





Connecting knowledge to action

21 August 2019

To the Members and member organisations of EFI

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Dear Colleagues,

“Each summer we hear terrible news about forest fires from across the world, a trend that has continued this year”. This is the third summer in a row that I start my letter to you with the same sentence. In addition, new heat records have been set in several European countries and cities this summer. Germany, the UK, France and The Netherlands have seen extraordinary temperatures. This should not be a surprise as science has been very clear about the fact that heatwaves are becoming more common, more severe and longer-lasting as global warming continues.

This also explains the new normal situation we are experiencing in terms of natural disturbances. Since June, more than 100 wildfires have raged across the Arctic. In Russia alone, wildfires have been burning in 11 of the country’s regions across the Russian Arctic, with more than 4 million hectares in Siberia affected, an area much bigger than Belgium. The Arctic is not the only afflicted region. So far this year, the EU has had four times the annual average number of fires over the previous decade.

How can we deal with this new normal situation?

First, it requires a long-term strategic approach to develop science-informed adaptation strategies and attract investments to help our forests adapt to the climate crisis and enhance their resilience to natural disturbances. This is key to ensuring that Europe’s forests continue to be an effective carbon sink. Second, we need to recognise that this is a European problem which will not stop at national borders. This is why at EFI we call for **solid European collaboration** to integrate, connect and share existing knowledge as a basis for future joint actions. The climate crisis and forest disturbances transcend national boundaries, and strategies and actions too should transcend them. You can read more on these issues in my **EFI blog post**.

Finally, I would like to remind you about this year’s **Annual Conference in Aberdeen**. During the conference we will discuss the new EFI Governance Programme, the future European forest research area, including the importance of building cooperation with China, as well as open science and data. The Scientific Seminar will focus on the challenges and opportunities for plantation forests and native forests in delivering multiple ecosystem benefits in a changing climate. More information **here**.

Wishing you a nice return from summer holidays,
Marc Palahí