



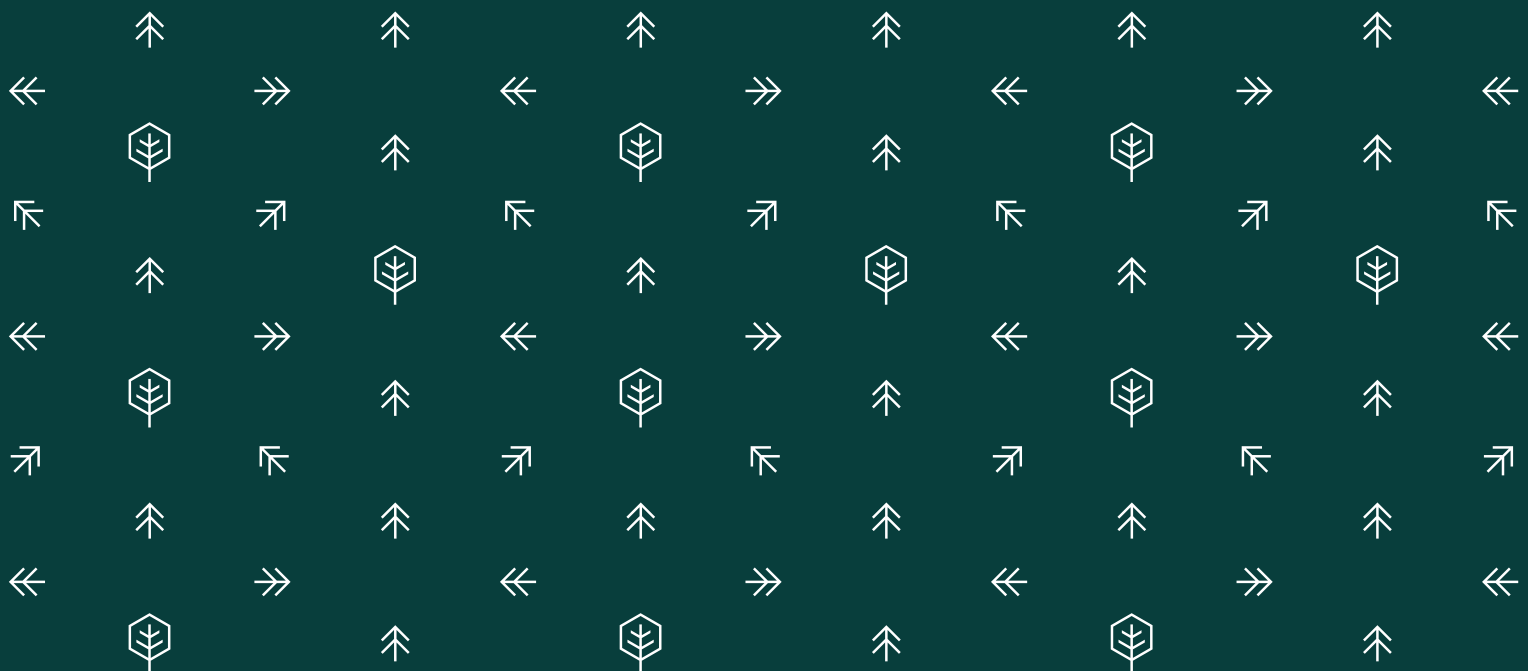
REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
FORESTRY AND FOOD



FOREST
DIALOGUE



FOREST
FUND



Operational Programme for the Implementation of the National Forest Programme in the 2022–2026 Period



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
FORESTRY AND FOOD**

By

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food

Concept

Forestry and Hunting Directorate

Participants

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Ljubljana, 18. October 2022

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List of acronyms and abbreviations used in the Programme

AP

Action Plan for Increasing the Competitiveness of the Forest-Wood Chain in Slovenia by 2020, slogan 'Wood is beautiful'

GDP

gross domestic product

BF-F

Biotechnology Faculty, Department of Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources

TRP

target research programme

CSP-CE

Plan for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategic Project for Decarbonising Slovenia by Transitioning to a Circular Economy

SLTCS

Slovenia's Long-Term Climate Strategy until 2050

EAFRD

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

FE

Forest Europe

FAO

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations)

FAO/TBFRA

UN food and agriculture indicators

FMP FMU

the forest management plan of a forest management unit

FMP FMA

the forest management plan of a forest management area

FMA

forest management area

FHT

forest habitat types

SFI

Slovenian Forestry Institute

TA

timber assortment

FD

Forest Dialogue

Forest Fund

budget fund for forests

IRSAFHF

Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting and Fisheries

PFS

public forestry service

CAFS

Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia

HC

hunting club

SPHA

special purpose hunting area

LULUCF

land use, land-use change, and forestry

GS

growing stock

LSMFFE

large-scale monitoring of forests and forest ecosystems

MEDT

Ministry of Economic Development and Technology

MAFF

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food

MESP

Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning

INECP

Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan 2030

NFI

National Forest Inventory

NFP

National Forest Programme

HMZP

Hunting Management Zone Plan

RRP

Recovery and Resilience Plan

NNCP

National Nature Conservation Programme

NEPP 2020–2030

National Environmental Protection Programme 2020–2030

OPINFO 2017–2021

Operational Programme for the Implementation of the National Forest Programme 2017–2021 (Government Resolution No 340-41/2017/14 of 21 August 2017)

OPINFO 2022–2026

Operational Programme for the Implementation of the National Forest Programme 2022–2026

UN

United Nations

RAHGM

Regional Association of Hunting Ground Managers

MWU

man-work unit

RINFP 2015–2019

Report on the Implementation of the National Forest Programme 2015–2019 (Government Resolution No 34000-6/2021/4 of 14 October 2021)

RINFP until 2014

Report on the Implementation of the National Forest Programme until 2014 (Government Resolution No 34000-2/2016/3 of 14 April 2016)

RDP

Rural Development Programme

RSLTCS until 50

Resolution on Slovenia's Long-Term Climate Strategy until 2050

RNFP

Resolution on the National Forest Programme (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No 111/07)

RS

the Republic of Slovenia

SiDG

Slovenski državni gozdovi, d. o. o.

FFF RS

Farmland and Forest Fund of the Republic of Slovenia

SIS 2030

Slovenian Industrial Strategy 2021–2030

CAPSP 2023–2027

Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan 2023–2027

SURS

Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

GHG

greenhouse gas

UNECE

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

ZDLov

Game and Hunting Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS], No 16/04, 120/06 – decision of the Constitutional Court, 17/08, 46/14 – ZON-C, 31/18, 65/20, 97/20 – as amend., and 44/22)

ZG

Forest Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No 30/93, 56/99 – ZON, 67/02, 110/02 – ZGO-1, 115/06 – ORZG40, 110/07, 106/10, 63/13, 101/13 – ZDovNepr, 17/14, 22/14 – decision of the Constitutional Court, 24/15, 9/16 – ZGGZRS, and 77/16)

ZGGLRS

Management of State Forests Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No 9/16 and 36/21 – ZZIRKDK)

SFS

Slovenian Forest Service

SFOA

Forest Owners Association of Slovenia

ZON

Nature Conservation Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No 96/04 – official consolidated text, 61/06 – ZDru-1, 8/10 – ZSKZ-B, 46/14, 21/18 – ZNOrg, 31/18, 82/20, and 3/22 – ZDeb)

IRSNC

Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation

ZUOPŠP

Act Determining Additional Measures to Remedy Damage Due to the Overpopulation of Bark Beetles (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No 14/18 and 65/20)

ASLSFP

Association of Slovenian Large-Sized Forest Properties

1

Introduction

Forest management in Slovenia is based on sustainable, close-to-nature, and multifunctional management of the integrated forest ecosystem. The national forest management policy is set out in the fundamental strategic document for Slovenian forest policy, the National Forest Programme (NFP), adopted by a resolution of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia in 2007 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No 111/07).

The Forest Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No. 30/93, 56/99 – ZON, 67/02, 110/02 – ZGO-1, 115/06 – ORZG40, 110/07, 106/10, 63/13, 101/13 – ZDavNepr, 17/14, 22/14 – decision of the Constitutional Court, 24/15, 9/16 – ZGGLRS and 77/16) (hereinafter: ZG) stipulates that the ministry competent for forestry must prepare five-year operational programmes for the implementation of the NFP, which is then adopted by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. In accordance with the ZG, the NFP is amended and supplemented contingent on the changes in forests and changes in management conditions.

Since the adoption of the NFP in 2007, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food (hereinafter: MAFF) has ensured that the objectives and focuses of the NFP are integrated into all strategies, programmes, and processes related to forests, forestry, and wildlife management

within the NFP as a process. The Operational Programme for the Implementation of the National Forest Programme 2022–2026 (hereinafter: OPINFO 2022–2026) is linked to the Operational Programme for the Implementation of the National Forest Programme 2017–2021 (hereinafter: OPINFO 2017–2021). The new Operational Programme is also the link between the core strategic document and the lower-level documents that form the basis for planning, implementing, and monitoring forest policies and forest management measures.

The OPINFO 2022–2026 takes into account the system of objectives and guidelines of the NFP, the policies of other sectors that have an impact on forests and forestry, and international commitments. At the overarching operational level, it transparently integrates the content of existing sectoral operational documents and programmes, building on them where necessary, on the basis of a scheme of priorities, measures, and other tasks. This approach, together with the content, enables forest policy makers to steer sustainable forest and wildlife management in the Forest Dialogue (FD), in line with ensuring all forest functions and taking into account the interests of owners and society as a whole. This can be done by ensuring rational and efficient use of the organisational, human, and financial resources available. The key basis for the development of the Programme is formed by the objectives and focuses of the NFP, the findings of the Report on the Implementation of the National Forest Programme 2015–2019 (RINFP 2015–2019), the forest management and hunting management plans of areas for the 2021–2030 period under preparation, and the preliminary analysis of the implementation of the OPINFO 2017–2021, which was carried out in the context of composing the new document.

Core objectives of the NFP

- sustainable development of the forest as an ecosystem, in terms of its biodiversity and all its ecological, productive, and social functions;
- conserving and developing wildlife populations and their environment;
- the sustainable use of all the material assets of the forest for the owner, rural development and society as a whole;
- sustainable wildlife management;
- an effective system of communication with forest owners and the public to ensure the successful steering of forest development;
- a favourable public policy, regulatory and institutional environment to support sustainable forest management and multi-functional use.

In addition to the core objectives, the NFP contains 59 objectives and 208 targets. With regard to the priorities and measures of the OPINFO 2022–2026, we also indicate the contribution to the specific objectives and targets of the NFP.

The success of achieving the objectives and implementing the targets of the NFP so far is reflected in the findings of the Report on the Implementation of the National Forest Programme until 2014 (RINFP until 2014), which was

adopted by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia by way of Resolution No 34000-2/2016/3 of 14 April 2016, and the Report on the Implementation of the National Forest Programme 2015–2019 (RINFP 2015–2019), adopted by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia by way of Resolution No 34000-6/2021/4 of 14 October 2021. The RINFP 2015–2019 provides a comprehensive overview and assessment of the implementation of the NFP, presenting the current state of sustainable forest management in Slovenia.

The NFP also contains a game management programme, which is laid down in Article 12 of the Game and Hunting Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No 16/04, 120/06 – decision of the Constitutional Court, 17/08, 46/14 – ZON-C, 31/18, 65/20, 97/20 – as amend.; ZDLov). The Programme provides a basic framework for game management, defines the habitat areas for each game species, and sets out the guidelines and conditions for the conservation and protection of game and its habitat. The provisions of the Game Management Programme are implemented through game management plans, which set out measures to conserve populations of all game species and measures in the game habitat. Part IV of the ZDLov sets out who implements the measures and how they are funded. The RINFP 2015–2019 shows that the planned cull of game followed population trends and thus followed the provisions of the NFP. Game management has been rational and effective, taking into account both the relationships within and between the populations concerned, and their interdependence and interconnectedness with the environment. .

Developing the priorities of the OPINFO 2022–2026

The five priorities of the OPINFO 2022–2026 are:

1. ensuring CO₂ sinks in forests and adapting forests to climate change, in particular to maintain their resilience, stability, vitality, and health;
2. conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of forests at landscape, ecosystem, species, and genetic levels, and monitoring their resilience, stability, vitality and health;
3. optimising the legal, organisational, and financial steering of forest and game management to ensure the multifunctional role of forests and strengthen rural development and the circular bio-economy;
4. promoting coordination and communication between all stakeholders related to forests, forestry, and game management, developing education, research, and knowledge transfer, and strengthening international cooperation;
5. ensuring sustainable game management.

The OPINFO 2022–2026 identifies priorities for forests, forestry, and game management, from which corresponding objectives, measures, and other tasks are derived. The OPINFO 2022–2026 OWNGP and the documents already adopted and implemented are linked by common denominators so that measures are not duplicated. The monitoring of the implementation of the measures will be linked, wherever possible, to comparable European benchmarks as well as quantitative and qualitative indicators of sustainable forest management. Where this is not possible, additional national indicators from the NFA are used. Given the operational nature of the OPINFO 2022–2026, targets have also been set for indicators to monitor the success of its implementation.

The OPINFO 2022–2026 therefore sets out, in schematic detail, by five priorities and twelve measures, the implementation tasks, responsible institutions, deadlines, resources needed, indicators, and targets. A separate section lists all the budgetary, European, and other sources of funding that will be used to finance the implementation of all the planned tasks and make it possible to achieve the objectives set.

2

Applicable documents related to forests, forestry, and game management

The strategic and operational documents already being implemented largely set out the objectives, focuses, and measures of forest policy up to 2026, complementing and in some places duplicating each other. Taking into account the findings of the RINFP 2015–2019, the OPINFO 2022–2026 is therefore the central document linking all operational documents in the

field of forests, forestry, and game management or the forest-woodland chain, and other related documents. It sets out the objectives, priorities, measures, other tasks, and responsible institutions, target value indicators, timetables, and resources needed, thus defining in a comprehensive and precise way the forest policy in Slovenia from 2022 to 2026.

2.1.

Forest management and hunting management plans for forest management areas in the 2021–2030 period

The forest management plans of forest management areas (FMP FMA's) and the long-term hunting management zone plans (long-term HMZP's) for the 2021–2030 period under preparation take the guidelines of the NFP's into full account. The summary at the level of the Republic of Slovenia presents the basic strategic guidelines and priorities for forest and game management, which relate to:

The guidelines of the FMP FMAs and the long-term HMZPs are also taken into account by all forest management plans of forest management areas, silvicultural plans, biennial HMZPs and annual hunting ground plans or SPHA plans, which are the direct expert basis for determining the necessary measures on the property of a particular forest owner or in the area of particular hunting grounds.

- ensuring the sustainability of forest yields and all forest functions,
- conserving all species and their habitats,
- conserving forest biodiversity at landscape, ecosystem, species, and genetic levels,
- maintaining the health and vitality of forests and wildlife populations,
- increasing the exploitation of the productive potential of forest sites,
- maintaining the sustainable use of wild game through hunting,
- increasing the openness of forests through forest traffic routes and the introduction of modern technologies.

2. 2.

Action Plan for Increasing the Competitiveness of the Forest-Wood Chain in Slovenia by 2030, slogan ‘Wood is beautiful’

The AP, adopted in 2012, is an operational document of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for increasing the competitiveness of the entire forest-wood chain, which also includes the objectives and guidelines of the NFP; it was valid until 2020. The document identifies wood as a strategic raw material for Slovenia. It classifies the wood processing industry as a promising sector.

During the preparation of the OPINFO 2022–2026, activities were initiated for preparing a new AP for the

period up to 2030. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food (hereinafter: MAFF) has sent a proposal for measures in the area of forests and forestry to the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology (hereinafter: MEDT) for amendments to the AP, which reasonably reproduces the content of the OPINFO 2022–2026. It is therefore an appropriate basis for preparing the new 2030 AP, specifically the part dealing with forests, forestry, and rural development in relation to the forest-wood chain.

2. 3.

Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 and the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan 2023–2027

The RDP 2014–2020 and the CAPSP 2023–2027, which are based, among other things, on the objectives and guidelines of the NFP, are an integral part of the forest policy. In the 2014–2020 programming period, rural development policy measures significantly increased the economic role of forests (openness through forest traffic routes) and stimulated the development of forest and timber-related entrepreneurship, non-timber forest products (introduction of modern technologies), and tourism. In the forest-wood chain, the RDP 2014–2020 has also played an important role in the implementation of the AN, as measures have also supported the first processing of wood prior to industrial scale. The opportunities offered by the forest in the countryside are creating many new green jobs.

The MAFF continues to support the enhancement of the efficiency and competitiveness of the Slovenian forest-wood chain through measures under the RDP 2014–2020 and the CAPSP 2023–2027 under preparation. In implementing the commitments made in the AP, the MAFF is primarily responsible for the implementation of the forest policy. In the 2014–2020 programming period, in addition to investments in forestry equipment, machinery, and forest traffic routes, and incentives for the establishment of producer groups in forestry, the MAFF will continue to support investments in what is known as primary wood processing before industrial scale through its measures under the RDP.

The RDP also co-finances the comprehensive rehabilitation of the consequences of the disasters that occurred in the last decade. In the field of the forest-wood chain, those eligible to receive funds from the RDP 2014–2020 are forest owners, farmers, entrepreneurs, and certain other groups, such as forestry producer groups, forest owner groups and groups of operators of complementary activities on farms. These are expected to make a significant contribution to solving the problem of commercially unconnected forest owners carrying out work in forests and acting jointly on the timber market.

Due to the delay in the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, the 2014–2020 programming period has been extended by two years, to 2021 and 2022, and payments from this period can be made until 2025. Funds from the new 2021–2027 financial period for the years 2021 and 2022 are redirected to the implementation of the current programming period. The extension of the current programming period by two years will result in a shorter implementation period for the Strategic Plan 2023–2027. In the 2023–2027 programming period, MARD continues the implementation of the measures referred to in the RDP 2014–2020 within the CAPSP 2023–2027, adding investments in the establishment and development of forest nursery activities and the conservation and maintenance of grazing areas for wild herbivores.

2. 4.

