

5th Policy Steering Committee Meeting, April 2025

ForestNavigator researchers provided updates on the early results on socio-economic indicators related to the EU bioeconomy, ForestNavigator policy reference scenario, and the biodiversity iBIS results quantifying climate change and forest management impacts on biodiversity at the EU scale. Members reviewed progress and provided input to validate the output and refine methodologies.

Willem-Jan van Zeist, from WUR, presented an early assessment of socioeconomic indicators related to the EU bioeconomy. Representatives of Ireland and Czech Republic noted the declining trend in labor in the forest sector, highlighting the potential of increased timber production, particularly for construction, to counterbalance this trend. However, constraints in bioenergy development were flagged, with existing policies sometimes limiting potential expansions.

Participants discussed how harvest levels and roundwood volumes are projected and recommended the inclusion of findings from a recent EEA study on EU harvest levels and emphasized the importance to account for political and legal constraints, such as strict forest laws in certain countries. The discussion underscored that sustainability constraints are not uniformly represented across models and that national-level calibration is crucial.

The members noted strong opportunities in enhancing wood circularity, particularly in the construction sector, which can contribute to carbon sequestration. However, political support and trade-offs between different wood uses (e.g., construction vs. bioenergy) were emphasized as critical factors.

Global shifts in wood flows, notably between Europe and the US, were discussed as key variables influencing future wood availability and pricing in Europe. Changes in trade policies and tariffs were flagged as potentially significant. Continued model development focusing on biodiversity, bioeconomy trade-offs, and sustainable forest management.

Julia Bognar, from IEEP, presented the ForestNavigator approach for building the Policy Reference Scenario. European Commission (DG CLIMA) representatives provided guidance, emphasizing a conservative approach, focusing on binding EU and national legislation rather than non-binding strategies or pledges. Particular attention was given to the complexities of modelling emerging regulations, such as the Nature Restoration Regulation, due to the lack of concrete national implementation plans. ForestNavigator will collaborate with DG CLIMA to further align the reference with DG CLIMA and refine policy inputs, particularly regarding the CAP and Nature Restoration Regulation.

Martin Jung, from IIASA, presented the iBIS model results estimating the impact of forest management on biodiversity outcomes. New approaches for representing close-to-nature forest management in models were presented, including strategies like reducing harvest intensities and promoting continuous cover forestry. The importance of deadwood for biodiversity and the technical ability to model deadwood dynamics were also highlighted.

Participants discussed the importance of aligning forest bioenergy demand with broader land-use policies: it was agreed that models should carefully consider the risks of displacing agricultural production. Participants agreed on the need to integrate biomass demand for bioenergy and biofuels with biodiversity goals and land-use carbon sink targets. Ongoing refinements to models will better capture these complex trade-offs.