

JOINT RESOLUTION OF BALTIC PRIVATE FOREST OWNERS on Fair, Cooperative and Sustainable Forest Policy

**of the Latvian Forest Owners Association, the Forest and Land Owners Association of
Lithuania and the Estonian Private Forest Union**

*Addressed to the Governments of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and to the representatives of our
countries in European Union institutions*

Date: 2nd of July 2026

We, the Latvian Forest Owners Association, the Forest and Land Owners Association of Lithuania and the Estonian Private Forest Union, call on the Governments of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to ensure that all forest related policies and decisions, including forestry, nature conservation, climate and European Union policies, are developed in a balanced, fair, evidence based and socially responsible manner.

Forest owners and their families are not separate from society; they are an essential part of it. It is therefore not acceptable to frame public debate as if there were "society" on one side and "forest owners" on the other. Private forest owners are citizens, families, local communities, employers, taxpayers and custodians of land that has often been managed by generations of the same families.

Forest owners are not opposed to nature conservation. On the contrary, forests in the Baltic States have been maintained, cared for and renewed through the long-term responsibility of forest owners. However, nature conservation must be based on cooperation, trust, scientific evidence and shared responsibility across society. It cannot be implemented mainly by imposing restrictions on individual private forest owners while leaving them to bear the economic and social consequences alone.

Forest owners wish to continue managing their ancestral properties responsibly and sustainably. They help sustain rural livelihoods, support local economies, provide renewable raw materials, strengthen climate resilience and ensure that well managed forests are passed on to future generations.

Timber is a local, renewable and strategically important resource for Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Its sustainable use supports the bioeconomy, strengthens resource independence by reducing reliance on imported and non-renewable materials, contributes to climate goals, and creates jobs and value in rural regions.

The forests of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia face growing challenges from climate change, increasing disturbance risks and a rapidly changing geopolitical environment. These challenges require practical solutions that work on the ground and flexibility in on-site decision-making, rather than a growing number of restrictions and prohibitions. The long-term health and resilience of Baltic forests depend on active and sustainable forest management, including forest regeneration, young stand tending, adaptation to local site conditions, well-functioning infrastructure, knowledge, investment and cooperation with the state and among forest owners.

In view of the above, we call on the Governments of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to:

1. **Recognise private forest owners as key partners** in achieving biodiversity, climate, bioeconomy and rural development objectives related to forests. Strengthen public understanding of the essential role of forest owners in maintaining resilient forests, supporting rural livelihoods, providing renewable resources, enhancing biodiversity and ensuring the long-term stewardship of land. Ensure that state institutions consistently recognise and communicate these contributions.
2. **Base forest and nature conservation decisions on sound evidence, transparent procedures and clear accountability.** Restrictions affecting property rights must not be imposed on the basis of incomplete, outdated or unverified information. Forest owners must have access to the data used in decision-making and effective procedures to correct errors or challenge unjustified restrictions.
3. **People in rural regions must be able to remain, work and build their future in their home regions, rather than being forced to leave because of a lack of jobs, services, education, healthcare, transport or digital connectivity.** This requires predictable conditions for land-based livelihoods, investment and value creation. Forest owners and the wider forest sector must know, clearly and predictably, what will happen to one of our most important assets- forests so that long-term investments, forest renewal, employment, rural development and stewardship can be planned with confidence.
4. **Make voluntary and contractual nature conservation systems the preferred model wherever possible,** with adequate financing and based on cooperation with forest owners. These systems can succeed only when they focus on agreed biodiversity outcomes, allow the continued use of land, and ensure that biodiversity enhancement is encouraged and rewarded rather than penalised.
5. **Establish a fair, transparent and adequately financed compensation system** for restrictions imposed on forest management. Compensation must reflect the real economic loss caused by restrictions, including lost income, reduced property value, additional management obligations, increased administrative costs and long-term limitations on land use. Ensure that nature conservation costs are shared fairly by society as a whole, rather than placing a disproportionate burden on individual forest owners and their families. Public benefits require public compensation.
6. **Refrain from introducing new permanent or long-term restrictions** on forest management and land use. Where restrictions remain necessary for clearly defined public-interest objectives, they must be proportionate, based on verified data, legally clear, individually justified where appropriate, and accompanied by timely and fair compensation.
7. **Ensure full participation of forest owner organisations** in the preparation and implementation of National Restoration Plans and other biodiversity-related policy instruments. Restoration measures affecting private forests must be justified and based on transparent objectives, clear methodologies, socio-economic impact assessment, realistic financing and respect for property rights.
8. **Promote active sustainable forest management** as part of climate and biodiversity policy. Well-managed forests, adapted to local conditions and regenerated in a timely manner, are essential for long-term carbon storage, biodiversity, wood supply, rural employment and resilience to droughts, storms, pests and diseases.
9. **Enable adaptive forest management** that allows timely responses to climate, security and other emerging risks based on local conditions. Europe's forests are diverse, and effective management

requires flexibility to respond to local conditions rather than increasingly restrictive and uniform rules.

10. **Ensure sufficient and accessible funding** for forestry measures in the new planning period 2028-2034, including support for forest renewal, young stand tending, climate resilience and adaptation, biodiversity measures, forest infrastructure, advisory services, digital tools, risk prevention and active sustainable forest management.
11. **Use the current European Union simplification agenda and the stress test of the Birds and Habitats Directives** to defend practical, proportionate implementation that provides legal certainty. The Baltic States should jointly advocate that EU nature policy must remain effective, while also being workable for land managers, rural communities and family forest owners.
12. **Defend Baltic national interests more strongly and in a coordinated manner** at the European Union level, ensuring that EU policies respect the specific circumstances of the Baltic States, including forest ownership structures, rural communities, the role of forest owners, bioeconomy potential, national security considerations and the importance of sustainable forestry for national development.

The future of forests in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia must be built on cooperation, trust, fairness and respect for those who care for forests every day. Without forest owners, there can be no successful nature conservation policy, no strong rural communities, no resilient forests and no sustainable bioeconomy.

Adopted by:

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