Slovenian Industrial Strategy 2021–2030

In June 2021, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Slovenian Industrial Strategy 2021–2030 (SIS 2030). It aims to ensure the competitiveness of the economy by promoting all three components of sustainable development (society, environment, economy) in a balanced way, and to create the right conditions for restructuring industry into an industry of knowledge and innovation for new and better jobs and for the transition to a green, sustainable, smart, and circular economy. The latter is becoming both a trend and a necessity for maintaining long-term international competitiveness and involves the transition to a low-carbon circular economy, which Slovenia has already made a strategic development priority with the adoption of the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030. We will achieve this by promoting innovation, new business models, digital transformation, resource efficiency through closing material flows and energy, and adapting to climate change.

The main objectives of the SIS 2030 related to the exploitation of wood are to increase the amount of round wood processed in Slovenia for non-energy use to 3 million m³ per year, to achieve a 30% proportion of wood in all new public buildings, to develop new uses for wood, to increase the number of people employed in wood-related industries, and to increase the wood industry's sales to EUR 2.5 billion per year.

In line with the SIS 2030, we will achieve the green breakthrough and sustainable development by creating an enabling environment for activities that contribute to achieving the Green Europe objectives, including wood processing, which is therefore being addressed systematically, taking into account the potential of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises..

At the end of May 2022, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Implementing Document Laying Down Measures for the Development of the Wood Processing Industry by 2030 in connection with the SIS 2030. This document contains specific measures under these headings:

- measures that create a favourable business environment for wood-processing companies,
- measures to support investment in increasing wood processing capacity,
- measures to support the provision of sufficient quantities of timber assortment (TAs) to wood-processing companies,
- measures to introduce new business models and digitalisation to improve the business excellence of wood-processing companies,
- measures to support the provision of adequate human resources for the development of wood-processing companies,
- measures that promote research, development, and innovation in the wood economy and develop a supportive environment, including networking with relevant stakeholders,
- measures to promote the use of wood in both the public and private sectors and to increase the promotion of wood.

2. 5.

Target Research Programme on Agriculture, Forestry, and Food for the 2022–2027 Period

In 2022, the MAFF and the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency will prepare a target research programme (hereinafter: TRP) with the aim of providing adequate research support to the sector for implementing fundamental development tasks. This is necessary to improve the competitiveness and strengthen the sustainable development of Slovenian agriculture, forestry, hunting, fisheries, food, and rural areas, and to achieve the objectives set out in the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030. Agriculture, forestry, hunting, fisheries, food, and rural areas are areas of particular social importance, enhancing quality of life and economic efficiency, as well as environmental and social balance. This social interest is pursued through the creation and development of knowledge.

The TRP is an important instrument for linking the needs of the Government and research on specific priority topics that are relevant for decision-making on agricultural and forestry policy development guidelines in a particular area of public interest, and for monitoring and controlling their implementation. The framework for the formulation of priority objectives and topics for the 2022–2027 period will be based on strategic documents and guidelines in agriculture, forestry, and other sectors. Forestry topics will be based primarily on the objectives and guidelines of the NFP in relation to the current needs in the field of forests, forestry, and game management.

2. 6.

Resolution on Slovenia's Long-Term Climate Strategy until 2050

The RSLTCS until 50 is a strategic document that sets a climate neutrality target for Slovenia by 2050. At the same time, it summarises the comprehensive national energy and climate plan by 2030, which is the main operational climate and energy document for the period until 2030. Under the RSLTCS until 50, Slovenia will produce a vulnerability assessment for, among others, agriculture, forestry, and biodiversity.

Forestry is included in the RSLTCS until 50 as part of LULU-CF, which has the goal of a net carbon sink of at least -2,500 kt CO₂ eq. in 2050. We will achieve this primarily by preserving and strengthening carbon sequestration on forest land, ensuring the sustainable development of the forest as an ecosystem and the maximum possible carbon sink. It is also necessary to ensure that the change in carbon stocks (calculated as carbon sink) in obtained wood products (i.e., sawn wood, wood boards, and paper) increases by 100% or to -370 kt CO₂ eq., and emissions due to the expansion of settlements or built-up and related land are reduced by 100% or to 0 kt CO₂ eq. in 2050 compared to the level in 2005.

In order to achieve the above target referred to in the RSLTCS until 50, the SLTCS also identifies areas for action, namely that Slovenia will continue to manage forests sustainably by 2050, taking into account and ensuring all forest functions, with an emphasis on maintaining and increasing carbon sinks and stocks in biomass, soil, and obtained wood products.

Key measures to achieve this include:

- strengthening forest resilience by optimising the age structure and tree composition of forests, including conversion of spruce monocultures, protection of forest soils, and removal of invasive non-native species;
- preventing deforestation in peri-urban and agricultural landscapes;
- preventive measures and protection against forest fires;
- strengthening natural climate solutions by designating reserves, eco-cells, and habitat trees and by conserving aquatic biotopes in forests;
- establishing nurseries by providing appropriate planting material of native and provenance-appropriate tree species for artificial reforestation;
- ensuring the quality of wood throughout the forest-wood chain.

2.7.

Strategy for Adapting Slovenian Agriculture and Forestry to Climate Change

The Interministerial Group for Climate Change Mitigation developed the Strategy for Adapting Slovenian Agriculture and Forestry to Climate Change, which was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia at its 174th regular session on 18 June 2008. In 2010, the MAFF prepared an Action Plan as an implementing part of the Strategy for Adapting Slovenian Agriculture and Forestry to Climate Change. The Action Plan consists of two parts. The first part deals with the measures already implemented to adapt Slovenian agriculture and forestry to climate change. They are presented in descriptive terms, as the financial values and indicators are defined in the individual programmes, operational plans, and work programmes of the public services already under implementation. Part two sets out the financially evaluated measures that have not yet been implemented, complementing the tasks and measures already under way. Both parts follow the structure of the Strategy and are therefore divided into five pillars:

Five pillars of the OPINFO 2022–2026 are:

- 1.** strengthening capacity to manage adaptation in agriculture and forestry,
- 2.** education, awareness-raising, and consultation,
- 3.** maintaining and building new knowledge on climate change and adaptation to it,
- 4.** agricultural and forestry policy measures and changes to existing regulations,
- 5.** strengthening international cooperation and partnership on climate change adaptation in agriculture and forestry, in particular in the EU context.

2. 8.

Resolution on the National Programme on Strategic Guidelines for Agricultural and Food Industry Development ‘Our Food, Rural Areas, and Natural Resources After 2021’

The Resolution on the National Programme on Strategic Guidelines for Agricultural and Food Industry Development ‘Our Food, Rural Areas, and Natural Resources After 2021’ (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No 8/20) aims to define the basic strategic framework for the functioning of agriculture, food, and rural areas, and is the basis for new strategic planning for the period after 2021. Agriculture and forestry are associated with a wide range of public goods that are

recognised and valued in society. The document points to the need for special care regarding the coexistence of agriculture and forestry. This will require developing and strengthening practices that allow the socially and environmentally appropriate coexistence of developed forest ecosystems alongside agricultural land, maintaining human settlement and farming with appropriate measures to ensure acceptable populations of large carnivores and game.

2. 9.

Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan 2030

The INECP is a strategic document that sets out the objectives, policies, and measures of the Energy Union for the period until 2030 (with a view to 2040). For forestry, the focus is on careful forest management and improving the sustainable cascading use of wood in industry. The main objective is to make the land use, land-use change, and forestry sector

climate neutral by 2030, specifically to ensure net zero emissions in the LULUCF sector. Forestry and agriculture are key to this goal. On the one hand, they are directly dependent on climate conditions, but on the other hand, their role as providers of environmental (ecosystem) services (functions) has increased precisely because of climate change.

2.10.

National Environmental Protection Programme 2020–2030 and National Nature Conservation Programme

The NEPP 2020–2030 addresses the protection, conservation, and enhancement of the following components of Slovenia's natural capital: nature with biodiversity and valuable natural features, soil, air, and water. The NNCP is an integral part of the NEPP 2020–2030. The latter does not deal with forests in detail, as this is the subject of the Resolution on the National Forest Programme (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No 111/07). The implementation of the NFP therefore also contributes to the achievement of the NEPP 2020–2030 objectives. The NEPP provides for these concrete measures to improve the state of biodiversity conservation:

- improving the implementation of the specific requirements of some specialised Natura 2000 qualifying habitats in the context of forest management;
- improving the implementation of the specific requirements of specialised Natura 2000 qualifying species for which this is required;
- identifying habitats of particular value to forest animals, or eco-cells, in order to conserve biodiversity;
- prioritising biodiversity protection measures in national forests;
- declaring forest reserves to be used for biodiversity protection.

2. 11.

Large-scale monitoring of forests and forest ecosystems

The LSMFFE carried out throughout Slovenia in 2000, 2007, 2012, and 2018 provides an understanding of the status (wood stock and volume of dead wood) and changes (growth increment, felling, volume of new snags) of Slovenian forests. In addition to the results, the methodology for calculating the estimates of the means based on systematic sampling is presented in detail. The data obtained are used for international reporting on the status and development of Slovenian forests and, to a limited extent,

for national reporting on the sustainable development of Slovenian forests. The system in place has the advantage of an internationally harmonised inventory methodology on a systematic grid of plots across the country. In 2020, the system was upgraded to a continuous panel system based on new permanent sample plots on an uneven systematic grid with a density of 2 km × 2 km, which is a good starting point for introducing a national forest inventory in Slovenia.

2.12.

Reports of the Slovenian Forest Service on forests

Most of the data on forest and game status is collected and processed by the SFS in the context of the annual preparation of the 10-year FMP FMU and biennial HMZPs or the 10-year preparation for the FMP FMA and long-term HMZPs. The data are collected in accordance with the Rules on Forest Management Plans and Game Management Plans (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No 91/10 and 200/20) and the Rules on Forest Protection (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No 114/09 and 31/16). When the plans are drawn

up, data on the state of the forest and game are collected, supplemented by data on monitoring the implementation of the planned works. Other important sources of information include expert opinions issued, project conditions, and consents for activities affecting forests and forest areas, the planning and maintenance of forest traffic routes, the recording of forest-damaging factors, forest recovery plans, and measures related to the maintenance of suitable wildlife habitats. Basic data on forests and game are presented annually in the SFS Forest Report.

2.13.

Annual reports on the state of forests

As part of its public forestry service (PFS) tasks, the Slovenian Forestry Institute monitors the degradation and damage of forests and the impacts of forests on climate change mitigation (hereafter referred to as: forest monitoring) for the purposes of informing the public, national forest policy-making and reporting under international commitments, in particular the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the FE process, and reports on forests by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and EUROSTAT.

Data are monitored in accordance with methodologies set out in regulations and documents. The importance of in-depth studies of anthropogenic impacts on forest ecosystems at the national level, as well as for Slovenia's involvement at the European level, requires that monitoring of the state of forests should continue in the future.

Forest monitoring is used to identify, in particular:

- impacts of air pollution on forest ecosystems;
- impacts of climate change on forest ecosystems;
- carbon dynamics in forest ecosystems.

2.14.

Programme for Managing Natura 2000 Areas in the 2022–2028 Period

The Programme for Managing Natura 2000 Areas in the 2022–2028 Period (PMN) was under preparation at the time of the preparation of the OPINFO 2022–2026, specifically in its third phase, which includes the drafting of the programme and the coordination of the proposals for measures with the institutions responsible for implementing the measures. There are five steps in the process of preparing a programme for managing Natura 2000 areas. The preparation of the programme involves the MAPP, SFS, and SFI, and all other key forestry organisations are also involved as stakeholders. The management programme determines, from a set of legally defined measures, those conservation measures that are necessary to achieve the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites, and also regulates the integration of expert content into legal, administrative, and contractual measures, and most often into the system of other plans, including the FMP FMU and the biennial HMZP, as forests make up 71%

of Slovenia's Natura 2000 network. Natura 2000 sites are managed in the forestry sector through forest management plans and hunting management plans, which set out guidelines and measures for the adapted use of natural assets. The framework for measures is forestry and game management legislation, which allows for the planning and implementation of all necessary measures to ensure the favourable status of forest habitat types and species associated with forest ecosystems. In accordance with the provisions of the Nature Conservation Act (ZON), forest management and game management plans include nature protection guidelines, which, in Natura 2000 sites, also set out the guidelines and measures needed to ensure the favourable conservation status of species and their habitats. The measures are included annually in the forest investment programme prepared by the SFS, which also acts as an operator implementing the guidelines or conservation measures in forests in Natura 2000 sites.

Strategy for the Management of Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos* L.) in Slovenia, Strategy for the Management of Wolf (*Canis lupus* L.) in Slovenia, and Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of the Lynx (*Lynx lynx* L.) in Slovenia

These strategic documents provide a framework for the management of large carnivores in the Republic of Slovenia. They define the legal, organisational, and substantive framework for measures to establish and maintain the favourable conservation status of all three large carnivores (brown bears, wolves, and lynx) in Slovenia in the long term. To ensure a favourable conservation status, an adequate prey base, consisting mainly of ungulates,

must be ensured. This fact must be considered in the planning of culling, which in Slovenia is ensured by the so-called adaptive hunting management planning, which, in hunting management areas with a permanent presence of large carnivores (primarily wolves and lynx), takes their presence into account when considering the quota of the planned culling of prey species, as well as in the planning of the sex and age structure.

3

Key findings of the Report on the Implementation of the National Forest Programme 2015–2019

The key findings of the RINFP 2015–2019 are based on a comprehensive review of the achievement of the objectives, compliance with the guidelines, and the implementation of the development options for sustainable forest management outlined in the 2007 NFP. This includes the environmental, economic, and social aspects of forest management. The findings are conceptually, structurally, and substantively linked to those in the RINFP until 2014, which was adopted by the

For the **environmental aspect** of sustainable forest management, the composition of the NFP overlaps fully with the FE criteria and indicators scheme. Thus, it includes: criterion one: maintaining and adequately enhancing forest resources and their contribution to global carbon cycles; criterion two: maintaining the health and vitality of forest ecosystems; criterion four: maintaining, protecting, and adequately enhancing the biodiversity of forest ecosystems; and criterion five: maintaining and adequately enhancing the protective role of forests (especially soil and water) in forest management.

The **economic aspect** fully integrates criterion three: maintaining and promoting the productive functions of forests (both wood and non-wood).

There is some divergence in terms of the **social aspect**, that is criterion six: maintaining other socio-economic functions and conditions. In the NFP, its indicators are classified under the economic or social dimension, which has been taken into account in a meaningful way and does not detract from the findings.

First of all, for all three aspects, the 2015–2019 period was an exceptional, even dramatic one in forestry due to climate change; an ice storm of historic proportions was also followed by other ‘record-breaking’ natural disasters and a consequent huge proliferation of the bark beetle. With the guidance of the public forestry service and the cooperation of all stakeholders, the industry has managed to address all these issues satisfactorily and comprehensively.

Compared to similar situations in neighbouring countries, post-disaster recovery was organised and carried out quickly and efficiently. The public was kept informed and forest owners were optimally supported with guidance from the PFS. While markets for forest products reacted as expected, there was neither a prolonged closure nor a drop in TA prices below the production cost, as has often been the case abroad on such occasions. Felling has increased by around 50% over this period compared to the period before this report. The supply of forestry services on the market has also increased significantly and many owners who were not active forest managers before have become active. In addition to all the above, the growing stock and annual increment have been maintained at the national level.

Sustainable management of Slovenian forests

The results of the analysis of the implementation of the NFP or the performance of forest management in Slovenia in the 2015–2019 period confirm that it continues to be carried out in accordance with the principles of sustainability, closeness to nature, and multifunctionality of forests as well as the planned nature of forest management, as required by the vision, basic objectives, and guidelines set out in the NFP. Nevertheless, there are significant threats and challenges, especially to forest health and the economic sustainability or long-term profitability of forestry. Forest policy measures based on the ecosystem principle support the sustainable development of forests, taking

into account their biodiversity and all their ecological, economic, and social functions, and have been quite successful in achieving their objectives. It should be noted that, despite a well-organised forest management system, forest management risks are increasing, mainly due to the effects of climate change. Central issues in forest management are therefore related to ensuring the mechanical and biological stability of forest stands, maintaining forest biodiversity (including preventing the encroachment of non-native invasive species), enhancing the buffering and protective effects of forests, and reconciling the very different (often conflicting) demands on forests (e.g. enhancing the social functions of forests). However, the lack of implementation of silvicultural work remains an important challenge, mainly due to the large number of forest owners and the high fragmentation of holdings.

Building resilience in forests continues in line with development opportunities, allowing them to continue to thrive in the face of adverse climate change. This is crucial to delivering the many forest functions expected of them by owners and all other stakeholders. The growing stock and growth increment continue to increase slightly and are close to the optimum value. Forests make a major contribution to preserving biodiversity and maintaining the natural environment and ecological balance in the landscape. They play an irreplaceable role in carbon sequestration and the provision of drinking water, as well as in sustainable wood supply and rural development. The legal, institutional, and financial framework is fairly stable. The public forestry service plans optimal forest management measures and guides forest management in cooperation with forest owners, taking into account their wishes and needs as well as public interest.

From an **environmental perspective**, we note that the increase in forest cover has stopped. In terms of tree composition, the proportion of broadleaved trees and other changes which are in line with the trend towards the establishment of a natural composition of forest communities continue to increase. In protective forests and forests with a special purpose, established regimes related to biodiversity conservation are maintained. Purchases made with earmarked funds from the Forest Fund increase the area of state-owned protective forests and forests with a special

purpose. At the level of principle, guidelines for the conservation of the favourable conservation status of habitat types, species, and their habitats in Natura 2000 sites and beyond are taken into account. Forest management plans include what is known as nature protection guidelines, which also set out the measures needed to ensure the favourable conservation status of species and their habitats in Natura 2000 sites. The measures are included annually in the forest investment programme prepared by the SFS and, since 2017, co-financed using a dedicated forest fund, the size of which allows for a larger proportion of the measures to be implemented than before. Although increasingly frequent weather events, together with biotic factors (insects, fungi), are having a negative impact on forests, in most cases they are still fulfilling their extremely important role in providing renewable resources, maintaining biodiversity, genetic diversity, and the ecological balance of nature. Forests play an important role in mitigating or reducing the effects of climate change and make a major contribution to biodiversity conservation. The abundance of game in some areas is a major obstacle to achieving forest management objectives, as this can, in some places, prevent rejuvenation with target tree species.

