

Welfare Effects of Forests 2008–2012

*A research programme by
the Finnish Forest Research Institute, Metla*



Metla/Erkki Oksanen

METLA

Further Information

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Welfare Effects of Forests

Background and challenges

During the past decades the main function of forests in Finland has been wood production. More recently, major structural changes to the agriculture and forestry have resulted to a demand to develop new means of livelihood in rural and peripheral areas. Today, nearly 80 % of Finns live in urban areas or in population centres. Moreover, changes in population structure and lifestyles have transformed needs and expectations of people and the society for the use of forests and their management, at large. Although commercial use of non-wood forest products and services is still building-up, their relative importance and future possibilities are increasingly included in forest policy processes such as the National Forest Program 2015.

In Finland, non-wood forest products and services (NWFP&S) include utilization of products such as berries, mushrooms, wild herbs, plants and other products, utilization of reindeer and game populations as well as nature-based tourism and recreational use of forests. Nature tourism, for example, is increasingly seen as one solution to create new job opportunities in rural and peripheral areas.



In northern and north eastern Finland (Lapland, Kuusamo and Kainuu) the economic significance of tourism is already important and increases rapidly. In Lapland, for example, the annual turnover of tourism is larger than annual turnover in forestry. Tourism provides direct employment already for 5000 persons, and helps the remote districts to stay populated by increasing economic growth and reflects in other entrepreneurship, for instance, in the construction sector.

The information basis for decision-making related to importance and potentials of NWFP&S is limited. Research on welfare impacts of forests has been conducted since 1990 and the theme has been included in two previous research programs of Finnish Forest Research Institute; Multiple Use Forestry (1990–1994) and Integrating Different Forest Uses (1995–1999). Current research is, however, fragmented and co-operation and coordination is needed at national level to allocate scarce resources.

Aims of the programme

Welfare effects of forests -research programme focuses on studying the importance and development potentials of non-wood forests products and services in Finland. The program responds to the information needs of various stakeholders and decision-makers. The program improves SMEs' possibilities for entrepreneurship and develops tools for integration of different forest uses.

The program consists of the following group of research projects

- -Sustainable multiple use of forests in northern Lapland-
www.metla.fi/hanke/3400/
- The meaning of tourism and recreation in rural development and landscape
www.metla.fi/hanke/3463/
- -Natura-based recreation monitoring and assessment
www.metla.fi/hanke/3462/
- Integrating ecological and social information in urban planning,
www.metla.fi/hanke/7220/
- Developing services for efficient utilization of forest resources for the welfare of forest owners and society
www.metla.fi/hanke/3471/
- Environmental and recreation services of forests: economic impacts, valuation, and business opportunities
www.metla.fi/hanke/3472/

Resources and co-operation

The program involves national and international cooperation, with universities and other research institutes as well as with other research programs at Metla.

