

30% Forest Growth in Europe, 1950 – 2010; a briefing document

Summary

Taking the UN FAO figures quoted in the briefing document below, it can be stated that European forests have grown by 44% since the early 50's. However, given the changing basis of reporting and other variances, Two Sides has decided that choosing a growth figure of 30% will be appropriate to ensure that any changes in definitions, measurement of data or country borders are accounted for. The basis of the growth figures are to be found in the source documents quoted below.

Sources of forest growth

Since 1950, forests in Europe have grown largely as a result of the increasing demand for wood as a source of renewable material for fuel, timber for construction and the making of pulp for paper and packaging. Today, in the world, only about 11% of the timber taken from forests is used directly for making paper; the biggest users are for fuel and construction, estimated at 55% and 30% respectively, with 4% for other uses.¹

The main source of data for the measurement of forests growth is the five yearly UN FAO Forest Resources Assessment which provides key worldwide data for forest cover and growth. Over the years country borders and measurement definitions have changed but the fundamental data is available and robust.

In 1953, the total area of European forests and woodland covered 28.3% of the land area² yet by 2010 this cover had increased to 49%³. European Forests and other wooded land are estimated by the UN FAO to have grown from 135.5 million hectares in 1953⁴ to 194.8 million hectares in 2010⁵, a growth of 43.7%. (see table below)

¹ [Breakdown of wood use, based on UN FAO Stat, 2008, figures](#)

² [World Forest Resources, 1953, p61, FRA, 28.3% forest, accessible and inaccessible, cover](#)

³ [UN FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment, 2010, p227, 49% forest and other wooded land cover](#)

⁴ [World Forest Resources, 1953, p60, FRA, forest cover tables](#)

⁵ [UN FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment, 2010, p226, forest cover tables](#)

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Comparison of data from UN FAO Global Forest Assessment report, 1953 and 2010:

Forests + Other wooded land (x 1000 ha)	FRA 1953	FRA 2010	Difference	
Albania	1,130	1,031	-99	
Andorra	0	16	16	
Austria	3,156	4,006	850	
Belgium	601	706	105	
Bulgaria	3,700	3,927	227	
Czech Republic + Slovak	4,023	4,590	567	
Denmark	438	591	153	
Finland	21,660	23,269	1,609	
France	11,407	17,572	6,165	
Germany	9,501	11,075	1,574	
Greece	2,000	6,539	4,539	
Hungary	1,253	2,029	776	
Iceland	2	116	114	
Ireland	124	789	665	
Italy	5,648	10,916	5,268	
Liechtenstein	4	8	4	
Luxembourg	81	88	7	
Netherlands	250	365	115	
Norway	7,500	12,768	5,268	
Poland	7,503	9,337	1,834	
Portugal	2,467	3,611	1,144	
Romania	6,326	6,733	407	
Spain	12,500	27,747	15,247	
Sweden	22,980	31,247	8,267	
Switzerland	950	1,311	361	
Former Yugoslavia	8,745	11,464	2,719	
United Kingdom	1,563	2,904	1,341	
Europe	135,512	194,755	59,243	43.72%

Doesn't include countries formerly belonging to USSR (e.g. Baltic States)

Analysis kindly provided by [CEPI, Confederation of European Paper Industries](#)

“Since the 1990s, the forest area in Europe has been increasing steadily. In the forest Europe region alone, the forest area increased by 17 million hectares in the last two decades.” Source: UN FAO, State of Europe’s forest 2011,⁶

“Forests cover almost half of Europe’s land surface and forest area continues to increase. There are 1.02 billion hectares of forest in Europe, which amount to 25 percent of the world total. Over the last 20 years, the forest area has expanded in all European regions and has gained 0.8 million hectares each year. Over the same period, the total growing stock of forests in Europe has increased by 8.6 billion cubic metres, an equivalent to the total combined growing stock of France, Germany and Poland. Growing stock has increased faster than area, which means that average standing volume of wood per hectare in Europe has increased.” Source: State of Europe’s forests 2011, MCPFE⁷

The rate of growth of Europe’s forests in recent years can be expressed as equivalent to 1.5 million football pitches every year, or 5 times the size of London.⁸

⁶ [UN FAO, State of Europe’s Forests 2011, Report Revised November 2011 MCPFE, preface and summary](#)

⁷ [MCPFE State of Europe’s forests 2011, p7](#)

⁸ [Expressing the size of forest growth 1990 – 2010, as football pitches, size of London](#)