The **economic impacts of forest management** are increasing. The implementation of potential felling is slightly increasing, but still below the permissible level in private forests. There is also a continued lack of silvicultural work in private forests, which has not been a priority due to the impact of the natural disasters. This is still largely due to the large number of forest owners who are independent of forest income, and to the fragmentation and small size of forest holdings. The security and efficiency of forest production and the openness of forests have improved, mainly as a result of measures under the RDP. The scope and content of professional, planned, and more active encouragement of forest owners to engage in joint management and business networking is not achieving the desired results, as such cooperation is still very rare. No major shift has taken place, despite the support for producer organisations in the forestry sector under the RDP 2014–2020.

Sanitation harvesting accounted for between 51% and 67% of the total felling (including the felling of weak trees for sanitation reasons as part of regular felling). The average

implementation of planned actions remains low. The available budget funds are fully used in all years. In forests damaged by weather-related natural disasters, recovery through planting had to be ensured. By the end of 2019, forest owners had received 1.7 million seedlings of various tree species and appropriate materials for seedling protection against game from the RDP 2014–2020 funds for the restoration of the damaged forest. In the years under review, every effort was made, as a result of extensive and good preparations among other things, to increase planting as a measure to rehabilitate damaged areas in accordance with rehabilitation plans.

The number of employees in the wood processing industry has stopped declining, but the current number of employees certainly does not reflect the true capacity of the forest-wood chain in Slovenia.

While the use of forests for other activities (hunting, bee-keeping, gathering fruits and other forest goods, tourism and recreation, etc.) is increasing, the economic impacts are not yet sufficient. However, Slovenia's emergence as a green tourism destination is creating business opportunities with local and foreign guests, both for farms and other tourism-related entrepreneurs in rural areas.

The wider **social aspect of forest management** remains a major challenge for all stakeholders. The number of people employed in forestry has even increased, despite the introduction of mechanical felling, as the high level of damage to forests from storms and bark beetles has led to an increase in felling. The increase in felling and the increased efficiency and professionalisation of forestry production are leading to higher incomes in forestry, which is particularly important for both the economic and social situation in rural areas. Unfortunately, forest owners do not make sufficient use of opportunities to participate in forest development planning. The high number of forest accidents remains a particular problem, although forest safety has improved on average, partly as a result of training for forest owners and the involvement of a higher proportion of professional contractors in restoration work. The increased scope of forest rehabilitation following natural disasters adds to the complexity of the work.

Increasing visits to forests is leading to inevitable conflicts. In some areas, particularly near major urban centres, there are problems of overuse associated with visits to forests, and consequent conflicts between forest owners and visitors and between visitors themselves (vehicles, pedestrians, etc.). There is still inadequate forest management and a lack of valuation of the non-wood functions of forests, which could be used as a basis for resolving such disagreements if public funds or a compensation system were to be invested. The Forest Fund provides a means to raise public awareness about forests and forestry and the importance of the forest-wood chain.

The amount of funds allocated annually to forestry under the ZG is increasing (EUR 22.45 million in 2015, EUR 25.91 million in 2019). Under the RDP 2007–2013, measures for forestry and first-stage wood processing, all the funds foreseen were spent, totalling EUR 49 million, of which EUR 35.27 million was directly earmarked for forestry. Disbursements from the programming period continued to be made in the 2015–2017 period. In 2015, the previous RDP was succeeded by the RDP 2014–2020. EUR 51 million is earmarked for investments to boost the competitiveness of the forest-wood chain and rehabilitate forests after natural disasters. By the end of 2019, EUR 16.8 million had been paid to beneficiaries under the new programme.

The environmental aspect of forests

Forest cover expansion halted

With a forest cover constituting 58% of the country's surface area, the trend of increasing forest area – lasting for over 130 years due to the overgrowth of abandoned farmland – has slowed down or halted. Currently, forests span 1.177 million ha of the country's surface area. However, two distinct and geographically separate processes persist: the continued overgrowth in remote regions less suited for agricultural production and the intense pressure

on forests and woodlands in peri-urban zones and areas of intensive agriculture. Deforestation remains relatively low.

The increase in the growing stock has slowed down

The GS continues to increase, reaching 303 m³/ha or 356.746 million m³ in 2019, according to SFS data. The proportion of conifers in the growing stock is decreasing, mainly due to the decrease in the proportion of spruce, while the proportion of beech, which is the dominant tree in the potential forest vegetation, is increasing. Changes or trends in tree composition are in line with the objective of maintaining and restoring the natural composition of forest communities and pursuing the objective of conserving forest biodiversity at species level. The problem is seen in fir, which is declining with an unfavourable age structure.

Predominance of older forests

The age structure or structure by development phase shows a clear predominance of older forests. The structure of forests has not changed much over the period under review. Surely this timeframe is too short for major changes to the criterion under consideration. However, natural disasters and the gradual increase in bark beetles have been the main contributors to the decline in older stands and the increase in young forests over the last five years.

Forests reduce and mitigate the effects of climate change

Forests play an important role in reducing and mitigating the effects of climate change, particularly by fixating and sequestering carbon and water. At the same time, they reduce wind speeds, moderate the runoff of excess rainwater, lower air temperatures by reflecting the sun's rays and shading the ground, and so on. Although unfavourable extreme weather conditions (droughts, ice storms), together with some biotic factors (insects, fungi), are having a negative impact on forests, in most cases they are still fulfilling their extremely important role in providing renewable resources, maintaining biodiversity, genetic diversity, and the ecological balance of nature. The forest microclimate allows many species threatened by changes in the regional

climate to survive. In most cases, protective forests are successful in protecting soils in steep, erosion-prone areas and in protecting low-lying land and structures. Forest reserves, which are an important element of the ecological balance in nature, continue to be managed, in particular as a place to monitor natural processes and the development of the forest. From here, the knowledge gained is transferred to commercial forests to ensure the sustainability of measures..

Defoliation is on the rise

Average defoliation has been gradually increasing since 1991. However, this increase has slowed down slightly since 2000 for both conifers and deciduous trees. In the 2007–2009 period, the average defoliation for conifers and deciduous trees was similar. However, in the 2009–2015 period, a noticeable decline in average defoliation was observed in deciduous trees, whereas the defoliation of conifers remained stable or showed a slight increase. Deciduous trees have shown more significant year-to-year fluctuations in defoliation compared to conifers. Increasing defoliation can also be observed at the European level. The average defoliation in Slovenian forests (28.0% in 2019) is still higher than the average for EU countries (23.4%). The average defoliation of conifers was a few percentage points higher than that of deciduous trees in all years except 2007. Climate change could be the cause of conifer decline, as conifers are generally less able to adapt to such change than are deciduous trees. In recent years, the increase in the defoliation of our main tree species, the beech, has become alarming. The causes are as yet unknown. Of the pollutants that enter forest ecosystems from the atmosphere, ozone is currently the most influential, with the greatest negative impact.

Imbalanced ratios between the plant and animal components of forests

The amount of game in some areas (especially in Kočevje, Notranjska, and Gorenjska) is a significant obstacle to achieving forest management objectives, as it can sometimes prevent rejuvenation with target tree species. An imbalanced forest-to-game ratio complicates natural regeneration, influences the species composition of trees, and leads

to damage from the stripping of young trees (known as 'letvenjaki' in Slovenian) and mature trees (referred to as 'drogovnjaki' in Slovenian). Additionally, an overpopulation of ungulates and wild boars causes damage to agricultural land.

Conservation of forest habitat types is stable

The status of habitat types is mostly stable, with potential for improvement, especially for minority habitat types and habitat types with special water regimes. In line with the appropriate guidelines in the plans, forest management aims to ensure a favourable conservation status for forest habitat types and qualifying species in Natura 2000 sites. Measures to achieve the target favourable conservation status of habitat types and qualifying species in private forests in Natura 2000 sites are co-financed from earmarked funds from the Forest Fund. The establishment of the Forest Fund under the ZGGLRS has significantly increased the volume of co-financing for measures, and the amendment of the Rules on Financing and Co-Financing Investments in Forests increased the co-financing rate to 95%. The Forest Fund's earmarked funds are used to buy up protective forests and forests with a special purpose as a priority. The area of protective forests and forests with a special purpose purchased has increased significantly in recent years.

Implementing measures to restore, tend, and protect forests

In order to ensure the proper health of forests, the mechanical stability of stands, and the promotion of a mix of tree species, the budget of the Republic of Slovenia finances and co-finances forest owners' measures for the restoration, tending, and protection of forests, the restoration of forests affected by natural disasters, and measures to maintain wildlife habitats. Owners receive forest tree seedlings and materials to protect the seedlings from game, and the work is co-financed at a rate depending on the ecological and social functions of each forest, as defined in the Rules on Financing and Co-financing of Investments in Forests. The increase in the 2016–2019 period is due to the Forest Fund earmarking for Natura 2000 measures, while the budget for the measures outside of Natura 2000 sites remained almost unchanged.

Forests are a landscape matrix

As forests are the landscape matrix of forest landscapes, the coherence of complexes and, above all, the many functions of forests are ensured by measures to protect and tend forests. The pressure on forests remains a problem, particularly in terms of preserving and protecting forests as a landscape element in peri-urban, agricultural, and wooded landscapes. The SFS actively participates in spatial planning, which determines the intended use of land.

The growing importance of the protective, hydrological, and safeguarding functions of forests

Protective forests protect land, prevent soil erosion, conserve water resources, and provide other non-wood functions of forests. The situation is fairly favourable, but the hydrological and safeguarding functions of forests have not yet been adequately defined. The situation is and will be of paramount importance for the preservation of clean drinking water sources and the establishment of water regimes in headwaters. The definition of forest areas is not yet optimal in terms of the emphasis of functions. The hydrological function is defined on the basis of a lack of hydrological expertise, while the safeguarding function lacks a comprehensive analysis of the terrain above the various infrastructure and other structures that the forest protects from falling rocks, avalanches, and landslides.

The economic aspect of forests

Increase in growth increment, the felling performed is not reaching its potential

An important indicator of sustainable forest management is the comparison between growth increment and felling. The growth increment increased from 7.27 m³/ha in 2015 to 7.50 m³/ha in 2019. Felling has varied over the years and, in 2019, it amounted to 4.40 m³/ha or 5.288 million m³. In all years, the realised felling failed to reach its

potential, ranging from 75% to 95%. In terms of volume, this represents about half the amount felled in the period before the major natural disasters. As of 2014, the planned potential felling at the national level has been above 75% of the growth increment, in line with the guidelines of the NFP. In conifers, the realised felling exceeded the planned potential felling in all years (111–138%), while in deciduous trees it was less than the potential felling (44–61%). The increased conifer felling and the resulting increase in overall felling are mainly due to natural disasters (ice storms, windstorms, bark beetle infestations). Sanitation harvesting ranged from 51% to 67% of the realised felling.

Among the obtained TAs, logs for sawing and veneer dominate

In 2016, roundwood production reached its highest volume since historical records existed, at 5.50 million m³. This is mainly due to the high volume of sanitation harvesting caused by natural disturbances in forests. Conifers dominated the structure of the production of TAs in the 2017–2019 period, accounting for 63% on average. In the same period, logs for sawing and veneer dominated the production structure with an average of 54%, followed by firewood with an average of 24%. The dominant group of tree species for logs is conifers (logs account for an average of 75% of the conifer TA), while for firewood it is deciduous trees (firewood accounts for an average of 56% of the deciduous TA).

Less than 80% of forests are privately owned

Forest ownership has changed in recent years, mainly as a result of denationalisation procedures. Since 1996, the area of state forests has decreased by 130,698 ha, while the area of private forests has increased by 187,536 ha. The ratio between the area of state forests and the area of private forests (including municipal forests) has changed from 33.9:66.1 in 1996 to 20.3:79.7 in 2019. The latest decrease in the area of state forests in 2019 is still due to denationalisation.

The structure of private forest holdings is changing somewhat

Fragmented and small forest holdings still prevail among

private forest owners, which, together with the unfavourable age structure of private forest owners, poses a challenge for sound management. The majority of forest holders are those with less than 1 ha of forest (65.3%), who hold only 5.2% of the total forest area.

Against the background of a fairly favourable business environment and the resulting increased economic value of forests, the ownership structure of privately owned Slovenian forests by size of holding appears to be changing somewhat. This is particularly true for the smallest holding class, whose proportion is decreasing, and the largest holding class, whose proportion is increasing. The average holding today is 3.2 ha (2.9 ha in 2010). However, to confirm these trends, regular monitoring of this indicator should be established.

A decline in the construction of forest roads and a surge in the construction of forest skid trails

In recent years, only 9 to 17 km of forest roads have been built annually. The reasons for the decrease in road construction are the fragmented private forest holdings, where it is difficult to collect construction consents from 75% of the forest owners, and the mostly complex land that remains unopened. However, forests are close to optimal openness.

The relatively large-scale construction of forest skid trails has been strongly influenced by the rehabilitation of forest stands affected by meteorological disasters (recovery after the ice storm and bark beetle infestation in the years following the ice storm), as new forest skid trails had to be built and some of the existing ones, which were unsuitable for wood hauling with modern hauling equipment, had to be reconstructed. On average, 400 km of new skid trails were built per year, and an average of 120 km of forest skid trails were restored per year.

The new national forest management model more efficient than the previous one

The expiry of the concession contracts in mid-2016 led to a change in the national forest management model. Under the ZGGLRS, the state-owned company SiDG was

established to manage state forests. The financial impact of the return on investment was already more than twice as high in 2016 as it was under the previous system for managing state forests managed by forestry companies under concession contracts. SiDG's net return in 2016 was 26.90 EUR/m³ and the net concession fee levied by FFF RS in 2015 during the concessionaire period was 12.22 EUR/m³. SiDG outsources most of its work (felling, planting, and protection tasks, forest construction). In 2019, the proportion of felling with SiDG's own capabilities was 7.1%. The company's aim is to increase the proportion of felling with its own capabilities to 20%. Most of the wood is sold to domestic wood processing companies. The establishment of a forest management company owned by the Republic of Slovenia also fully supports the implementation of the objectives and guidelines of the AP.

The important role of forests in the AP is realised

The forestry sector fulfils its commitments under the AP. In particular, it is gaining competitiveness and efficiency through the support of the measures of the RDP. This directly facilitates the development of so-called green jobs in Slovenia, which can cover work from the harvesting of trees to the last stage of wood processing with the highest added value. Forests are the most important renewable resource and a major source of energy. The NFP has been taken into account in the preparation of the AP, which is being implemented reasonably well. The development of the wood industry indirectly increases the economic value of forests. The AP, the establishment of the Wood Industry Directorate at the MEDT and the dedicated calls for tenders for wood processing create better conditions for a more efficient functioning and development of the forest-wood chain. The focus on high value-added products increases the competitiveness of the wood and furniture industry and allows small and medium-sized plants to adapt quickly.

Factor income is increasing

The proportion of forestry in GDP was around 0.6%. GDP per employee has also continued to increase in the recent period, reaching EUR 40,000/MWU in 2019. Factor income

in forestry is also rising. By 2019, it had increased significantly both in total (from EUR 161.1 million to EUR 213.2 million) and in terms of per employee or MWU (from EUR 21,454 to EUR 29,181).

Positive impacts of the measures of the RDP

The measures of the RDP (forest roads, recovery after storms, machinery and equipment) are noticeably increasing the economic role of forests and the development of forest- and wood-related entrepreneurship, non-wood forest products, and tourism. The 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 RDP's have also helped many farms to develop complementary activities linked to wood and other forest products and tourism. This stimulates job creation and improves rural prosperity, reducing the reasons for emigration to cities.

Roundwood exports are stabilising

Slovenia has been characterised by a foreign trade surplus in roundwood since joining the EU. In 2016, both the foreign trade surplus (over 2.6 million m³) and exports (over 3 million m³) reached record levels. The largest foreign trade surplus is in the category 'logs for sawing and veneer'. In 2019, the upward trend in exports reversed, with exports reaching less than 2 million m³ that year, the lowest value since 2013. Imports of roundwood have been increasing in recent years and, in 2019, exceeded 0.61 million m³, a record for the last 18 years. The category of logs for sawing and conifer veneer is seeing the biggest increase in imports, up by 663% in 2019 compared to 2017, reaching a record 113,000 m³.

Insufficient transparency of the wood market

The wood market still lacks transparency, forest owners are not organised, and long-term contracts are common practice in the sale of wood from state forests and are the exception rather than the rule in private forests. The TRP project has launched the MojGozdar.si web portal (www.mojgozdar.si) to help forest owners find forest contractors. More than 1,600 forest contractors are now listed on the portal. To support forest owners, prices of the most common forest wood products (<http://wcm.gozdis.si/>), transport, and forestry services are regularly monitored and published within the framework of the PFS, which is financed by the

MAFF and implemented by the SFI. Publishing lists of service providers, price monitoring, and publishing prices help to make the market transparent, but there is still a problem of disconnection between the forest owner and the final consumer of roundwood. A more transparent and organised market would make it easier for consumers of wood for processing and energy purposes to plan their supplies and thus help the forest-wood chain to function more efficiently.

Reduced consumption of wood for energy purposes

Annual consumption of wood of all types and forms for energy purposes has decreased by 11% over the 2015–2019 period, from 2.2 million tonnes in 2015 to 2 million tonnes in 2019, or 0.97 t/capita. The values of the selected indicators regarding wood use for energy purposes are in line with national policies on renewable energy use. Currently, there is no uniform or systematic monitoring of the production of different wood fuels, the most deficient of which is the monitoring of firewood production. Estimates on the use of wood for heating in households are also weak. According to a survey of rural households conducted by the SFI (2018), more than 40% of rural households heat with wood, and of these, more than 50% use firewood from their own forest or from a forest owned by family members. This is why firewood is an important and often overlooked element in reducing energy poverty in rural areas.

