

WELCOME

Professor Heikki Juslin
President
Finnish Forest Association

Distinguished Guests, Dear Speakers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this opening session of the Forum titled “Renewable Resources – Sustainable Future”.

In this welcome address I will highlight briefly the motive and execution of this Forum. After that, I will give a practical example of the linkage between sustainability and business.

Motive for the Forum

The basic question of the Forum is:

“How can renewable natural resources contribute to European competitiveness, sustainability and well-being?”

As we told in the invitation letter the European economies and business increasingly depend on eco-efficient resource utilization, and sustainable production and consumption patterns. At the same time the societal status and technical nature of the renewable resource base is totally changing.

The debate on renewable resources is strengthening everywhere. The boundaries between various sectors are disappearing. Development of forest and energy sectors is a good example of that.

The winners of the future are those who discover the future first. No sector can look at the future challenges only from its own point of view. Reacting to the changes is not enough. Proactive approach is needed.

Sustainable use of Finnish forests for human well-being is a success story. During Finnish EU presidency, the Finnish forest sector wants to broaden the debate on renewable resources, competitiveness, sustainability and well being. This is the reason why we are here. This Forum is a cooperative effort of the whole Finnish forest sector: Ministry, forest industries, forest owners, Finnish Forest Foundation and Finnish Forest Association.

***Mode of the Forum***

Need for cross-sectoral dialogue is clearly increasing. Finnish forest sector has long experience of high level cross-sectoral dialogue. High level decision makers from various sectors have been invited to seminars and forest excursions in order to increase their knowledge and understanding of the possibilities and challenges of the forest sector

This far more than five hundred societal decision makers have participated the Forums. The Forums have been effective. Knowledge and image of the forest sector have improved and the trust in the future of forest sector increased.

Being encouraged by the good results of the domestic cross-sectoral Forums we arranged some international Forums using the same concept.

That forum is called "Forest Academy for Decision Makers". Term "academy" is not referring to academic spheres. After very positive domestic and international feedback the concept was productized. This product can be used by those who need a tool for cross-sectoral communication and dialogue. This forum is carried out using that productized concept.

Case: Sustainability as a Business Opportunity

The Finnish forest sector has to follow with keen eye what is happening in our export markets. Sustainability is one of the key drivers in the European markets. As an example I will use the UK construction market.

Demand for sustainability

The UK government has been very active when promoting sustainability. The strategy of sustainable development was launched in early 1990's and it was followed by guidelines for sustainable construction. The "Sustainable Communities Plan" aimed at communities, buildings and homes which people can afford and where they want to live and work.

The Egan Report "Rethinking Construction" recommended new operating modes and new business models for the construction industry. A new "Code for Sustainable building" will direct the choices of construction materials and methods. BREEAM (Building Research Establishment – Environmental Assessment Method) helps the assessment and certification of the environmental performance of new or renovated buildings. EcoHomes standard guides construction of environmentally friendly houses.

Concepts of sustainable construction

The UK strategy for more sustainable construction- Building a Better Quality of Life, emphasises following principles:

- lean construction, minimum waste, energy and pollution
- preserving and enhancing biodiversity and conserving water resources
- respect for people and local environment



Key strands for sustainable construction are environmental responsibility, social awareness and economic profitability.

Economic sustainability

The UK - like the rest of the Europe - faces a massive challenge if it is to continue enjoying economic growth and development, while protecting and improving the environment. Under "business as usual" projections, the UK and Europe will increasingly face trade-offs between economic and environmental objectives. And those trade-offs could impose significant costs on society - either through limits to economic growth or through the effects of environmental damage.

Innovation is the key driver of resource productivity. This means new ideas, new technologies and new business models enabling greater value to be extracted from natural resources. Yield of renewable resources is maximised and the waste minimised. By encouraging environmental innovation and using resources more productively, environmental objectives can be achieved sooner and at less cost. Trade-offs can be minimised and opportunities to combine increased prosperity and environmental protection can be exploited.

The UK example indicates how demand for sustainability could be transformed into business possibilities. Wood as a sustainable and renewable material has huge potentials in European construction sector. **The demand for wood is there.** Renewable materials, sustainable processes and new business models can mean competitive business.

Dear audience. In this Forum we share information, encourage dialogue and form a framework for our thinking. When having proactive attitudes we don't forecast the future we create it! It is a pleasure and honor for me to welcome you all to this Forum titled "Renewable Resources – Sustainable Future".