



Safeguarding forest biodiversity – policy instruments and socio-economic impacts 2005–2010

A research programme, Metla

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METLA

forest • knowledge • know-how • well-being

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Background and challenges

Forests are a central source of the biodiversity of Finnish nature, and they are habitats for the large part of Finland's endangered species. In addition to safeguarding biodiversity, forests have an important role in producing other environmental benefits, e.g. in mitigating the climate change. Internationally Finnish network of protected areas is well managed, but suffers from regional imbalance. In the North 16.3 % from the forestry land are protected, but in the Southern Finland the figure is 2.7 %. The Forest Biodiversity Program for Southern Finland (METSO) was established to experiment new voluntary instruments for forest biodiversity protection.

Finland's economy and welfare, especially in the rural areas, is dependent on the utilization of forest resources. The increment of forest conservation and the maintenance of the biodiversity of forest species should be accommodated with forestry and other forest-based livelihoods in economically and socially sustainable manner. Ecological, economic, social and cultural sustainability and their consolidation is required by several Finnish forest programmes and legislation, e.g. National Forest Programme, Forest law and METSO-programme.

The specific objectives of the programme are:

- To produce, gather and disseminate scientifically high quality and versatile research information on the interaction between safeguarding forest biodiversity and the society.
- To commit the monitoring of economical and social impacts of the national (METSO 2003-2007 and 2008-2016) programs for the Ministry of Agriculture and forestry (MAF) and to evaluate the impacts of conservation decisions until 2010.
- To invite participation of information users during the planning, execution and extension of the programme with an aim to promote customer-oriented and socially significant research and to improve communication.
- To develop methods applicable in this subject, and to create and support collaboration networks within Metla that support research and cut expenses, to network with other research organisation and interest groups, as well as to assist in the internationalization of research in Metla.

Central research themes

Specific research areas include demand for and supply of biodiversity, policy instruments, effectiveness of different conservation measures, multiple-use of forests, social and economic impacts of conservation, and the effects of changes in the forest

- the impacts of increased forest conservation on timber supply and prices in regional and national scale, and in Finnish and European forest industry
- the relation of forest conservation to the viability of rural areas
- the acceptability and effectiveness of conservation instruments in private forests, and their impacts on the profitability of forestry
- the advancement of cost-efficiency in forest restoration ecological effects of restoration and biodiversity oriented management
- the integration of forest biodiversity services in forest planning
- municipal forests

The results of the research program support directly METSO program under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment. Two intermediate reports, a research report of over 400 pages and the final report were produced for the METSO 2003-2007 program and researchers contributed to the preparation of the National Forest Programme 2015 and METSO 2008-2016 in expert positions.

Resources and co-operation

The total annual budget is about one million euros. About one third has been funded by external sources, such as different EU instruments, the Academy of Finland, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of the Environment and numerous smaller foundations. The programme is led by Programme Director who is assisted by a steering committee of 12 external experts from different fields.

Researchers from Metla's Vantaa, Joensuu and Rovaniemi Research Units participate the program. The research projects have wide co-operation networks both nationally and internationally. Networks include other research institutions, organisations of practical level, and interest groups. Large and working networks have enabled achievement of joint research, visiting positions, co-authored articles and joint research proposals.

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