Non-wood functions of forests as an untapped business opportunity

Forests are not only a key link in the forest-wood chain, but also offer many business opportunities in other areas such as hunting, tourism, recreation, and crafts based on various forest products. By implementing potential felling close to the maximum felling and by integrating forests into the tourism offer, the economic role of forests can be greatly enhanced.

Strengthening the importance of non-wood functions of forest

Non-wood functions of forest are gaining importance and play an important role in shaping the right public attitudes towards forests, forestry, and the environment. This remains

an insufficiently researched area. The evaluation of functions is not practised, as is the case worldwide. Direct compensation is not available to forest owners, but they are provided with free PFS services, RRP measures, and subsidised silviculture measures and RDP measures. As the pressure on forests increases, this is also one of the causes of conflicts in balancing private interests with those of the wider public. As there is still virtually no useful evaluation of non-wood forest products and functions, the success of sustainable management in this field cannot be assessed again.

The economic importance of the forest water cycle and carbon sink

Social and ecological functions are difficult to quantify directly or accurately, although they have many direct and indirect economic impacts. The hydrological and climatic functions are at the forefront of the minds of the general public and professionals. The hydrological function includes the interception and retention of rainwater, the management of rainfall surges, and the filtration of drinking water, which is not only an environmental, but also an economic good. Strongly linked to it is the protective function, which prevents soil erosion. Forests in water protection areas in particular have a strong hydrological function, while forests that protect farmland from wind, drainage, and frost, or that regulate temperature differences and mitigate weather extremes in settlements or at a local level, have a strong climatic function. The greatest economic importance of forests is in providing wood as a material and a renewable energy source. Forests are an important carbon sink, sequestering carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Carbon sequestration in wood products and the use of wood and wood products contribute to the substitution of other energy sources and materials (fossil fuels, plastics, and metals), thereby reducing GHG emissions in various areas.

The social aspect of forests

Mechanical felling does not reduce employment in forestry

Despite the introduction of mechanical felling, which usually entails the streamlining of the workforce, the number of employees in the forestry sector is not decreasing. On the contrary, the average number of people involved in registered forestry activities was around 6,000 in the years up to 2014, and more than 7,300 in 2019, due to increased felling related to meteorological disaster recovery. Unpaid labour accounts for the largest proportion of total employment in forestry in the period up to 2015 (79%). This includes farmers who own forests, and sole traders. The proportion of unpaid labour in the forestry workforce structure increased from 75% (in 2014) to 81% in 2017 and then decreased again to 79% (in 2019).

Support for the forest-wood chain is increasing

In line with the 2012 AP entitled 'Wood is beautiful', the measures of the MAFF in the field of forests, forestry and under the RDP, as well as the measures of the MEDT in the field of further wood processing, continue to support investments in increasing the economic value of forests and in pre-industrial and industrial wood processing. The aim is to maximise added value in the Slovenian forest-wood chain in the context of the circular economy, creating new 'green' jobs and strengthening the economic and social strength of rural areas. Other forest-related activities are also providing more and more employment opportunities. People from urban areas are very keen to choose forest environments for recreation and relaxation, which makes it possible to develop tourism in rural areas. Tourism is one of the most important complementary activities on farms. There are still many untapped opportunities in this area.

Fewer fatal accidents at work

Despite the increasing introduction of mechanical felling and the proliferation of modern forestry machinery and equipment in recent years, felling and wood hauling remain among the riskiest activities. The level of safe work among professional workers is also quite high, also due to the requirements of the legislation, while the opposite is true for non-professional workers. Compared to the previous period, when there was a marked increase in fatal work accidents in forests, the trend has moderated somewhat in the recent

period. As regards fatal accidents involving non-professional forest workers, there was a jump in 2018, which is attributed to the recovery from the windstorm that hit Slovenia in December 2017. In 2019, mortality was also high, but the felling was limited compared to 2018 due to limited sanitation felling. The five-year average of the volume of wood harvested per fatal incident in the most recent period (393,404 m³/fatal incident) has almost doubled compared to the previous period (217,910 m³/fatal incident), which means that forest safety has improved on average.

Insufficient monitoring of forest activities

New forms of recreation that are undesirable or even harmful in forest areas, such as cross-country motorcycles, quad bikes and the like, are still proliferating. Mass seasonal gathering is highly concentrated in particular areas, where it has a negative impact on the forest and causes friction between visitors and locals. Similarly, there is a growing demand for recreation in forest areas close to urban and tourist centres, which in some places is already clashing with the productive and other uses of forests. Positive developments, albeit limited, can be seen in providing and marking infrastructure for mountain biking. In some areas, unregulated grazing in forests persists. The monitoring of forest works, compliance with forest road use regimes, visitors in the forest, and nature conservation monitoring are carried out to a limited extent, given the possibilities offered by SFS and the Forest Inspection Service.

Increased information and awareness-raising regarding forests and forestry

With the establishment of the Forest Fund as a source of funding in 2017, the MAFF, in cooperation with the SFS, started to promote forests, forestry, and forest-wood chains on a planned basis. In this context, particular emphasis should be placed on raising awareness among the general public about the rules of behaviour in forests and the rules of forest use..

The importance of the State's contribution to the implementation of forest restoration and management

Adequate state contribution to private forest owners through budgetary allocations for public forest use is important to maintain consensus between forest owners and the interests of other forest and forestry stakeholders, and to preserve the civilisational value of free access to forests. In addition to financial incentives to carry out restoration, maintenance, and conservation work, forest owners are offered free services provided by the public forestry service (drafting of forest management plans, tree marking). The amount of co-financing for forest restoration, silviculture, and conservation that preserve and develop the social and ecological functions of forests depends on the emphasis placed on these functions. Priority work is carried out to maintain the sustainability of the forest's ecological and social functions.

The passive attitude of forest owners in the process of preparing forest management plans

Forest owners are not sufficiently involved in forest development planning. The scope and content of professional, planned, and more active management incentives for forest owners are insufficient. Even more pressing is the area of business networking between forest owners, which is virtually non-existent. This has not happened despite the support for producer organisations in the forestry sector under the RDP 2014–2020 measures.

The important role of forest owner organisations

CAFS and SFOA cooperate in the processes of drafting and implementing regulations in the field of forests and forestry. They are also actively involved in the implementation of the RDP.

Policies, institutions, and tools/measures

In general, the forest policy follows the objectives and guidelines of the NFP. There is a positive trend in the financing of the tasks deriving from the ZG. The amount of funds allocated annually to forestry under the ZG increased by 15.4% in the analysed period (EUR 22.45 million in 2015, EUR 25.91 million in 2019). Furthermore, the results of the measures arising from the RDP 2007–2013 for forestry and first-stage wood processing are encouraging. Within these, all the funds foreseen were spent, totalling EUR 49 million, of which EUR 35.27 million was directly earmarked for forestry. Funding from the 2014–2020 Rural Development Programme of the Republic of Slovenia has also contributed to these results. By the end of 2019, beneficiaries had received EUR 16.8 million in investment aid. In 2016, the Forest Fund was established with the adoption of the ZGGLRS. The earmarked funding for the tasks deriving from the ZGGLRS increased from EUR 5.6 million in 2016 to EUR 16.2 million in 2019. Despite the increase in the budget for the tasks under the Forest Act, the implementation of forest management, which is crucial for maintaining the stability of forests and ensuring the long-term provision of all their functions, both ecological and social, as well as productive, is not close to what was planned. This can be attributed to the disinterest of forest owners in undertaking silvicultural work and felling to the extent foreseen in the forest management plans. The budget for the operation of the SFS has been increasing.

Examples of evaluation of non-wood forest functions are currently very rare in Slovenia and do not yet allow for a comprehensive consideration of the importance of forests in this context. This limits the possibilities for communication between professional services and different groups of the public about the benefits of Slovenia's high forest cover. A planned evaluation of forest functions could address this, while also transparently justifying and regulating the relationship between the rights and duties of forest owners and non-owners, and the limits on public financial inputs.

At the end of the 20-year concession period, the ZGGLRS was adopted. The new model, with the creation of a state-owned SiDG, is more commercially viable than the previous one. The ZUOPŠP provides for additional measures to address the consequences of the overpopulation of bark beetles to help affected forest owners. The tax environment has not changed. Key governmental and non-governmental organisations in the forest and forestry sector, which normally carry out their own missions, are joined by the state-owned company SiDG. The training and education system for forestry staff and forest owners at all levels is working. Research activities are carried out in line with financial possibilities and the success of international and national projects. Despite positive developments, communication and coordination between all the professional stakeholders involved is not yet optimal. The constant communication of the importance of forests and the forest-wood chain to the wider public has clearly started to improve since 2017 with the systemic funding from the Forest Fund.

Following the change in the management model of forests owned by the Republic of Slovenia, the more radical legal and organisational changes in the forest and forestry sector envisaged in the OPINFO 2017–2021 have not been pursued. Communication and coordination among all stakeholders has improved in efforts to make the forestry system work and to communicate the importance of forests and the forest-wood chain for society as a whole. This applies in particular to strategic communication and the joint efforts of the MAFF, SFS, SFI, BF-F, and SiDG to enhance the image of forests and forestry and the forest-wood chain as a whole.

4

International cooperation regarding forests and forestry

By providing economic, environmental, and social functions, forests play an important role in achieving various objectives at the global, EU, regional, and national levels. Their importance has been increasing significantly in recent years, including in terms of climate goals.

Forests thus contribute to many of the goals of the United Nations (UN) **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 15 on sustainable forest management. The importance of forests and the capacity of the land-use sector to contribute to global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a low-emission economy is recognised in the **Paris Agreement on Climate Change**, the first legally binding climate agreement. At the same time, forests are also important for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, as highlighted in the UN **Convention on Biological Diversity**. The agreement to halt deforestation and reduce methane emissions, reached at the UN Climate Change Conference COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, should also be mentioned here.

The **United Nations Forum on Forests** (UNFF) was established in 2000 to promote the management, conservation, and sustainable development of all types of forests. In 2017, the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 was adopted, providing a global framework for action at all levels to sustainably manage all types of forests and trees outside forests and to halt deforestation and forest degradation, and a reference for the work of the UN forest-related system. It includes six broad and voluntary Global Forest Goals (GFGs) to be achieved by 2030.

The **Food and Agriculture Organisation** (FAO) is working globally for change that benefits forests and people. It balances economic, social, and environmental objectives to enable the present generation to exploit forest resources, but also conserve them to meet the needs of future generations. The FAO's professional work in forestry is guided by the Committee on Forestry (COFO) and six regional commissions on forestry. The FAO collects, enhances, and shares knowledge through various working groups. The oldest is the Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds (WPMMW), within which there is a sub-group that deals with protective forests.

At a regional level, it is important to mention the intergovernmental process entitled **'Forest Europe'**, established in Strasbourg in 1990, which involves 46 signatories, including 45 European countries and the European Union. The process promotes sustainable forest management in Europe and develops criteria and indicators for it. A definition of 'sustainable forest management' has also been developed. A report is issued on the basis of the reporting at each Ministerial Conference. At the FE Conferences, the ministers responsible for forestry sign declarations and resolutions to guide the future work of the process. The last conference was held in Bratislava, Slovakia, in April 2021. Germany, which subsequently took the lead in the process, has drawn up a multiannual work programme for the 2021–2024 period on the basis of the ministerial documents.

The **United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)** is also active in Europe, supporting the development of evidence-based policies for sustainable forest management. It informs stakeholders and the public about the many wood and forest products and ecosystem services that forests and wood provide to society, and additionally helps countries in the region to monitor and guide forest management.

In addition to these, there are a number of other associations and networks of organisations, countries, or institutions with strong links to forestry at a global level or more broadly within Europe. The cooperation between the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), UNECE, and FAO has borne fruit with the implementation of a regional initiative to restore 30 million hectares of forests by 2030 in Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia (ECCA 30). The French-led Rainforest Alliance, which brings together local communities, policy makers, experts, and foresters to preserve rainforests, is committed to the conservation of rainforests. The integration of biodiversity protection into forest management or sustainable forest management is promoted by the informal networks Integrate, an initiative of Germany and Czechia, currently chaired by Switzerland, and Pro Silva, a European organisation of professional foresters, which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2019.

Forestry at the level of the European Union

The European Union is also an important stakeholder in

forests and forestry. With the help of expert groups in the field of nature and climate change, Slovenia develops inter-ministerial coordinated opinions between different ministries, institutions, and services. It then actively participates with them in the working bodies of the European Commission and the Council of the European Union, when the procedures for drafting and adopting legislation and other documents in the field of forests and forestry are being conducted. The number of forest-related documents, both legislative and non-legislative, is increasing at the EU level, reflecting the recognition of the importance of forests in achieving international climate and environmental objectives as well as those same objectives at the EU level. Reference should be made to **Regulation (EU) No 995/2010** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market. It will be replaced by the **Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the making available on the Union market and the export from the Union of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation and repealing Regulation (EU) No 995/2010**, which was, at the time of the preparation of the OPINFO 2022–2026, in the form of a legislative proposal and in the first stage of discussions at the level of the Council of the EU. In the area of climate, environment, and energy, the Fit for 55 package is important, with a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Related are the European **Regulation on Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry**, which sets objectives and rules for accounting for emissions and sinks in forests and agricultural land, and the European **Renewable Energy Directive**, which sets sustainability criteria for the use of wood biomass for energy purposes. Other important European documents include the **Habitats and Birds Directives**, which designate Natura 2000 sites in the environmental field, the **Taxonomy Regulation** on the transition to sustainable finance through a general framework for the development of an EU-wide classification system of nature-friendly and sustainable economic activities, and last but not least the **Common Agricultural Policy** and the **Rural Development Programme**, regarding which more detail will be provided in subsection 2.3.

Among the most important non-legislative documents is the **EU Forest Strategy**, published by the European

Commission on 19 July 2021, replacing the 2013 Strategy. It aims to address the current challenges facing forests, in particular the crisis of climate change and biodiversity loss, and to discover and conserve their assets for our future. Foresters and the entire forest-wood chain have an important role to play in ensuring resilient, protected, and restored forest ecosystems and achieving sustainable and climate-neutral forestry by 2050. The strategy sets out a course of action that the European Commission will advocate at EU level over the coming years, while the global forest conservation strategy is the subject of a Communication that was welcomed by EU Member States in December 2019 with an EU Council Decision on policy guidelines for the protection and restoration of the world's forests.

Other European strategic documents include the **EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change**, which outlines the importance of forest reproductive material and sustainable forest management for climate change adaptation, the **EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030**, which advocates for the identification, mapping, monitoring, and strict protection of all remaining primary and old-growth forests in the EU, and for increasing the quantity of forests and their health and resilience. However, its implementation, in particular the agreement on different definitions, such as the definition of primary forests and old-growth forests, needs good cooperation at a national level. Another important aspect of the OPINFO 2022–2026 in terms of exempting part of the forests from management is the strict protection of 10% of the EU territory.

The **Commission's Communication on a Renovation Wave for Europe** is also relevant, recognising the importance of using organic building materials, as they have the dual benefit of stocking the carbon locked up in organic matter and preventing carbon emissions that would result from the production of other inorganic and more energy-consuming building materials. At the EU level, the incentives for forestry research coming from the **Horizon Europe** programme should also be mentioned.

In addition to the implementation of EU legislation, which requires additional planning and reporting to the European Commission or the European Environment Agency (e.g. for the European LULUCF Regulation), international processes,

agreements, and objectives also influence attitudes and domestic policy-making regarding forests. Slovenia also reports on the achievement of the targets set in the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030, on the criteria and indicators in the FE process, on the situation on the wood market within the UN/ECE, etc.

Mechanism for coordinating cooperation between the People's Republic of China and CEE countries in the field of forestry

The mechanism for coordinating cooperation between China and CEE countries in the field of forestry is part of an initiative to strengthen political, economic, and research cooperation between 16 (or 17) CEE countries and China. These are Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Serbia. Greece joined the 16+1 mechanism (17+1) at the beginning of 2021. Lithuania, an original member of the 16+1, left the 17+1 mechanism in mid-2021.

Slovenia took over the coordination of the 16+1 mechanism in the field of forestry by adopting the 'Action Plan for the Cooperation within the Framework of the Coordination Mechanism for the Cooperation in Forestry between China and CEE Countries' in Ljubljana on 24 May 2016. The coordination is led by the Director of the Executive Coordinating Body, based at the MAFF. Participation in the mechanism does not entail any legally binding obligations for Member States.

Within the framework of the mechanism, Member States strengthen cooperation through policy dialogue on sustainable and multifunctional forest management, wetland and wildlife protection, green economy development, and eco-culture, as well as the exchange of information, good practices, and joint projects in the field of scientific research and education and promote the strengthening of cooperation in the field of business and investment opportunities. At the same time, they will work together to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in particular, the goal of sustainable forest management. This will bring together interested institutions, organisations, companies, and their partners in China and CEE countries.

5

Financing the OPINFO 2022–2026

The implementation of the OPINFO 2022–2026 is fully financed from the available resources of the budget of the Republic of Slovenia, including the Forest and Climate Change Funds, the Recovery and Resilience Fund, and the Common Agricultural Policy funds (EAFRD). The OPINFO 2022–2026 represents the middle level of forest policy planning, implementation,

and monitoring. In accordance with the Forest Act, it is positioned alongside the NFP, which is the basic strategic document, and the forest management, silviculture, and hunting management planning system, as well as alongside other operational documents in the field of forests, forestry, and game management at the basic implementation level.

5.1.

Slovenian budget, Forest Fund and Climate Change Fund

In Tables 1, 2, and 3, the funds from the budget of the Republic of Slovenia are listed. This is provided by the MAFF for measures based on ZG, ZDLov, and ZGGLRS. For 2022 and 2023, the funds are based on the amendment of the 2022 budget of the Republic of Slovenia and the 2023 budget of the Republic of Slovenia. The funds for 2024, 2025, and 2026 will be determined in the budget of the Republic of Slovenia once it is adopted.

