



Brussels, 4 December 2018  
(OR. en)

15101/18

AGRI 607  
FORETS 49

**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations

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Subject: Massive forest damages in Europe  
*- Information from the Presidency*

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Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Presidency on the above mentioned subject to be raised under "Any other business" at the session of the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 17 December 2018.

**Massive forest damages in Europe**

An extraordinary heatwave and the resulting drought, combined with heavy storm events, affected Europe in October 2018 and caused severe damage in forests all over Europe.

In Austria alone, damage amounting to more than 8 million solid cubic metres of wood, occurred as a result of storm and bark beetle. For Italy, the preliminary estimation of damage is around 15 million solid cubic metres. Also in the Czech Republic, in Slovakia, Germany and many other countries the excessively hot summer led to climate-related damage caused by drought and increased pest infestation. Massive forest fires were reported from Sweden and Greece, among others. Sweden recorded forest fires on altogether 25,000 hectares, which are considered the most menacing fires in the history of Sweden.

The solution of the resulting problems for reforestation, for the timber markets, the protection against pest infestation, and sustainable forest management confronts the forest sector in the Member States with enormous challenges.

Therefore, the instruments of the European Union which serve the support of sustainable forest management, in particular the rural development programme and the EU Forest Strategy, must be used in the best possible way. Efforts will have to focus on making forest stands fit to withstand the negative impacts of climate change, on pest control, forest fire prevention and reforestation.

Most of the concerned Member states put immediate measures into effect; in Austria, the Federal Government put a Drought-Package in place for quick support to the affected forest owners as well as further disaster relief measures for coping with storm damages. However, the problem has now reached a Europe-wide dimension and requires cross-border cooperation. A regulated exchange of knowledge and information in the framework of the EU Forest Strategy appear to be urgently necessary. Against this background of increasing forest damages, the conclusion of the legally binding agreement on forests in the pan-European region reaches a new level of urgency.