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European Organisation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors

Confédération Européenne des Entrepreneurs de Travaux Techniques Agricoles, Ruraux et Forestiers

Europäischer Zentralverband der land- und forstwirtschaftlichen Lohnunternehmer und ländlichen Dienstleistungsunternehmen

EU Green Week 2019 needs qualified jobs in the forestry sector!

On the occasion of the EU Green Week 2019, CEETTAR is asking for:

- 1) better working conditions in the forest, especially for manual forest workers;**
- 2) support to rural businesses to help them increase their profitability;**
- 3) a communication campaign on the interest of our activities for the environment.**

The 2019 Green Week focuses on the challenges, expectations and opportunities of implementing environmental legislation in Europe. Forests and other wooded land cover about 40% of the EU territory, and the forest sector provides more than 3.5 million jobs in the European Union. The forest value chains are engines of rural growth and generate other benefits to society, including societal benefits for human health, recreation and tourism.

CEETTAR would like to recall that more than 50,000 forest contractors companies in Europe, employing about 100,000 people work every day to maintain and enhance forest areas for the benefit of society (employment, leisure, maintenance of biodiversity, etc.)¹.

In order to meet the economic, environmental and societal objectives set by the European Institutions, CEETTAR considers it essential to involve the actors on the ground who work every day in rural areas.

What is CEETTAR asking for?

The implementation of good environmental protection practices cannot be achieved without maintaining and attracting competent and dynamic young people to our businesses.

The benefit of the forest production in terms of sustainability should be more appreciated in terms of timber use, both as a structural material as well as a biomass material. Furthermore, European food agriculture requires the balance of forest growth to achieve a level of carbon management for the curtailment of climate change. Support for animal and plant production agriculture must be financially balanced with support for sustainable forest development.

To achieve this, CEETTAR identifies three priority areas to be developed in European policies:

1. Improve working conditions in the forest, especially for manual forest workers

Health and Safety must be the top priority to improve forest working conditions. Manual forest work often has an image of hazardous work. This is mostly linked to skills requested to do the job and therefore on training and development of the business environment. Forest sector should offer jobs

¹ See CEETTAR position paper "For a human dimension to the European Forest Strategy", January 2019, available at: <http://ceettar.eu/publications.php?item=91&cat=4&year=2019>

where working in a safe way is possible throughout the year and where people can earn their living and get a decent standard of living.

Improving safety at work needs higher public support for the training system in the forest sector. This should contain training of existing workers and new workers (adults and young people). Creating professionals, who can work efficiently in a safe way and, at the same time, can abide by nature protection requirements, biodiversity, climate change, recreation and customer demand will not happen by accident.

Measures required by certification bodies, such as PEFC, as well as ILO regulations already present best practice examples to be further developed at the EU level.

2. Supporting rural businesses to help them increase their profitability

Forestry contracting is in a different phase of development in various geographical areas of Europe. In some areas, there is more need for supporting investments in new technology, whereas in other ones, there is more need for enhancing the utilization of digitalisation. Rather poor profitability is a common challenge for forestry contracting all around Europe. There is a need for improving the business skills of those who run their business in forestry – a challenge linked to health and safety concerns and attractiveness of the sector.

Forestry and forestry contracting should be the clear focus point of supporting rural development in Europe through the European regional development policy.

More precisely, rural land-based contracting businesses in forestry and agriculture need financial support to invest or to adopt new digital technologies, which in turn will allow them to be more profitable and environmentally friendly. These investments bring efficiencies to forestry through greater use of technologically advanced machines that bring technology to smaller forests. A clear distinction must also be made between the means of helping woodworking companies and forestry companies, including timber harvesting.

In addition, digitisation and knowledge of contractors' business through data collection from machines will help to increase the company's profitability. These data can also be used to document work done by contractors, in connection with certifications.

3. Launch a communication campaign for the general public on the interest of our activities for the environment

A common challenge for the whole forestry sector is to get the message of multi-functionality of forests to public consciousness. First of all, sustainably managed forests are one of the most important tools in the fight against climate change. Wood is the best renewable energy source of increasing the storage carbon capacity of the forest and accordingly to reduce the impact of climate change. Contractors use efficient forest contractor-operated machinery, which allow for a quick turnaround of the forest cycle in a clean, efficient and wholly sustainable way. This allows the important forest cycle of carbon sequestration to continue with minimum interruption. Professional forest contractors play a major role in protecting forests and making sure that there is also a forest tomorrow, and this message should be broadly disseminated.

Another challenge is the recognition of the fact that professional forest contractors are the ones who make the decisions on the forest ground level. Contractors and their machine operators and manual forest workers act an important role in enhancing vitality and biodiversity of growing forests. It gives forest contractors a high responsibility in the forestry sector to work for active management of Europe's forests and to communicate it to the public.

The EU Green Week is an opportunity to promote the Green Jobs. It is only by moving forward at European level on the three identified axes that we can really implement good environmental practices in a sustainable way.

About CEETAR:

The European Organisation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors (CEETAR), established in 1961, represents about 150,000 companies and nearly 600,000 workers. It aims to represent the interests of land-based contractors in Europe. In 2014, the European Network of Forestry Entrepreneurs (ENFE) decided to merge with CEETAR, resulting in a stronger and more representative single organisation representing land-based contractors at EU level. CEETAR aims to be a proactive force to benefit the contractors and the rural economy at the European level.