Future funding is planned to enable the public forestry service to carry out all its statutory tasks to a high standard, while at the same time keeping pace with rising labour costs and the need for necessary infrastructure investment. The budget for the public forest service increased in 2023 compared to 2022 due to rising prices for services, goods, materials, and energy. Increased costs are also still planned to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus. Labour costs will be higher mainly due to regular promotions of staff in accordance with the regulations, higher annual leave allowance, the age structure of the SFS staff, and the high number of retirements foreseen. Given the complexity of assessing the budgetary possibilities in this respect, solutions to priority area c, 'optimising the legal, organisational, and financial steering of forest and game management to ensure the multifunctional role of forests and strengthen rural development and circular bio-economy', will be sought by means of the tasks under measure 8, 'digitisation of forestry and game management', and the adoption of broader

legislative frameworks which also include adjustments to the tasks and organisation of the public forestry service in light of the budgetary possibilities (Table 12).

The integral budgetary funds for forest investment in 2022–2023 remain at a level comparable to that of previous years. This level is not sufficient to (co-)finance all the measures foreseen in the forest management plans, so the available funds are allocated according to the urgency of the work. In order to be able to finance all measures, the MAFF will endeavour to increase the funds allocated for these purposes within the limits set by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia at the time of each budget preparation.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has given assurances that, as in the previous period, measures to repair damage to forests following storms will be financed to the maximum extent from European funds. It follows that the integral budgetary funds for forest investment are mainly earmarked for forests that are not affected by natural disasters. In the 2022–2026 period, the recovery of forests damaged by natural disasters is being prioritised for funding under the RDP 2014–2020 and the CAPSP 2023–2027.

Compensation due to restrictions on property rights in protective forests and forests with a special purpose is paid according to the number of legitimate claims submitted by forest owners, which varies from year to year.

Compensation for damage caused by game on non-hunting land is also paid according to the legitimate claims of the injured parties and depends on the actual damage caused.

The national budget also provides funds for the maintenance of forest roads, to the extent that forest roads are of public character.

The budget for scientific research in forestry (co-)finances research programmes and national and international research projects through public calls for tenders and calls for proposals. The results of research programmes and projects contribute to forest policy formulation, to the development of regulations, or are directly translated into forestry practice through public forest service operators.

Table 1

Planned integral budgetary funds of the Republic of Slovenia for forestry and hunting tasks in 2022 and 2023 (in EUR 1,000)

Budget heading code	Budget heading name	Year 2022	Year 2023
184110	Public forestry service	25,832.1	26,865.4
141110	Regenerating private forests	213.0	213.0
224810	Regenerating burned areas and regenerating forests damaged by natural disasters	185.0	185.0
144110	Tending private forests	380.6	380.6
632610	Preventive forest protection	140.0	140.0
632710	Other protection of private forests	215.0	215.0
632910	Fire protection in the Karst	150.0	150.0
633010	Seed and seedling production in forestry	6.0	6.0
255910	Enforcement of decisions of the Slovenian Forest Service	5.0	5.0
632810	Maintaining wildlife habitats in private forests	50.0	50.0
417810	Repairing forest roads in private forests	1,960.3	1,960.3
417910	Repairing forest roads in national forests	665.3	665.3
633210	Compensation due to the declaration of forests with a special purpose	6.0	6.0
255210	¹ Scientific research work in forestry	500.0	500.0
613110	Compensation for damage caused by game	646.0	400.0
170058	Public service for game and hunting	100.0	100.0
Total		31,054.3	31,841.6

¹ These funds are earmarked by the MAFF to support scientific research work in the field of forestry. The funds are earmarked for research projects under the TRP and are financed jointly with the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

Pursuant to paragraph five of Article 33 of the ZGGLRS, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopts an annual programme for the use of the budgetary funds from the Forest Fund. The budgetary resources from the Forest Fund are earmarked, in accordance with the ZGGLRS, for denationalisation procedures and the payment of compensation for the inability to use the

returned forests, for the acquisition of forests, for the disposal of state forests, for Natura 2000 measures in private forests, for obligations towards municipalities (on the basis of Article 35 of the ZGGLRS), for obligations arising from the Republic of Slovenia's ownership of forests, and for the promotion of the use of wood and forest-wood chains.

Table 2

Planned dedicated funds (Forest Fund) from the budget of the Republic of Slovenia for forestry and hunting tasks in 2022 and 2023 (in EUR 1,000)

Planned funds	Year 2022	Year 2023
Forest Fund – investments	2,047.4	0
Forest Fund - Natura 2000 measures	1,000.0	1,000.0
Forest Fund – forest acquisition	4,465.8	6,000.0
Forest Fund – disposal tasks	385.7	1,000.0
Forest Fund – liabilities of the Republic of Slovenia arising from the acquisition of ownership of forests under the act governing inheritance	3.0	5.0
Forest Fund – liabilities towards municipalities – 25% of the annual remuneration of revenues from the sale of wood from state forests	3,346.6	3,200.0
Forest Fund – liabilities arising from taxes, contributions, and other compulsory levies deriving from the ownership of state forests	2,118.9	1,500.00
Forest Fund – promoting the use of wood and wood products and forest-wood chains	634.2	1,000.00
Forest Fund – tasks relating to the transport, storage, and sale of seized and confiscated timber assortment carried out by the company on the basis of the act governing forests	0	110,00
Forest Fund – Article 36 of the ZGGLRS	10,631.1	1,000.00
Total	26,654.7	16,838.0

Resources from the Climate Change Fund are also used, among other things, to implement climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the forestry sector. Funding is provided for the preparation of expert documents, courses, workshops, lectures, practical demonstrations, and other activities to transfer knowledge regarding the possibilities of the wood trade in Slovenia,

investment in measures to protect forests from invasive alien species, to adapt the tree composition of forests to climate change, and to ensure the genetic diversity of tree species. The beneficiaries of the funds are contractors selected on the basis of public procurement processes and project promoters selected on the basis of public calls for tenders.

Table 3

Planned dedicated budgetary funds of the Republic of Slovenia (Climate Change Fund) for forestry tasks in 2022 and 2023 (in EUR 1,000)

Measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change in forestry	Year 2022	Year 2023
Total	1,405.3	1,499.2

5. 2.

Recovery and Resilience Plan

To mitigate the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic, the European Commission has set up the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), which is the European Union's financial support to accelerate the implementation of sustainable reforms and investments to achieve the objectives of the 2030 INECP and the EU's 2050 climate neutrality goals.

On 1 July 2021, the European Commission positively assessed Slovenia's Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP). Slovenia has identified four development areas in the RRP with associated reforms and investments, which will be based on the Digital and Green Transition goals.

The following two projects will be implemented in the field of forestry under the RRP:

- investment in the Seed, Nursery, and Forest Protection Centre (C1 K3 – Development Area 1 Green Transition – Component 3 Clean and Safe Environment); and
- eGozdarstvo (C2 K2 – Development Area 2 Digital Transformation – Component 2 Digital Transformation of the Public Sector and Public Administration).

Through all its activities, the Seed, Nursery, and Forest Protection Centre will directly support the achievement of Slovenia's climate change and adaptation goals and commitments by restoring and maintaining the health, resilience, and biodiversity of forest ecosystems, the effective sustainable use of forests and wood in the future, and the

provision of planting material.

The eGozdarstvo (eForestry) project is part of the Ministry's broader investment in digital transition – the digital transformation of the public sector and public administration in agriculture, food, and forestry, which will streamline the tasks of the PFS and, in particular, make it more efficient and faster in dealing with customers, thereby increasing the stability, resilience, and responsiveness of the forestry sector. There will be greater transparency and traceability in the forest-wood chain.

For the 2021–2026 period, funding is provided for both RRP projects; specifically, European funds from the Recovery and Resilience Fund are used for the investment part of the projects, and integral budgetary funds from the Slovenian budget are used for VAT.

Table 4

Amounts of the funds available for the RRP projects (EU funds – Recovery and Resilience Fund and Slovenian participation for VAT) in the forestry sector

RRP forestry projects	Amount (in 1,000 EUR)
Development Area 1 Green Transition – Component 2 Clean and Safe Environment (C1 K3)	
Seed, Nursery, and Forest Protection Centre (EU and SLO)	6,180.2
– Recovery and Resilience Fund (EU funding)	5,100.0
– integral VAT resources of the budget of the Republic of Slovenia	1,080.2
Development Area 2 Digital Transformation – Component 2 Digital Transformation of the Public Sector and Public Administration (C2 K2)	
eGozdarstvo (eForestry; EU and SLO)	11,812.5
– Recovery and Resilience Fund (EU funding)	10,116.4
– integral VAT resources of the budget of the Republic of Slovenia	1,696.1
Total, both projects (EU and SLO)	17,992.7
– Recovery and Resilience Fund (EU funding)	15,216.4
– integral VAT resources of the budget of the Republic of Slovenia	2,776.3

At the time of the preparation of the OPINFO 2022–2026, the projects 2330-22-0033 eGozdarstvo and 2330-22-0028 Establishment of a Seed Production Centre were included in the current Development Programme Plan 2022–2025.

5.3.

Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 and the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan 2023–2027

In line with the RDP 2014–2020 and the CAPSP 2023–2027, the MAFF uses funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and Slovenian participation to continue to support the increase in efficiency and competitiveness of the Slovenian forest-wood chain. In implementing the commitments made in the AP within the forest-wood chain, the MAFF is primarily competent for the implementation of the forest policy. In the 2014–2020 programming period, in addition to investments in forestry equipment, machinery, and forest traffic routes, training for safety at work in forests, and incentives for the establishment of producer groups in forestry, the MAFF will continue to support investments in what is known as primary wood processing before industrial scale through its measures under the RDP. The comprehensive rehabilitation of forests following natural disasters (i.e. ice storms, windstorms, bark beetles) in the last decade has also been co-financed through the RDP.

Due to the delay in the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, the 2014–2020 programming period has been extended by two years, to 2021 and 2022, and payments from this period can be made until 2025. Funds from the new 2021–2027 financial period for the years 2021 and 2022 are redirected to the implementation of the current programming period. The extension of the programming period by two years will result in a shorter implementation period for the Strategic Plan 2023–2027. In the 2023–2027 programming period, MARD continues the implementation of the measures referred to in the RDP 2014–2020 within the CAPSP 2023–2027, adding investments in the establishment and development of forest nursery activities and the conservation and maintenance of grazing areas for wild herbivores.

In the RDP 2014–2020, the following measures are planned in the forest-wood chain for forest owners, farmers, entrepreneurs, and other beneficiaries:

measure 1: knowledge transfer and activities relating to the provision of information: training for safe work in forests

measure 4: investment in fixed assets, operation entitled 'Arrangement of Forest Infrastructure' to increase the openness of forests by means of forest traffic routes

measure 6: development of farms and companies, sub-measure 6.4: investment in the establishment and development of non-agricultural activities in order to facilitate access to financial resources, thereby promoting a faster economic revival in rural areas in the field of primary and secondary large-scale wood processing

measure 8: investing in the development of forest areas and improving the viability of forests

– **sub-measure 8.4:** prevention and repair of damage to forests caused by forest fires and natural disasters and catastrophic events

– **sub-measure 8.6:** investments in forestry technologies, wood processing, and mobilisation will be implemented within the framework of two operations:

- 'Investments in the Purchase of New Machinery and Equipment for Felling and Wood Hauling'
- 'Investments in Pre-Industrial Wood Processing'

measure 9: setting up producer groups and organisations

Measure 9 is expected to make a significant contribution to solving the problem of commercially unconnected forest owners carrying out work in forests and acting jointly on the wood market. .

Table 5

Amounts of funds available under the RDP 2014–2020, including the transition period until the end of 2022, by measure, sub-measure, and operation (EU funds and Slovenian participation)

RDP 2014–2020 measure/sub-measure/operation	Amount (in million EUR)
Arranging Forest Infrastructure	9.0
Investments in the establishment and development of non-agricultural activities	31.3 ¹
Investing in the development of forest areas and improving the viability of forests	
• Prevention and repair of damage to forests	14.0
• Investments in forestry technologies and wood processing and mobilisation	
• Investments in the Purchase of New Machinery and Equipment for Felling and Wood Hauling	27.0
• Investments in Pre-Industrial Wood Processing	19.8
² Setting up producer groups and organisations	3.4 ¹
Knowledge transfer and activities relating to the provision of information	4.8 ¹
Total:	69.8

¹ These amounts are not included in the total because the resources invested in the forest-wood chain depend on applications.

² The funding for the establishment of groups and producers is earmarked for agriculture and forestry, so that implementation in the forestry sector depends on applications.

The CAPSP 2023–2027 foresees the following measures in the forest-wood chain for forest owners, farmers, entrepreneurs, and other beneficiaries:

- investments in arranging forest infrastructure
- investments in the purchase of new forestry machinery
- investments in primary wood processing and digitisation
- investment in the establishment and development of forest tree nurseries
- investment in the rehabilitation and restoration of forests following natural disasters and adverse weather conditions
- preservation and maintenance of grazing areas for wild herbivores
- support for the establishment and initial operation of collective forms of cooperation in the agriculture and forestry sector
- support for investments in the establishment and development of non-agricultural activities, including the bio-economy
- knowledge sharing and information transfer to farmers and forest owners and the training of counsellors

Table 6

Amounts of funds available under the CAPSP 2023–2027 by individual intervention (EU funds and Slovenian participation)

Intervention under the CAPSP 2023–2027	Amount (in million EUR)
Investments in arranging forest infrastructure	4.0
Investments in the purchase of new forestry machinery and equipment	20.5
Investments in primary wood processing and digitisation	10.0
Investment in the establishment and development of forest tree nurseries	2.0
Investment in the rehabilitation and restoration of forests following natural disasters and adverse weather conditions	4.0
Preservation and maintenance of grazing areas for wild herbivores	4.5
² Support for the establishment and initial operation of collective forms of cooperation in the agriculture and forestry sector	9.0 ¹
Support for investments in the establishment and development of non-agricultural activities, including the bio-economy	8.9 ¹
Knowledge sharing and information transfer to farmers and forest owners and the training of counsellors	3.5 ¹
Total:	45

¹ These amounts are not included in the total because the resources invested in the forest-wood chain depend on applications.

² The funding for the establishment of groups and producers is earmarked for agriculture and forestry, so that implementation in the forestry sector depends on applications.

In addition to the overview in the tables above, we have compared the values of the available funds at the level of the seven-year programming period, specifically from 2014 to 2020 and from 2021 to 2027. The 2021–2027 funding of EUR 18.6 million is already being used in the 2021–2023

transition period. The new programming period will therefore only start in 2023. Funding for forestry interventions in the 2021–2027 period increased by EUR 8 million compared to the previous from 2014 to 2020. This is a 15% increase in available funding.

6

Purpose and design of the OPINFO 2022–2026

Following the adoption of the RINFP 2015–2019, the MAFF brought together all programmes and documents in the field of forests, forestry, and game management in a transparent, conceptual and substantive manner in a single operational document, as it did when preparing the OPINFO 2017–2021, and, on the basis of paragraph four of Article 7 of the ZG, prepared the five-year OPINFO 2022–2026. The programme is primarily based on the objectives and guidelines of the NFP or the findings of the RINFP 2015–2019. This document provides a comprehensive overview and assessment of the implementation of the NFP, presenting the current state of sustainable forest and game management in Slovenia. The OPINFO 2022–2026 also builds on existing and ongoing documents related to forests, forestry, and game management or the forest-wood chain at the national and international level.

The OPINFO identifies the current priorities in the 2022–2026 period for forests, forestry, and game management, from which measures and other forest policy tasks are derived. The OPINFO 2022–2026 and the documents already adopted and implemented are linked by common denominators so that measures are not duplicated. The monitoring of the implementation of the measures will be linked, to the greatest extent possible, to comparable European benchmarks as well as quantitative and qualitative indicators of sustainable forest management, including the corresponding target values. Where this is not possible, additional, task-appropriate national indicators from the NFA are used. Given the operational nature of the OPINFO 2022–2026, the document for monitoring the performance of forest policymaking and implementation also sets out, alongside the indicators and targets, the task holders, the financial resources required, and the timeframes for implementation.

6.1.

Five priorities and twelve measures of the OPINFO 2022–2026

Since the adoption of the RNFP in 2007, the MAFF has ensured that the objectives and guidelines of the RNFP, which cover various areas related to forests, forestry, and game management, are integrated into all operational programmes and other documents. The system of five priorities and twelve measures of the OPINFO 2022–2026, which integrates all three aspects of

sustainable forest management (environmental, economic, social) and game management, thus clearly defines the framework and content of the forest policy. The system is structurally and substantively largely linked to the structure of the OPINFO 2017–2021, allowing comparability and tracking of forest policy implementation over a 10-year period.

Table 7

Priorities and measures of the OPINFO 2022–2026

Priority	Measure
a) Ensuring CO2 sinks in forests and adapting forests to climate change, in particular to maintain their resilience, stability, vitality, and health.	<p>1. Ensuring that forests have a CO2 sink that is still large enough to permanently create stable, vital, and healthy forests, and that adequate data are available for national emission and sink registers</p> <p>2. Adapting forests to climate change and ensuring the stability, vitality, and health of forests through management practices that adapt to natural conditions and climate change, taking into account the environmental, economic, and social aspects of forests</p>
b) Conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of forests at landscape, ecosystem, species, and genetic levels, and monitoring their resilience, stability, vitality and health.	<p>3. Conserving and enhancing biodiversity in forests and ensuring a favourable conservation status for threatened forest species and habitat types.</p>
c) Optimising the legal, organisational, and financial steering of forest and game management to ensure the multifunctional role of forests and strengthen rural development and the circular bio-economy;	<p>4. Increasing the exploitation of the productive potential of forest sites by promoting felling in private forests in accordance with the forest management plans in force and encouraging the modernisation and professionalisation of forest production and investment in forest infrastructure.</p> <p>5. Promoting the use of wood and non-wood forest products and the social functions of forests to further enhance rural development and the circular bio-economy.</p> <p>6. Monitoring the performance of forest management in forests owned by the Republic of Slovenia.</p> <p>7. Ensuring adequate levels of budgetary funds, EU funds, and other financial resources (e.g. the Forest Fund and the Climate Change Funds) for forests, forestry, and game management.</p> <p>8. Digitisation of forestry and game management as well as the adoption of broader legislative frameworks, also including adjustments to the tasks and organisation of the public forestry service to budgetary capacity.</p>
d) Promoting coordination and communication between all stakeholders related to forests, forestry, and game management, developing education, research, and knowledge transfer, and strengthening international cooperation.	<p>9. Promoting strategic communication with a focus on a 'Forest Dialogue' of all forest, forestry, and game management stakeholders and developing education, research, and knowledge transfer.</p> <p>10. International cooperation regarding forests, forestry, and game management.</p>
e) Ensuring sustainable game management.	<p>11. Monitoring the implementation of the biennial HMZPs.</p> <p>12. Introduction of additional methods to determine the status of herbivorous ungulate populations.</p>

6. 2.

