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Voluntary conservation measures in METSO Programme

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Abstract

Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland (METSO) proposed new policy instruments based on forest owners' willingness to undertake conservation measures on a voluntary basis. Forest owners are compensated for any economic losses they consequently incur for conservation. The new conservation measures (nature values trading, competitive tendering, co-operation network for safeguarding forest biodiversity) were tested in pilot projects.

The presentation is based on the results of the monitoring and evaluation of Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland and the results of interviews and postal survey targeted to forest owners who had participated to the pilot projects.

The voluntary measures used in the METSO Programme have gained widespread acceptance. Both temporary and permanent schemes of voluntary conservation should be further developed and targeted. To gain general acceptability of forest protection, it is important to consider local social and economic impacts of protection actions. Close collaboration between forestry and environmental organisations is necessary whenever new measures are to be widely adopted. Building up co-operation networks and new cultures of voluntary action takes up time and resources. Forest owners emphasized voluntariness, property rights and sovereignty in decision-making in regard to the acceptability of a conservation contract. Forest owners considered the process of nature values trading to be more acceptable than the traditional, land acquisition-based conservation in private forests.