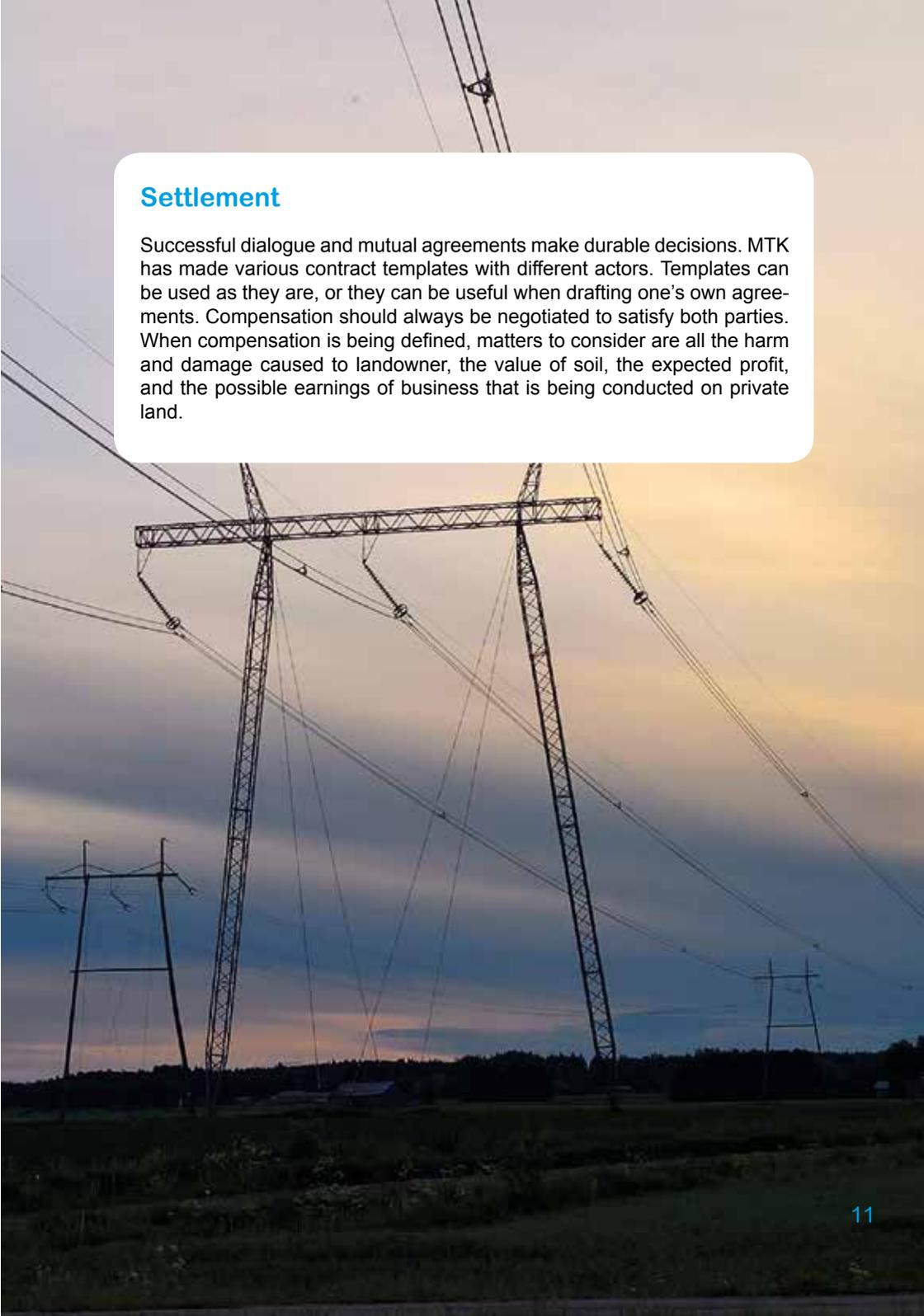
Private landownership is the basis for Finnish affluent society and countryside's business activities. The property of everyone is protected by the Constitution of Finland. We must respect and brace these rights. However, landownership is more restricted than the one of other types of property.

We must ensure that everyone has a true right and opportunity to participate in any processing regarding their own property. No planning should be done on private property without the landowner's awareness. MTK's goal is that a transparent and efficient interplay of landowners, authorities and other actors is secured by law and good practice. MTK promotes contractual usage, and offers various contract templates regarding landowning.



The objective is that any release of property for public good is based on a mutual agreement and consensus. Therefore, the legislation must assure satisfactory compensation, when land is being expropriated.

Landowners must have a strong status on land use planning, so that operational preconditions of agricultural industry are ensured for the foreseeable future, and people are given right to choose a pleasing domicile.



## Settlement

Successful dialogue and mutual agreements make durable decisions. MTK has made various contract templates with different actors. Templates can be used as they are, or they can be useful when drafting one's own agreements. Compensation should always be negotiated to satisfy both parties. When compensation is being defined, matters to consider are all the harm and damage caused to landowner, the value of soil, the expected profit, and the possible earnings of business that is being conducted on private land.

## MTK's environmental promises

- ✓ *We value our land*
- ✓ *We take care of our soil productivity*
- ✓ *We protect our waters*
- ✓ *We solve energy issues*
- ✓ *We apply climate actions*
- ✓ *We safeguard biodiversity*



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