Tasks for the formulation and implementation of the forest policy by priority and measure

The OPINFO 2022–2026 sets out priorities and measures for the formulation and implementation of the forest policy. For effective implementation and monitoring, each priority and its associated measure is linked to a system of tasks or activities,

promoters, timetables, financial resources, indicators, and targets. In all tables, the sources of funding are indicated in the column 'Resources', and the detailed level of funding at the annual or programme level is defined in Tables 1 to 6.

6. 2. 1.

Priority a: ensuring CO2 sinks in forests and adapting forests to climate change, in particular to maintain their resilience, stability, vitality, and health

Forests play an important role in regulating the Earth's climate and are a vital link in the global carbon cycle, incorporating CO2 into biomass as they grow. The contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation of forests to climate change is one of the central challenges that must be adequately addressed. Despite an increasingly stressed environment and extreme weather events as a result of

climate change, forests still manage to play an extremely important role in maintaining biodiversity and the ecological balance of nature, which must be maintained as a matter of priority with appropriate measures and sufficient resources. Forests play an important role in mitigating climate change, particularly in relation to photosynthesis and CO2 fixation.

Slovenia has a relatively high forest cover, which is not expected to change significantly in the future, and its forests are well preserved and have maintained a high growing stock despite the impact of natural disasters. This is why there are limited options for a significant long-term increase in the CO₂ sink in forests in Slovenia due to additional accumulation of growing stock and land expansion. The energy and climate strategic plans (INECP, SLTCS) also define forest and forestry measures more in the direction of ensuring a balanced forest composition and maintaining forest health and vitality. The SLTCS emphasises the key

measure of strengthening natural climate solutions by designating reserves, eco-cells, and habitat trees and by conserving aquatic biotopes in forests. The INECP identifies key LULUCF instruments such as the upgrading and implementation of forest inventories, development of a methodology for monitoring sinks, upgrading of measures into a sectoral policy, forest management plans for FMAs (2021–2030), state incentives for forest owners for silviculture and forest protection as well as education and workshops on sustainable forest management for forest owners.

The SLTCS highlights three key factors for achieving the LULUCF sinks targets:

- 1.** maintaining and increasing forest carbon stocks and sinks, which will require:
 - a) optimising the age structure and tree composition of forests;
 - b) introducing mature stands into regeneration more rapidly, including by shortening the production periods of keystone or dominant tree species;
 - c) restoring degraded forests and rehabilitating forests damaged by storms;
 - d) improving the implementation of forest management plans, including more active implementation of silvicultural and conservation work, especially in private forests;
- 2.** increasing the carbon stock of harvested wood products, which will only be possible by increasing investment in the wood processing industry, especially in primary wood processing such as sawmills, wood-processing centres, and veneer mills;
- 3.** managing the expansion of settlements or the rate of growth of built-up areas and encouraging the renovation of existing buildings.

6.2.1.1.

Measure 1: Ensuring that forests have a CO₂ sink that is still large enough to permanently create stable, vital, and healthy forests, and that adequate data are available for national emission and sink registers

Forests are increasingly affected by climate change, but they also play a key role in mitigating it. The ability of forests to sequester carbon in biomass and soils makes it possible to remove (sink) CO₂ emissions from the atmosphere. The functioning of a forest as a sink for CO₂ from the atmosphere is only guaranteed if the conditions are right for the forest to accumulate wood reserves (biomass) and organic carbon in soil.

Adapting forests to climate change and maintaining and securing their role in climate change mitigation are key tasks of forestry measures. Changes in the growing stock of forests have an enormous impact on national inventories of GHG emissions or sinks. Due to the occurrence of increasingly extreme natural events, this effect of forests can change relatively quickly, as shown by the change in the CO₂ sink in Slovenian forests. Based on historical data on the evolution of the growing stock in Slovenian forests, it can be concluded that the increase in the growing stock in forests and thus the CO₂ sink accounted for as much as a third to a half of all emissions in Slovenia (emissions from industry, transport, agriculture, etc.) until the occurrence of major disasters after 2014. After this period, however, the severe damage to forests (hail, wind, bark beetle) and the necessary amount of salvage cutting have led to a significant reduction in the CO₂ sink in Slovenian forests.

With such a large and significant impact on the national inventory of GHG emissions and sinks, the forestry sector is increasingly being integrated into the climate and energy

policy framework of Slovenia and, in particular, the European Union. Forests and forestry are integrated into climate policy through what is known as LULUCF – Land Use, Land Use Change, and Forestry.

With the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2018/841 governing LULUCF, the EU has included greenhouse gas emissions and carbon dioxide removals from land use, land use change, and forestry in its climate and energy targets until 2030. The Regulation is binding on Member States and requires that emissions do not exceed removals in the 2021–2030 period, which applies to all land categories included in the accounting. This commitment, or what is known as the LULUCF ‘no debit rule’, will be assessed for the periods from 2021 to 2025 and from 2026 to 2030. Therefore, additional measures are needed to establish a monitoring system for emissions and removals in the LULUCF sector, specifically in the area of accounting for harvested wood products, to ensure adequate monitoring of carbon in wetlands, urban, and agricultural soils, which are important from the perspective of carbon sequestration, and to obtain data on changes in carbon stocks in living and dead biomass in forests, which will ensure credible accounting and reporting and allow verification of progress towards climate targets. In this area, we expect that the methodology for data collection, reporting, and accounting will be constantly changing (the Commission is already working on an amendment to Regulation (EU) 2018/841, which is expected to apply after 2025), so it is essential to continuously update the protocols.

Table 8

Tasks within the scope of measure 1: ensuring that forests have a CO₂ sink that is still large enough to permanently create stable, vital, and healthy forests, and that adequate data are available for national emission and sink registers

Tasks/activities	Responsible institutions	Deadline	Funds	Indicator	Target value
Measure:					
Ensuring that forests have a CO ₂ sink that is still large enough to permanently create stable, vital, and healthy forests, and that adequate data are available for national emission and sink registers					
Activities related to LULUCF/AFOLU reporting*	SFS/SFI after PFS	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS	Reports	—
Design and implementation of the LSMFFE and integration into the public forestry service, with support from the Climate Fund projects	SFS/SFI after PFS	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS, the Climate Change Fund	Annual reports	—
Modelling CO ₂ sinks in above- and below-ground biomass	MAFF, SFI, SFS	A permanent task	RDP 2014–2020, within the scope of financing by the PFS	Programme implementation rate (%)	100 %
Obtaining information on changes in carbon stocks in living and dead biomass in forests	SFI, SFS	A permanent task	Climate Change Fund	Data and methodology for reporting and accounting	—
Carbon monitoring in forest soils, wetlands, and urban soils (mainly soil organic matter)	SFI	A permanent task	Climate Change Fund	Data and methodology for reporting and accounting, Project report	—
Monitoring the impacts of climate change on forest soil processes and tree growth	SFI	A permanent task	Climate Change Fund	Data and methodology for reporting and accounting, Project report	—
Market opportunities for roundwood in Slovenia and its producers and consumers	SFI	A permanent task	Climate Change Fund	Data and methodology for reporting and accounting of sinks/emissions for harvested forest and wood products (HWP), Project report	—

* AFOLU is the LULUCF sector combined with agriculture; the acronym stands for Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU). The merged sector is expected to be operational in 2025, following the envisaged amendment of Regulation 2018/841.

6.2.1.2.

Measure 2: dapting forests to climate change and ensuring the resilience, stability, vitality, and health of forests through management practices that adapt to natural conditions and climate change, taking into account the environmental, economic, and social aspects of forests

Climate change also has important implications for forest management. Extreme weather events and natural disasters (droughts, storms, hail, fires), together with biotic factors (insects, fungi, and other diseases of forest trees), have a negative impact on forests. Their role in management planning will continue to grow in the future and will, together with climate change and global trade, take new forms. The importance of protecting forests to ensure their resilience and stability, vitality, and health increases. The forestry system must be able to respond quickly and effectively in the event of storms and pest outbreaks.

Natural regeneration, management at all stages of forest development, and small-scale interventions in stands are not

able to achieve the intended value in meeting the objectives set in the forest management plans, as the average achievement of the planned measures is still insufficient. There is a need to increase the interest of private forest owners in the implementation of the planned measures, to specify the priorities or level of urgency of forest investments, therefore increasing their impact. This will require more dedicated public funding.

The investment in the construction and establishment of the Seed, Nursery, and Forest Protection Centre within the RRP is an important institutional strengthening in the area of forest protection and resilience, stability, vitality, and health through the provision of planting material.

Table 9

Tasks within the scope of measure 2: adapting forests to climate change and ensuring the resilience, stability, vitality, and health of forests through management practices that adapt to natural conditions and climate change, taking into account the environmental, economic, and social aspects of forests

Tasks/activities	Responi	Responsible institutions	Funds	Indicator	Target value
Adapting forests to climate change and ensuring the resilience, stability, vitality, and health of forests through management practices that adapt to natural conditions and climate change, taking into account the environmental, economic, and social aspects of forests					
Increasing the efficiency of the forest protection system	SFI, SFS	2022–2026	Within the scope of financing by the PFS, Recovery and Resilience Fund	—	—
Monitoring the health status of forests and ensuring that conditions are right for the rapid and comprehensive rehabilitation of damaged and degraded forests following weather disasters and fires, as well as for the prevention of bark beetle increases and rehabilitation due to bark beetles	MAFF, SFI, SFS	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS	Ratio of implemented to planned activities (%)	100 %
Ensuring measures for forest stability, vitality, and resilience and reducing risks in forest management	MAFF, SFS	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS, Climate Change Fund, EAFRD	Ratio of implemented to planned activities (%)	100 %
Preparation of annual forest investment programmes taking into account measures to adapt forests to climate change	SFS	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS	Prepared investment programme for the current year	100 %
Strengthening action in planned protective forests and in torrent areas to strengthen their resilience and provide protective effects	SFS	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS, Climate Change Fund	Ratio of implemented to planned activities (%)	100 %

Protection against invasive alien species in forests	SFS, SFI	A permanent task	Climate Change Fund	Poročilo o izvajanju naloge/ projekta	100 %
Ensuring fire protection in fire-prone forests	SFS	A permanent task	Budget of the Republic of Slovenia, within the scope of financing by the PFS	Razmerje med izvedenimi in načrtovanimi aktivnostmi (%)	100 %
Strengthening forest management in accordance with the FMP and raising awareness and training forest owners to implement it in private forests	MAFF, SFS, SFOA	2022–2026	The budget of the Republic of Slovenia: Forest Fund, EAFRD	Razmerje med izvedenimi in načrtovanimi aktivnostmi (%)	100 %
Preparation of a basis and proposals for amendments and changes to the regulations governing the protection, health, and resilience of forests and the conservation of genetic diversity – for the establishment of a Seed, Nursery, and Forest Protection Centre (RRP)	MAFF, SFI	2022	Within the financial plan of the MAFF	—	—
Establishment of the Seed, Nursery, and Forest Protection Centre – investment under the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP)	MAFF (lead authority), SFI (provider), AAMRD	2022–2024	Recovery and Resilience Fund (EU) and within the scope of the financial plan of the MAFF – integral funds from the budget of the Republic of Slovenia	— / EUR 5.1 million excluding VAT (Recovery and Resilience Fund – EU) EUR 1.1 million (VAT within the scope of the financial plan of the MAFF – integral funds of the budget of the Republic of Slovenia) Total: EUR 6.2 million incl. DDV	
Mitigating and adapting forests to climate change and ensuring the resilience, stability, vitality, and health of forests through management practices that adapt to natural conditions and climate change, taking into account the environmental, economic, and social aspects of forests					
Targeting forestry measures in the area of torrential rains (e.g. debris removal, cutting down heavy trees along torrents, etc.)	MAFF, SFS, SFOA	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS EAFRD, Climate Change Fund	-	-
Maintenance of the Forest Protection Information Centre – Protecting Forests in Slovenia portal (Varstvo gozdov Slovenije)	SFI, SFS	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS, Recovery and Resilience Fund	Updated status display	-

6.2.2.

Priority b: conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of forests at landscape, ecosystem, species, and genetic levels, and monitoring their resilience, stability, vitality and health

Forests are one of humankind's key allies in the fight against climate change, as healthy and vital forests contribute significantly to climate change adaptation and mitigation and to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

At the operational level, the guidelines for maintaining the favourable conservation status of habitat types, species, and their habitats in Natura 2000 sites and beyond are generally followed, but the implementation of specific measures for the conservation of forest species and habitat types needs to be strongly reinforced. The Natura 2000 management programme is a key instrument for improving the status of species and habitat types. In forests that are subject to conservation degradation, more resources will need to be allocated in the future to implement concrete measures to improve their conservation status. For private forests, the Forest Fund is available under the Management of State Forests Act (ZGGLRS) for the implementation of measures in Natura 2000 sites in accordance with the Natura 2000 management programme. However, under the ZGGLRS, national forests are required to contribute to the achievement of nature conservation objectives, in particular the objectives of Natura 2000 sites and protected areas. The conservation status of lowland riparian and floodplain forests is deteriorating more markedly, and more attention will also be needed for minority forest habitat types.

Specific measures to improve the conservation status of forest habitat types will also need to be complemented by improving knowledge regarding the characteristics and distribution of minority and endangered forest habitat types.

Despite the relatively favourable situation, more attention should also be paid to defining the hydrological and protective functions of forests. Better hydrological expertise is needed to define the hydrological function, while the protective function also requires more detailed consideration of the conditions on the land above the various infrastructure and other facilities. The protective role of forests needs to be strengthened through adapted management in protective and protected areas. Work on managing torrential stream headwaters in forests will need to be stepped up.

The plant and animal components of forests are inextricably linked. Conservation of all native wildlife species is crucial. There are currently no major problems in managing individual species of wildlife linked to the forest (mainly large herbivores). Active protection of individual game species will need to continue. In most cases, the natural habitats of wildlife have been so severely altered by general human influence that passive protection cannot contribute to the conservation of a particular species.

6.2.2.1.

Measure 3: conserving and enhancing biodiversity in forests and ensuring a favourable conservation status for threatened forest species and habitat types

In Slovenia, forestry prides itself on being close to nature, on knowing and caring for the ecological function of forests, and on balancing the animal component, especially herbivores, with the carrying capacity of forests. Forest management plans and hunting management plans are also the management plans needed for those parts of forests that lie within Natura 2000 sites. Forest management and game management in such environments can only be possible with sufficient knowledge of the flora and fauna and their ecological needs.

The necessary forest management activities or restrictions to maintain the favourable conservation status of special protection areas designated under the regulations governing nature conservation and nature protection shall be set out in forest management plans and hunting management plans. Slovenia's forests are relatively well preserved. This is reflected in the mix of tree species, the diverse (vertical and horizontal) structure of the stands and the representation of wildlife species. According to the draft FMP FMAs, 27.5% of forests are conserved, 44.2% are converted, 22% are heavily converted, and 6.3% are exchanged.

Dead wood biomass is an important habitat for fauna and flora. This significantly and additionally contributes to increasing the biodiversity of forest ecosystems. In this

case, thicker standing dead trees are important for the survival of some specific species, while for others, trees lying down are more important. In 2012, standing dead trees amounted to 7.1 m³/ha and standing trees with stumps to 12.7 m³/ha, or a total of 19.8 m³/ha, which is almost 7% of the total growing stock of forest stands. It is precisely because of the effects of major storms in forests that the amount of dead wood biomass has increased since 2012. According to the draft FMP FMA 2021–2030, the amount of dead biomass is 21 m³/ha. The structure is poor, with most of the dead mass in the extended thickness class A (up to 30 cm). According to SFS data, in 2019, dead wood biomass in the thickness class up to 30 cm dominated but is less significant in terms of the conservation of Natura 2000 species of European importance. Key species for which measures to increase the proportion of dead biomass in combination with the proportion of unmanaged forests are important and require a higher standard are: the wrinkled bark beetle and the birds white-backed woodpecker, three-toed woodpecker, middle spotted woodpecker, and the red-breasted flycatcher.

A key measure for the future is to ensure sufficient dead and dying standing trees in the widespread B and C thickness classes – in the core areas of bird species and some beetles (5–7 trees per ha in forests with dominant trees over 30 cm in diameter). More attention will need to be paid

to lowland riparian and floodplain forests, where the situation is deteriorating, mainly due to deforestation caused by agriculture, urbanisation, and infrastructure, unfavourable hydrological conditions caused by various interventions and climate change (droughts, floods), and the spread of invasive non-native species and pests. The deteriorating condition of these forests is also reflected in the decline of the population of the middle spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos medius*), which breeds in lowland floodplain forests. Greater attention should therefore be paid to improving knowledge regarding lowland forest habitat types, as well as other minority forest habitat types, many of which are also priority habitat types (e.g. maple, black pine, and

swamp forests) and therefore particularly important for biodiversity conservation at all levels. Measures to restore these habitat types should be stepped up, and the study of their characteristics and distribution (mapping) of minority habitat types, and especially of priority forest habitat types, should be continued. This is a Natura 2000 measure within the framework of the Forest Fund, and the same applies to the Eurasian capercaillie. To support forest management planning and forest management, a permanent and reliable system for studying forest stands and habitat types should be established, contributing to a better knowledge of forest soils, characteristic plant species, and communities (phytocoenological maps).

