



WORKING GROUP
ON PLANTS, ANIMALS, FOOD AND FEED

Section Forest reproductive material

9 MARCH 2022

SUMMARY

SECTION A Information and/or discussion

1. Update on the revision of plant and forest reproductive material legislation

The Commission gave an update on the revision of the legislation on plant and forest reproductive material and the next steps. The Commission informed about the ongoing public consultation and the upcoming targeted survey, interviews and focus groups. The Commission invited Member States to pre-register for the targeted survey and participate in the public consultation. The Commission announced that the webpage had been updated.

One Member State mentioned that ‘deployment areas’ are a matter of national competence whereas another Member State noted the need for defining this term and including the underlying principles in the revised forest reproductive material legislation. One Member State declared that the revised legislation should not contain any measures on contingency planning.

2. Scientific and technological developments

Finland presented advances in tree breeding and explained that the adaptation of forests to climate change can be enhanced by using improved forest reproductive material. Finland evaluates breeding materials at a number of sites under different climatic conditions before using these materials for forest reproductive material production. A stable performance across multiple testing environments gives better tolerance to environmental stresses. The ‘Planter’s Guide’ web tool allows forest owners to choose the most productive forest reproductive material taking into account future projected global warming. In a second presentation, Finland explained that shortage of bred Norway spruce material was solved through the use of in vitro multiplication of seed embryos for the production of this material. A survey showed

that forest owners and professionals are willing to pay more for forest reproductive material with features such as improved resilience and improved pest and pathogen resistance. As the seed embryos can be stored at very low temperatures the material stays young and fit for regeneration, thus guaranteeing the availability of Norway spruce forest reproductive material.

The Joint Research Centre presented EU-Trees4F, an application modelling the current and future distribution of 67 European forest tree species based on national forest inventories. The aim of this application is to contribute to informing afforestation/reforestation activities, supporting assisted tree migration, conserving tree diversity and ecosystem services, highlighting highly vulnerable forest areas and calibrating/validating global vegetation models.

3. Assessment of characteristics contributing to sustainable afforestation and reforestation

Slovenia presented their approach towards the use of characteristics contributing to sustainable afforestation and reforestation. The national forestry programme and legislation support diversity in all actions and outreach activities, contain rules and guidelines for the conservation of genetic diversity including adapted rules for approval of basic material, provide guidelines on the use of provenances, prepare lists of appropriate species depending on the ecological region and elevation zone and contain measures for genetic protection of forests.

4. Conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources

The European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN) Secretariat presented their preliminary views on the revision of the forest reproductive material legislation. In the case of conservation of forest genetic resources the aim is to preserve the entire gene pool rather than selecting superior individuals for desired growth traits. Moreover to conserve forest genetic resources small quantities of forest reproductive material that cannot fulfil the requirements of basic material are required. The EUFORGEN Secretariat asked support for the activities of seed conservation networks of forest genetic resources and clarified that exchange in kind of forest reproductive material is very rare.

5. a) Seed fraud network

The Commission presented the priorities and organisation of the EU seed fraud network. It is a voluntary network exchanging administrative information related to suspected cases of fraud. The four operational criteria for seed fraud are violation of EU Plant reproductive material Law, intention, economic gain and deception of customers/farmers/operators.

b) Import of forest seed for ornamental uses

The Commission presented an example of the number of trees that can be planted from imported forest seeds reminding Member States to pay attention when

considerable amounts of forest seeds are imported for ornamental use. In certain cases the amounts imported could be used for forestry purposes.

6. Customs controls on suspected cases of illegal imports

Point not addressed

7. Official Controls Regulation

The Commission presented the Official Controls Regulation and explained that official controls to approve basic material and certify forest reproductive material, which are carried out prior to the placing on the market of forest reproductive material, would remain in the sectoral legislation. The Commission clarified which changes on official controls were considered and compared the options for future harmonised controls either in the sectoral legislation or in the scope of the Official Controls Regulation. Two Member States expressed concerns about the inclusion of plant and forest reproductive material in the scope of the Official Controls Regulation. Member States were asked to provide written comments by 8 April 2022.

8. Exchange of views on approval of basic material and issuing supplier's document

The Commission had an exchange of views with Member States on conducting tasks such as approval of basic material and certification of forest reproductive material under official supervision of the competent authorities. Two Member States were of the opinion that allowing professional operators to approve basic material would create a conflict of interest. Another Member State noted that the assessment of basic material could be done by professional operators under official supervision but that the approval of the basic material for listing in the national register of basic material should always be done by the competent authority. Member States were asked to provide written comments by 8 April 2022.

9. Production of forest reproductive material for non-forestry uses

Denmark and Sweden presented how they have implemented the legislation on the marketing of forest reproductive material to produce forest reproductive material for non-forestry purposes. One Member State highlighted the need for harmonising the scope of the legislation with regard to the envisaged purpose. For example in certain Member States the national legislation covers the production of forest reproductive material for biodiversity conservation and restoration of ecosystems whereas in others it does not. The Commission concluded that a survey will be prepared on this topic and on activities under official supervision. Member States will have one month time to reply to this survey.