

## WELCOME

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Honourable Ms. Minister, Dear Speakers, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this opening session of the second forum of “Renewable Resources – Sustainable Future”.

In this welcome address, I will briefly explain what the forum of “Renewable Resources – Sustainable Future” is, and why it is organized here in Finland by the Finnish Forest Association. I will also give some examples of the linkage between the forest sector, sustainability and renewable resources.

In her opening speech, our Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Ms. Sirkka-Liisa Anttila, will handle natural resource policies in the Nordic and Baltic countries more broadly, and in our key note speech, Dr. Monika Sormann from the European Commission will elaborate the way to a bio-based European economy.

### **Why RRSF in Finland?**

This forum “Renewable Resources – Sustainable Future” aims to contribute to competitiveness, sustainability and well-being in the Baltic Sea area. Even if the seminar is organised by the Finnish Forest Association, it is not a traditional forest seminar for foresters. It is a cross-sectoral forum, bringing together key actors from different sectors in the Nordic and in Baltic countries. It provides a future-looking and output-oriented international platform for providing new insight to the potentials of renewable natural resources.

As mentioned in the invitation letter, European societies and businesses increasingly depend on efficient resource utilisation, as well as sustainable production and consumption patterns. A renewable resource base – like biomass, air or water – offers a wide range of new opportunities for both competitive businesses and sustainable policies.



The sustainable use of Finnish forests for human well-being is a success story. Wood and forest were key factors in converting Finland from an agrarian society to an industrial nation. The forest industry is still the second largest industrial branch in Finland. However, the total volume of the growing stock of our forests is bigger than ever before, and the total area of protected forest is one of the largest in Europe. The starting point of the RRSF forums was that the Finnish forest sector wanted to broaden the debate on renewable resources, competitiveness, sustainability and well being.

This forum is a cooperative effort of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland, and the whole Finnish forest sector. The forum is organised by the Finnish Forest Association. It is an organisation for the co-operation of bodies active or interested in the forest sector. It was founded one hundred and thirty years ago. From the very beginning, the goal of the Finnish Forest Association was to promote cooperation and to increase interest in better forest management in Finland.

At present, its mission is to provide information on the potential of forests in solving societal problems and to promote the acceptance of responsible forest use. The main working instrument of the association is the arrangement of open and interactive communication between the forest sector and other spheres of society.

The Finnish forest sector and Finnish Forest Association have long experiences of high level cross-sectoral dialogue through arranging a regular cross-sectoral forum called "Forest Academy for Decision-Makers". This informed people's forum gathers an unusual combination of decision-makers and opinion leaders to increase their knowledge and understanding of the possibilities and challenges of the forest sector. So far, more than six hundred decision-makers have participated in the forums.

This international Forum is carried out by using the same cross-sectoral, proactive concept. And please note, the Forest Academy concept has been productized, and is now also available for other countries and international organisations.

### **Sustainable development and sustainable forestry**

Dear audience, the use of forests is often considered as a problem from the point of view of sustainability, but it is not a problem, it is a solution.

Forests and wood illustrate a renewable natural resource with multiple potentials. These potentials are related to, for example, construction, energy, environment, recreation and rural development. A competitive and eco-efficient forest cluster combined with the fact that forests are a renewable resource make an excellent foundation for sustainable development.



The definition of sustainable forestry by The Second Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in Helsinki 1993 is:

*“Sustainable forest management means the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems.”*

Although sustainable development is bound to political and social systems, businesses and in this case the forest industry has a key role when pursuing sustainability. The industry has resources, technology, and also the incentive for it.

It is important for the reputation of forestry and the forest industries that the raw material sources are known and the wood comes from well managed forests, environmental impacts of the processes are minimal and the products are recyclable. Positive reputation supports competitive business and sustainable development.

The vision of the European forest-based sector is that by 2030, it will be a key contributor to a sustainable European society. It will operate a competitive, innovative and knowledge-based industry, fostering an extended use of renewable forests resources. In a new, bio-based and customer-driven European economy, it will make significant social contributions.

### **Bio-energy and forest sector**

Another good example of the linkage between sustainable development and renewable resources is the use of bioenergy.

Climate change calls for restrictions of carbon dioxide emissions on the global scale. Increasing the use of renewable energy, and bioenergy in particular, is one important means to reduce emissions.

Raising the self-sufficiency of the energy supply is also one of the central goals of energy policy in Europe. In this, too, bioenergy and other renewable sources of energy play a key role. The European Council has confirmed a binding 20 % renewable energy target for the EU by 2020.

This means that the share of renewable energy must be tripled from the current 6-7 % over the next 13 years. The objective is extremely challenging.

In Finland already now, the share of renewable energy is close to 25 %. About a fifth of Finland's energy is generated from wood. Thus, sustainable forestry and the forest industry are very essential drivers for bioenergy promotion.

The forest industry is the largest producer of wood based bioenergy in Finland, accounting for about 80 % of the whole bioenergy production.



I have used the forest sector and a wood material as an example of sustainable development based on renewable resources. However, the demand for renewable resources concerns not only wood or bioenergy but also other raw materials. A necessary condition for sustainability is that we succeed in substituting non-renewable resources by renewable ones, to the extent that is possible without threatening the renewability of the resource. All products and services based on renewable resources will be success factors in the long run, as long as the principles of sustainability are being followed.

No one knows what the future will be, except that it will be very different from what life is today, and that the future will deeply depend on our decisions and choices. However, I am absolutely sure that renewable resources are the most essential cornerstone of sustainable future.

Once more, as President of the Finnish Forest Association it is a great pleasure and honour for me to welcome all of you to this second forum of “Renewable Resources – Sustainable Future”.