Table 10

Tasks within the scope of measure 3: conserving and enhancing biodiversity in forests and ensuring a favourable conservation status for threatened forest species and habitat types

Tasks/activities	Resp. Instit.	Deadline	Funds	Indicator	Target value
Conserving and enhancing biodiversity in forests and ensuring a favourable conservation status for threatened forest species and habitat types					
Biodiversity – implementation of the strategies in the FMP FMA, implementation of the PMNs and measures in the FMP FMU, implementation of silvicultural measures for species and habitat types	MAFF, SFS	A permanent task	Budget of the Republic of Slovenia, Forest Fund, LIFE Programme, Climate ChangeFund	Percentage of the programme's target realised (%)	100 %
¹ Increase in new areas exempted from management and comprehensive renewal of the system of forests with a special purpose	SFS, MAFF, MESP, IRSNC	A permanent task	Forest Fund, within the scope of financing by the PFS	Area of forests with a special purpose and protective forests	A quarter increase in the size of forest reserves by 2026 (2,400 ha or 11,800 ha in total)
Conservation of large contiguous forest complexes	MAFF, SiDG, IRSNC	A permanent task	—	—	—
Preserving forest remnants in agricultural and peri-urban landscapes and ensuring ecological connectivity	MAFF, SiDG	A permanent task	—	—	—
Preparation of annual forest investment programmes taking into account measures from the Natura 2000 management programme	SFS	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS	Prepared investment programme for the current year, coordinated with the IRSNC	100 %
Implementation of measures in Natura 2000 sites in private and state forests, taking into account the measures of the Natura 2000 management programme	SFS	A permanent task	Forest Fund, owners' own resources	Implementation of planned measures	100 %
Mapping of (minority) FHT's and continuation of phytocoenological mapping in areas where such baselines are lacking, insufficient, or outdated. Monitoring of the Eurasian capercaillie	PFS, SFI, SFS	2022–2026	Within the scope of financing by the PFS, EU funds	Percentage of vegetation map coverage	100 %
Establishing and monitoring the status of key Natura 2000 species	MAFF, MESP, SFS, IRSNC	2022–2026	EU funds MOP funds	Monitoring in place for key Natura 2000 species	100 %

¹ New areas exempted from management should be designated in particular around the two forest reserves with world heritage status (Krokar Primary Forest and Snežnik-Ždrocle), around forest reserves with the aim of contributing to the Natura 2000 objectives of the Natura 2000 site management programme, in protective forests that are significant for biodiversity, and in areas of eco-cell congestion without measures.

6.2.3.

Priority c: Optimising the legal, organisational, and financial steering of forest and game management to ensure the multifunctional role of forests and strengthen rural development and the circular bio-economy

This priority is linked to the broader economic and social aspects of sustainable forest management, ranging from production to tourism and recreation functions, which are not sufficiently exploited. This includes how forestry is organised and how it is financed from budgetary, European, and other resources.

The implementation of potential felling is increasing but is still below the planned level in private forests. While the use of forests for other economic activities (hunting, beekeeping, gathering fruits and other forest material goods, tourism and recreation, etc.) is increasing, the economic impacts of such use are not. Forest production is being updated and forest openness is being improved, thanks in particular to the measures implemented under the RDP. The scope and content of professional, planned, and more active encouragement of forest owners to engage in management and business networking is not achieving the desired results, as such co-operation is almost non-existent. A major shift could be achieved with funding from the 2014–2020 Rural Development Programme of the Republic of Slovenia and the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan 2023–2027.

New business opportunities are already being created in rural areas by exploiting the tourism potential of forests. However, in some areas, particularly near major urban centres, problems arise from overuse associated with visitors to forests. In some places, recreation in forest areas and the need for other non-productive functions already conflict with productive and other uses of forests. This causes disagreements between

forest owners and visitors, which need to be regulated.

As the animal component of the forest, game has an important influence on the development of the forest as a whole. In some parts of Slovenia, there is observed difficulty in forest rejuvenation due to excessive grazing on young forest plants. In addition to grazing, other types of damage can be caused by game, notably the peeling of trees in their younger stages of development. Adequate action planning and proper implementation of forest management and hunting management plans are key to avoiding this.

Forests are an economically important renewable source of wood as a raw material for further processing and energy purposes, but they are also important in terms of public benefits due to their ecological and social functions.

The specific nature of forest management in the implementation of forest policy, particularly in relation to ownership interests and the multiple functions of forests, means that the forestry system is dependent on the continued provision of adequate funding from both budgetary and European sources.

The analysis of the untapped potential of forests, the efficiency of the forestry system, and the country's financial possibilities shows that the legal and organisational solutions in the field of forests and forestry are not effective enough, which calls for changes in the broader legal framework. The digitisation of the PFS system plays an important role in this, bringing central control and display of data.

6.2.3.1.

Measure 4: increasing the exploitation of the productive potential of forest sites by promoting felling in private forests in accordance with the forest management plans in force and encouraging the modernisation and professionalisation of forest production and investment in forest infrastructure.

The aim of the measure is to increase the proportion of potential felling that can be realised and to carry out silviculture work, mainly in private forests, in accordance with the forest management plans in force. Increasing the exploitation of the productive potential of forest sites can also be achieved through support for the establishment of groups and organisations of producers of forest wood products, or by bringing forest owners together to sell wood and (possibly) organise forest production jointly.

In this context, the technological update of wood production processes and the professionalisation of forest work should be promoted. Investing in forest infrastructure improves the ability to exploit forests, lowers the costs of forest management, improves fire protection in forests, and provides the opportunity to act quickly and effectively in the event of more frequent climate change-induced disasters. Good forest infrastructure has a positive impact on the possibilities of adapting the forest to its various social functions (recreational paths, cycle paths, hiking trails, etc.).

The upstream part of the forest-wood chain, forest nursery activities, needs to be strengthened. Investing in forest nurseries ensures that sufficient forest tree seedlings are available to rehabilitate forests damaged by natural

disasters over the past decade. Adequate and high-quality seedlings are a prerequisite for a quality forest that can withstand extreme weather events, a consequence of climate change. Nurseries should be allowed to enter into multiannual contracts for the production of seedlings, as the only way to maintain this activity is to ensure that a stable source of funds is guaranteed.

The measure also aims to increase safety and professionalisation in forest work. The increase in felling and the increased efficiency and professionalisation of forestry production are leading to higher incomes, which is particularly important for both the economic and social situation in rural areas. A particular problem is the high number of forest accidents, which is increasing despite the education of forest owners, especially in the face of the difficult situation in the recovery from the ice storm and the proliferation of bark beetles. Owners carrying out work in forests should be offered additional training and the possibility of purchasing appropriate and tested protective and technical equipment. Forest owners who are not skilled in working safely in forests will need to be sensitised to the necessity of leaving felling and wood hauling to professionally qualified contractors who are properly equipped and trained to work safely and efficiently in the forest.

Table 11

Tasks within the scope of measure 4: increasing the exploitation of the productive potential of forest sites by promoting felling in private forests in accordance with the forest management plans in force and encouraging the modernisation and professionalisation of forest production and investment in forest infrastructure

Tasks/activities	Responsible institutions	Deadline	Funds	Indicator	Target value
Measure:					
Increasing the exploitation of the productive potential of forest sites by promoting felling in private forests in accordance with the forest management plans in force and encouraging the modernisation and professionalisation of forest production and investment in forest infrastructure					
Drawing up forest management plans	SFS	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS	Percentage of plans drafted in relation to the SFS work programme	100 %
Revision of the norms for co-financing and financing forestry works	MAFF	2022–2026	Within the scope of financing by the PFS	Forestry works study carried out	1
Calls for proposals for interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027 for forestry: investments in forest infrastructure	MAFF, AAMRD, SFS, CAFS	2029 ¹	EAFRD	Amount of funds paid	EUR 4.0 millions EUR
Calls for proposals for interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027 for forestry: investments in the purchase of new machinery and equipment for forestry work	MAFF, AAMRD, SFS, CAFS	2029 ¹	EAFRD	Amount of funds paid	EUR 20.5 millions EUR
Calls for interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027 for forestry: investments in the establishment and development of forest tree nurseries	MAFF, AAMRD, SFS,	2029 ¹	EAFRD	Amount of funds paid	EUR 2.0 millions EUR
Calls for proposals for interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027 for forestry: investments in the rehabilitation and restoration of forests following natural disasters and adverse climatic events	MAFF, AAMRD, SFS	2029 ¹	EAFRD	Amount of funds paid	EUR 4.0 millions EUR
Calls for interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027 for forestry: promoting collective forms of cooperation in the forestry sector	MAFF, AAMRD, SFS, ZLGS, CAFS	2029 ¹	EAFRD	Number of forestry producer groups established	3
Calls for interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027 for forestry: knowledge sharing, transfer of information to forest owners, and training of forestry advisers	MAFF, AAMRD, SFS	2029 ¹	EAFRD	Number of training participants	2,500

¹ Deadline for spending.

6.2.3.2.

Measure 5: promoting the use of wood and non-wood forest products and the social functions of forests to further enhance rural development and the circular bio-economy

The purpose of the measure is to promote the use of wood and non-wood forest products and the social functions of forests to further enhance rural development and the circular bio-economy. This also includes the adaptation of forest infrastructure (forest roads, forest skid trails), usage regimes, and the control of the various social functions of forests (recreational paths, cycle paths, hiking trails, etc.) in forest areas defined by forest management plans as having a first and second level of emphasis on social or tourist/recreational functions.

The monitoring of forest works, compliance with forest road use regimes, visitors in the forest, and nature conservation monitoring are carried out to an insufficient extent, given the possibilities offered by SFS and the Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting, and Fisheries. In order to be able to finance the implementation of these tasks in terms of increased human resources and the scope of works, the MAFF will endeavour to increase the funds allocated for these purposes within the limits set by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia at the time of each budget preparation.

New forms of recreation that are undesirable or even disturbing and harmful in forest areas, such as cross-country motorcycles, quad bikes, snowmobiles, etc., are on the rise. The problem is also the massive phenomenon of foraging, which is highly concentrated in a particular area and at a particular time of year. In some areas, unregulated grazing in forests persists. In some places, recreation in forests and forest areas and the need for other non-productive functions already

conflict with productive and other uses of forests, mainly with guaranteeing a favourable conservation status of habitats. The SFS needs to strengthen nature conservation and forestry monitoring, the guidance of visitors to forest areas, and enforcement of forest and nature protection legislation.

Slovenia will continue to use wood biomass for energy purposes, and the economics of this are also important, as the use of lower quality wood for energy purposes greatly improves the economics of wood processing chains and energy systems. It will particularly encourage smaller local systems with a closed local supply of wood biomass. Wood exploitation takes into account the principles of the circular bio-economy and the conservation of forest cover and sustainable forest development, which will adapt to the effects of climate change and also to the objectives of ensuring the CO₂ sink in forests (see LULUCF subchapter 6.6). The use of wood as a raw material for products will be promoted as a priority – the processing of wood, residues, and other lignocellulosic resources takes precedence over energy exploitation. Key to this will be the strengthening of the wood processing manufacturing sector, based on strategic guidelines for the sector and incentives for the wood processing industry to increase added value by linking value chains and introducing cutting-edge design and marketing, and on the internationalisation of the sector. The development of collection centres in this context will also be key. In the long term, circular economy policies and measures will be developed to enable the cascading use of wood and the use of wood products for energy at the end of their life (at the actual end and taking into account the cascading use

of wood), without significant environmental impacts. At the same time, the volume of biomass suitable for energy use will also increase.

The measures of the RDP are necessary to increase the economic role of forests and the development of forest- and

wood-related entrepreneurship, non-wood forest products, and tourism. The development of complementary activities linked to wood and other forest products and tourism is also being encouraged on many farms. This stimulates job creation and improves rural prosperity, reducing the pressure to emigrate to cities.

Table 12

The tasks within the scope of measure 5: promoting the use of wood and non-wood forest products and the social functions of forests to further enhance rural development and the circular bio-economy.

Tasks/activities	Resp. institutions	Deadline	Funds	Indicator	Target value
Measure:					
Promoting the use of wood and non-wood forest products and the social functions of forests to further enhance rural development and the bio-economy					
Calls for interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027 for forestry: investments in primary wood processing and digitisation	MAFF, AAMRD, SFS, CAFS	2029	EAFRD	Amount of funds paid	EUR 10.0 millions. EUR
Calls for interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027 for forestry: support for investments in the establishment and development of non-agricultural activities, including the bio-economy	MAFF, AAMRD, SFS, CAFS	2029	EAFRD	Amount of funds paid	EUR 300,000
Strengthening inspection, forestry, and nature conservation controls	SFS, MAFF, IRSAFHF, MESP	2022–2026	within the financial plan of the MAFF, within the scope of financing by the PFS	—	—
Annual review of wood flows and analysis of the state of the forest and the wood sector in Slovenia (regular updating of the WCM/InfoGozd web portal)	GIS	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS	Regular posts on the portal	In line with the PFS annual programme

6.2.3.3.

Measure 6: monitoring the performance of forest management in forests owned by the Republic of Slovenia

The planned potential volume of felling in state forests is not expected to increase significantly in the future. In the next ten-year period, it will remain roughly at the same level as previously, up to 1.59 million m³/year gross and 1.38 million m³/year net. The shift in the structure of planned felling is very significant, because, at 52%, the proportion of deciduous trees in potential felling is, for the first time, higher than that of conifers. The planned measures follow a change in the composition of national forests in terms of the representation of individual tree species, which has changed significantly more rapidly in recent years in favour of deciduous trees, due to the recovery from natural disasters. According to a rough estimate, 450,000 m³ of logs and 195,000 m³ of industrial roundwood of conifers and 210,000 m³ of logs and 520,000 m³ of wood from deciduous trees can be expected to be harvested annually from national forests.

As a rule, the company Slovenski državni gozdovi fully implements the planned maximum possible felling in terms of volume and structure; any deviation from the planned quantities may only occur in the event of major natural disasters. Given the known and at the same time limited quantities of wood from national forests, it makes sense to channel these quantities in a planned way to buyers under long-term contracts or to forest-wood chains with a higher level of processing, thus enabling higher added value and employment and, consequently, having a greater positive impact on the added value of other sectors of the economy. To this end, criteria should be defined in the wood processing sector for the key actors in the future development of the wood sector in Slovenia.

Table 13

Tasks within the scope of measure 6: monitoring the performance of forest management in forests owned by the Republic of Slovenia

Tasks/activities	Resp. institutions	Deadline	Funds	Indicator	Target value
Measure:					
Monitoring the performance of forest management in forests owned by the Republic of Slovenia					
Monitoring the performance of forest management in forests owned by the Republic of Slovenia and the operations of the company SiDG	MAFF	A permanent task	-	Implementing the SiDG business plan	100% realisation of the SiDG business plan
Directing the use of the Forest Budget Fund	MAFF	A permanent task	Forest Fund	Implementation of the Forest Fund Spending Programme	100 %
Forest acquisition/increasing the proportion of forests owned by the Republic of Slovenia	MAFF, SiDG	A permanent task	Forest Fund	Implementation of the Forest Fund Spending Programme	100 %

6.2.3.4.

Measure 7: ensuring adequate levels of budgetary funds, EU funds, and other financial resources (e.g. the Forest Fund and the Climate Change Funds) for forests, forestry, and game management

The specific nature of forest management and game management when implementing forest policy, particularly in relation to the nature of sustainable, close-to-nature, and multifunctional forest management and game management, property interests, and the ecological functions of forests, makes it important for the functioning of the forestry system to have an adequate level of financial resources for forests and forestry on a permanent basis. This includes budgetary resources from the Republic of Slovenia, including the Forest Fund and the Climate Change Fund, and European resources such as the EAFRD and the Recovery and Resilience Fund.

The integral budgetary funds for forest investment in 2022–2023 remain at a level comparable to that of previous years. This level is not sufficient to (co-)finance all the measures foreseen in the forest management plans, so the available funds are allocated according to the urgency of the work. In order to be able to finance all measures, the MAFF will endeavour to increase the funds allocated for these purposes within the limits set by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia at the time of each budget preparation.

Sustainable, multi-purpose, and close-to-nature forest management involves measures to ensure that forests function optimally as ecosystems and that their ecological, productive, and social functions are fulfilled. The budget of the Republic of Slovenia provides funds for the operation of the public forestry service and the public service in the field of game, for the restoration, care, and protection of forests, for

the rehabilitation of forests after natural disasters, for the maintenance of wildlife habitats, for the maintenance of forest roads, for compensation for limiting property rights in protective forests and forests with a special purpose, for scientific research work in the field of forestry, etc.

Resources from the Climate Change Fund are also used, among other things, to implement climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the forestry sector.

The resources from the Forest Fund are earmarked, in accordance with the ZGGLRS, for denationalisation procedures and the payment of compensation for the inability to use the returned forests, for the acquisition of forests, for the disposal of state forests, for Natura 2000 measures in private forests, for obligations towards municipalities (on the basis of Article 35 of the ZGGLRS), for obligations arising from the Republic of Slovenia's ownership of forests, and for the promotion of the use of wood and forest-wood chains.

Two projects will be implemented in the field of forestry under the RRP, namely the investment in the Seed, Nursery, and Forest Protection Centre and eGozdarstvo (eForestry).

In line with the RDP 2014–2020 and the CAPSP 2023–2027, the MAFF will use funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and Slovenian participation to continue to support the increase in efficiency and competitiveness of the Slovenian forest-wood chain.

Table 14

Tasks within the scope of measure 7: ensuring adequate levels of budgetary, European. and other financial resources for forests, forestry, and game management

Tasks/activities	Resp. institutions	Deadline	Funds	Indicator	Target value
Measure:					
Ensuring adequate levels of budgetary funds, EU funds, and other financial resources (e.g. the Forest Fund and the Climate Change Funds) for forests and forestry					
Preparation of expert bases, objectives, and indicators for the preparation of the budget of the Republic of Slovenia for the 'Forestry' programme	MAFF	A permanent task	¹ Within the financial plan of the MAFF	—	—
Implementation of the tasks/projects included in the 2022–2023 Climate Change Fund Spending Programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change in forestry • within the framework of technical assistance – upgrading carbon sampling methodologies for forest soil and biomass 	MAFF, SFI, SFS	2022–2023	Climate Change Fund	Implementation of the Climate Change Fund Spending Programme	100 %
Develop forestry-related tasks/projects for the Climate Change Fund after 2023	MAFF, SFI, SFS	2022–2023	Climate Change Fund	—	—
Efficient use of Forest Fund resources in accordance with the annual spending programmes of the forest budget fund	MAFF, SIDG	A permanent task	Forest Fund	Implementation of the Forest Fund Spending Programme	100 %
Promoting the efficient use of EU funds for forests, forestry, and hunting	MAFF, SFI, SFS	A permanent task	EAFRD, Recovery and Resilience Fund	—	—

¹ Cost of experts' participation in the preparation of the relevant expert bases.

6.2.3.5.

Measure 8: digitisation of forestry and adoption of broader legislative frameworks, also including adjustments to the tasks and organisation of the public forestry service to budgetary capacity

An analysis of the untapped potential of forests, the effectiveness of the forestry system, and the country's financial capacity shows that, in some cases, the legal and organisational solutions for forests, forestry, and game management are not effective enough. The failure to meet some of the forest management and forest-wood chain objectives set out in the NFP points to the need to digitise the operations of the PFS and the public service in the field of game, to consider possible reorganisation and streamlining of the roles and tasks of key stakeholders, and to establish a more efficient system for the use of public funds.

The NFP process should continue and, based on the findings of the RINFP 2015–2019, identify new development needs in the forest and forestry sector, and provide guidance for possible amendments and changes to the NFP and the legal frameworks of forestry regulations. This provides a basis for designing measures to make forest policy more effective, especially in relation to the increasingly relevant ecological and social functions. These challenges also need to be addressed in the context of the broader debate organised in the framework of the 'Forest Dialogue'.

The current PFS and public service system in the field of game does not allow for digital data collection and central

data management and display. The current systems do not achieve the objective of simplifying business for forest owners and administration. Digitalisation therefore brings:

- simplifying administrative procedures for implementing forest policy measures, thus reducing the administrative burden for beneficiaries;
- a single digital entry point to access databases and tools to improve forest management;;
- increased efficiency, speed, streamlining of professional and administrative tasks, smooth customer service, and
- levers for better decision-making and targeting, monitoring and evaluation (e.g. impacts of forestry on natural resources).

The eGozdarstvo (eForestry) project is part of the MAFF's broader investment in digital transition – the digital transformation of the public sector and public administration in agriculture, food, and forestry within the RRP, which will increase the stability, resilience, and responsiveness of the forestry sector.

Table 15

Tasks within the scope of measure 8: digitisation of forestry and adoption of broader legislative frameworks, including adjustments to the tasks and organisation of the public forestry service to budgetary capacity

Tasks/activities	Resp. institutions	Deadline	Funds	Indicator	Target value
Measure:					
Digitisation of forestry and adoption of broader legislative frameworks, including adjustments to the tasks and organisation of the public forestry service to budgetary capacity					
Amendment of the NFP in the process of 'Forest Dialogue'	MAFF, SFS, SFI, BF, CAFS, SFOA, interested stakeholders	2022-2024	Within the financial plan of the MAFF	—	—
Preparation of bases and proposals for amendments and changes to the Forest Act, the Game and Hunting Act, and other legislation, including in the context of the modernisation and digitisation of the PFS and the public service in the field of game	2022-2024	2022-2026	Within the financial plan of the MAFF, Recovery and Resilience Fund	—	—
Impact analysis and optimisation of investments in forests	MAFF, Ministry of Finance (MF), SFI, SFS	2022-2026	Within the financial plan of the MAFF	—	—
Implementation of the eGozdarstvo (eForestry) project under the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP)	MAFF (lead authority), SFS (provider), SFI (provider), AAMRD	2022-2026	Recovery and Resilience Fund (EU) and within the scope of the financial plan of the MAFF (integral funds from the budget of the Republic of Slovenia)	—	—
Transposition of Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the making available on the Union market and the export from the Union of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation and repealing Regulation (EU) No 995/2010 into national law	MAFF	With a view to the adoption of the regulation at the EU level	With a view to the adoption of the regulation at the EU level	With a view to the adoption of the regulation at the EU level	With a view to the adoption of the regulation at the EU level

6.2.4.

Priority d: promoting coordination and communication between all stakeholders related to forests and forestry, developing education, research, and knowledge transfer, and strengthening international cooperation

This priority underlines the importance of communication, of coordinated action by all stakeholders, and of continuously communicating the importance of forests and the forest-wood chain to the public. Answers to the findings on the untapped potential of forests, the efficiency of the forestry system, and the financial possibilities of the country can be found within the formal 'Forest Dialogue' as one of the key elements of the NFP as a process. Forest owners, other sectors, NGOs, and the public with an interest in what happens in forests need to be further involved. In particular, forest owners are not yet making sufficient use of

the opportunities to participate in the forest development planning process, and there is still little or no business networking. Dialogue, with the participation of all interested stakeholders, is certainly the place to address all forest and forestry-related problems in a comprehensive manner. In view of its achievements, Slovenia should continue to cooperate in international forest and forestry projects, especially in view of the importance of forests in tackling the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss. The answers to these challenges can only be found through education development, research, and knowledge transfer.

6.2.4.1.

Measure 9: promoting strategic communication with a focus on a ‘Forest Dialogue’ of all forest and forestry stakeholders and developing education, research, and knowledge transfer

Despite positive developments, the communication and coordination between all stakeholders involved in forests, forestry, and game management are not yet optimal. The aim of the measure is to improve communication between forest and forestry stakeholders and the whole forest-wood chain and game management to achieve their coordinated action in finding solutions for effective sustainable, close-to-nature, and multi-purpose forest management, and to ensure that the importance of forests and the forest-wood chain is continuously communicated to the public. The development and implementation of a permanent formal ‘Forest Dialogue’ within the NFP as a process is an objective in which all stakeholders in the field of forests,

forestry, and game management are involved. In doing so, they represent their interests in the formulation and implementation of forest policy, changes to regulations, and they participate in the implementation of the NFP. Formal dialogue offers opportunities to improve the flow of information and cooperation between professional organisations in the field of forests, forestry, and game management, forest owners, other sectors, and the public, as well as opportunities to promote the use of wood and wood products and the importance of the whole forest-wood chain. Alongside the formal education system and research, the transfer of knowledge to forest owners through the work and tasks of the PFS is also important.

Table 16

Tasks within the scope of measure 9: promoting strategic communication with a focus on a 'Forest Dialogue' of all forest and forestry stakeholders and developing education, research, and knowledge transfer

Tasks/activities	Responsible institutions	Deadline	Funds	Indicator	Target value
Measure:					
Promoting strategic communication with a focus on a 'Forest Dialogue' of all forest and forestry stakeholders and developing education, research, and knowledge transfer					
The functioning of the 'Forest Dialogue'	MAFF, SFS, BF, SFI, the sectors concerned, non-governmental organisations	A permanent task	Within the financial plan of the MAFF and PFS	—	—
¹ Popularising forests and forestry	MAFF, SFS, BF, SFI, on-governmental organisations	2022–2023	Within the financial plan of the MAFF and PFS	Proportion of events implemented out of planned events	100 %
Generic promotion of forests and forestry, of the use of wood and wood products and forest-wood chains	MAFF, MGRT	A permanent task	Forest Fund	Percentage of the Forest Fund programme implemented (%)	100 %
Participation in the 'Forest Wood' group	MAFF, MGRT, stakeholders in the forest-wood chain	A permanent task	Within the financial plan of the MAFF	—	—
Financial support for research projects relevant to Slovenian forestry	MAFF, Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS)	A permanent task	Within the financial plan of the MAFF and Slovenian Research Agency (SRA)	—	—
Advice, education, and training for forest owners, including a focus on topics related to climate change and biodiversity conservation	MAFF, SFS	A permanent task	Within the financial plan of the MAFF and the PFS, the Forest Fund, the Climate Change Fund	—	—

¹ The item will be abolished as of 2024 and the promotion will be financed exclusively by the Forest Fund under the task entitled 'generic promotion of forests and forestry, of the use of wood and wood products and forest-wood chains'.

6.2.4.2.

Measure 10: international cooperation regarding forests and forestry

International cooperation in forests and forestry involves active cooperation both within the EU and at the global level. This includes active participation in working groups and expert groups, exchange of information and good practices, participation in policymaking related to forests and forestry, reporting to international organisations, etc.

At the global level, we will continue to actively participate in the activities of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and in the implementation of its Strategic Plan for Forests 2030. We will report on the state of forests within the FAO and co-lead a working group on protective forests with Austria. We will actively support the FE process and its multiannual work programme for the 2021–2024 period, participating in its working groups and reporting while considering the agreed upon criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. We will participate in the activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in the area of forest products markets.

At the EU level, we will continue to be active in the Standing Forestry Committee and the EU Council Working Party on Forestry. We will work with other Member States to implement the EU Forestry Strategy 2030 and related Council Decisions, to implement other strategies, and to negotiate various legislative proposals. We are also working with other relevant ministries participating in the European Commission's expert groups, amongst which

forest-related discussions are taking place. These include the Forests and Nature Working Group, which is working on definitions under the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, as well as expert groups on forestry sectors and sectoral issues, working groups related to the implementation of climate legislation, and research groups.

Forest and forestry related topics are addressed in different expert and working groups, and cross-sectoral cooperation within the country will need to be improved. Improved cooperation and involvement of qualified forestry experts from different institutions will ensure that the Slovenian way of forest management is recognised and that its needs are taken into account. In the research field, we will also continue to cooperate with international organisations such as the European Forest Institute (EFI) and the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO), as well as at the EU level in Horizon Europe.

The mechanism for coordinating cooperation between China and CEE countries in the field of forestry is part of an initiative to strengthen political, economic, and research cooperation between 16 (or 17) CEE countries and China. Slovenia took over the coordination of this cooperation in the field of forestry by adopting the 'Action Plan for the Cooperation within the Framework of the Coordination Mechanism for the Cooperation in Forestry between China and CEE Countries'.

Table 17

Tasks within the scope of measure 10: international cooperation regarding forests and forestry

Tasks/activities	Responsible institutions	Deadline	Funds	Indicator	Target value
Measure:					
International cooperation regarding forests and forestry					
¹ FE – participation in expert groups	The MAFF in cooperation with the SFI	A permanent task	Within the financial plan of the MAFF	—	—
Reporting in international processes (FE, FAO, UNECE, etc.)	The MAFF in cooperation with the SURS, SFS, and SFI	A permanent task	Within the financial plan of the MAFF	—	—
Reporting in international processes (FE, FAO, UNECE, etc.)	MAFF	A permanent task	Within the financial plan of the MAFF	—	—
FAO – co-chairing of a working group on protective forests	The MAFF in cooperation with the SFS	Two-year period of the Slovenian and Austrian joint presidency	Within the financial plan of the MAFF	—	—
Coordination of implementing the mechanism for coordinating cooperation between the People's Republic of China and CEE countries in the field of forestry	MAFF	A permanent task	Within the financial plan of the MAFF	—	—
Participation in European Commission working groups (e.g. Standing Forestry Committee and other forest and forestry-related groups)	The MAFF in cooperation with the SFI and SFS	A permanent task	Within the financial plan of the MAFF	—	—
Participation in the Council of the European Union Working Party on Forestry	MAFF	A permanent task	Within the financial plan of the MAFF	—	—

¹ FE (Forest Europe) is a pan-European voluntary high-level policy process for dialogue and cooperation on forest policies in Europe. The process involves 45 signatories and the European Commission.

6.2.5.

Priority e: ensuring sustainable game management

The plant and animal components of forests are inextricably linked. One dominating the other is not good for the forest as an ecosystem. The key is to determine the carrying capacity and ensure the natural rejuvenation of the forest. The management of game populations must therefore be based on knowledge of, and respect for, the laws that govern the life of individual specimens. Game management plans, or more specifically, biennial hunting management zone plans (HMZPs), set out measures for game populations. Monitoring the successful implementation of these plans is key to determining the success of game management.

Ecosystems are complex systems. Each species has its own role to play in a complex system of relationships and interactions. One of the key ecological characteristics of a population of any species is, among other things, the abundance of specimens. Objectively determining abundance in the animal kingdom is quite difficult, especially regarding species in which the number of specimens is large. This is also the case for populations of individual game species that are not threatened and often have a significant impact on the environment. New knowledge or new methods of abundance estimation are therefore very welcome.

6.2.5.1.

Measure 11: monitoring the implementation of the biennial HMZPs

Game is managed by the Republic of Slovenia. Sustainable game management may be transferred by the Republic of Slovenia to a qualified legal entity as a hunting right under the conditions laid down in the ZDLov. Through the game and its habitat management plans, the country sets management frameworks. Game management plans are multi-tiered: long-term HMZPs, which are strategic in nature and valid for 10

years, two-year HMZPs, which are implementing in nature and valid for two years, and annual operational plans for hunting grounds or SPHAs. Ongoing monitoring of the success of the achievement of the objectives through the implementation of the planned measures is crucial for the successful management of game at the population level and the level of its habitat, and for the coordination between them.

Table 18

Tasks within the scope of measure 11: monitoring the implementation of biennial HMZPs and the introduction of additional methods to determine the status of herbivorous ungulate populations

Tasks/activities	Responsible institutions	Deadline	Funds	Indicator	Target value
Measure:					
Monitoring the implementation of the biennial HMZPs					
Creation of biennial HMZPs	SFS	A permanent task	Within the financial plan of the MAFF	Number of plans produced	100 %
Implementation of measures planned in the biennial HMZPs	Hunting ground managers	A permanent task	—	Percentage of measures implemented	100 %
Verification of the achievement of the objectives	SFS	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS	—	—

6. 2. 5. 2.

Measure 12 : introduction of additional methods to determine the status of herbivorous ungulate populations

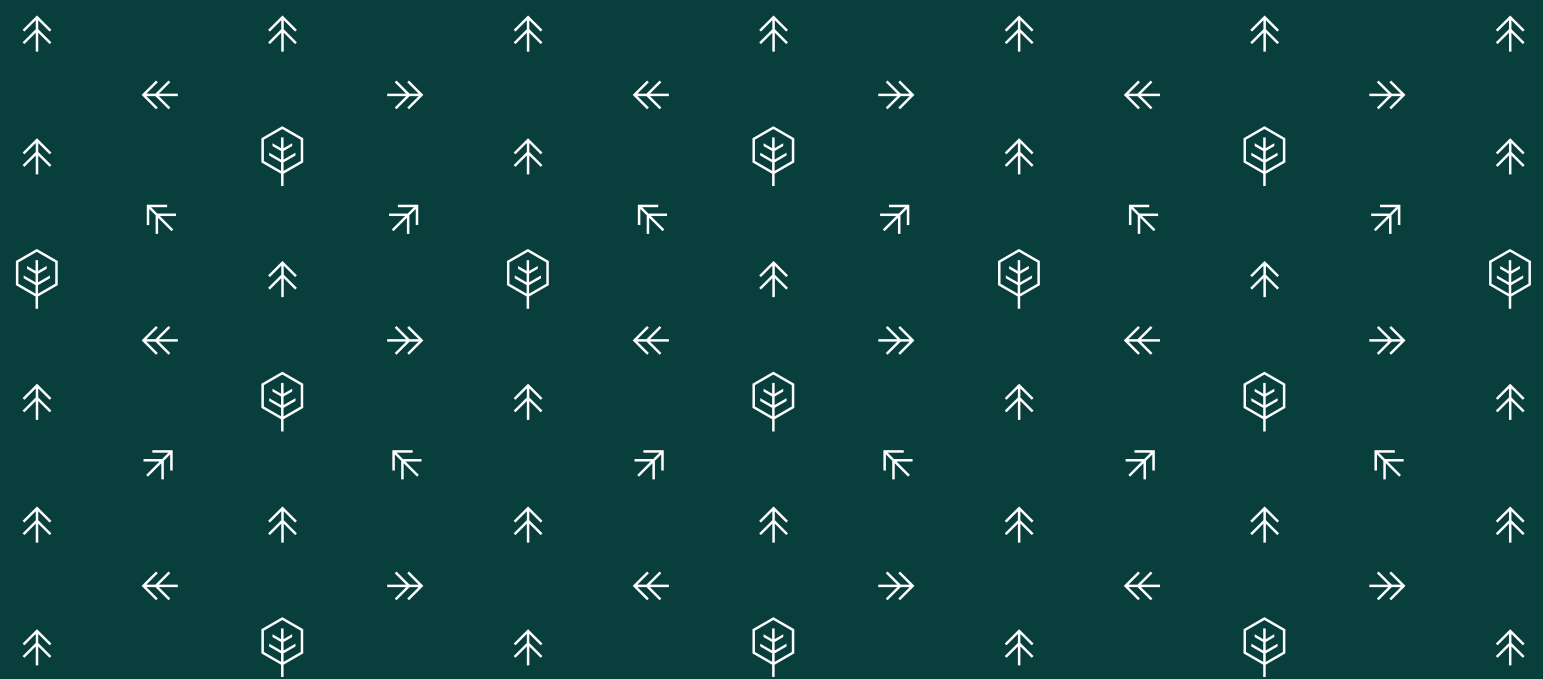
Currently, both in Slovenia and in Europe, we are facing challenges related to determining the abundance of game populations and integrating the data into the management process. The same applies to identifying the impact of game species on the environment and the threats to game habitats caused by various human activities in the area. For several decades now, the management of game populations in our country has been based on the control method, which

means constant monitoring of certain indicators and trends, and the associated adjustment of management measures. Knowledge of the absolute/relative abundance of game, or its trends over time, the effects of human activities on game habitat, and the impact of game on their habitat is also crucial for better management of game populations, their habitat, and the relationships between them.

Table 19

Tasks within the scope of measure 12: introducing additional methods to determine the status of game populations, with a focus on herbivorous ungulates and the balance with their habitat

Tasks/activities	Responsible institutions	Deadline	Funds	Indicator	Target value
Measure:					
Introducing additional methods to determine the status of game populations, with a focus on herbivorous ungulates and the balance with their habitat					
Preparation of guidelines and workshops for the implementation of the method	SFS, BF	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS	—	—
Monitoring the transfer of findings into practice	SFS, BF	A permanent task	Within the scope of financing by the PFS	—	—



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