

EFI Strategy 2040

Forests in
a changing
world



EFI Strategy in a nutshell

Vision

What do we aspire to?

A world where forests and people thrive together – supporting resilient societies and a healthy planet.

Mission

What is our role?

EFI connects knowledge and action. We bring science, policy and practice and society together to co-create solutions for forests, people and the planet.

Why does this Strategy matter?

We live in times of rapid change and interconnected challenges – climate crisis, biodiversity loss, pollution, resource overuse, geopolitical tensions, technological disruption and social shifts.

We generate knowledge and help our partners apply it to navigate uncertainty, manage risks, and seize opportunities to build a more sustainable and resilient future. Together we can create a hopeful path forward.

Strategic goals

What we focus on to connect knowledge and action

Advancing forest knowledge

to better understand forests.

Empowering decision-makers

to enable smarter choices.

Strengthening co-creation

to build trust and solutions.

Strategic themes

The big topics where we make a difference

Building resilience

to keep forests and societies flourishing in a changing world.

Advancing forest-based solutions

for sustainable, low-carbon economies.

Supporting inclusive governance

to balance local needs with global challenges.

Enabling collaboration

to find meaningful solutions that work for all.

EFI Values

What guides our work

Our work is guided by three core values:

- 1. Acting with integrity and responsibility.**
- 2. Working inclusively and engaging with others.**
- 3. Striving for innovation and excellence.**

Forests in a changing world

We live in a world of profound change. Climate crisis, biodiversity loss, pollution, resource overexploitation and geopolitical tensions are testing the resilience of our societies and our planet.

Rapid technological advancement, demographic shifts and changing social demands are reshaping how we live, interact and what we aspire to and value.

These forces are deeply interconnected, revealing systemic weaknesses and challenging the sustainability of our environment, economies and governance.

Within these challenges lies the opportunity to reimagine our future.

A future where resilient societies thrive within the boundaries of a healthy planet. Where sustainability, equity and wellbeing reinforce each other. Where long-term thinking, inclusivity and collaboration across borders and sectors are valued.

We believe that forests are central to this future. They regulate climate, support biodiversity, provide goods and services, sustain livelihoods and enrich cultures. When managed responsibly, they contribute to resilient ecosystems, healthier communities and more equitable and sustainable economies.

Our vision is built on the belief that science and expertise, informed dialogue, collaboration and co-creation are essential to navigate uncertainty and shape transformative solutions. By connecting forest-related knowledge with societal needs, EFI will help to shape a world that is more resilient, just, and aware of our interdependence with nature.

Global drivers of change

The EFI Strategy 2040 is grounded in the recognition that today's global drivers are interconnected, dynamic and volatile.

Forests and related sectors are both affected by, and essential to addressing, these environmental, economic, technological and societal shifts. Systemic, evidence-based and collaborative responses are needed to manage risks and harness opportunities.

A defining feature of our era is uncertainty, which amplifies all other pressures. Climate-related disasters, geopolitical tensions, economic shocks, health crises and technological disruptions are becoming more frequent and unpredictable. These converge with other drivers, highlighting the urgent need for resilience and adaptation.

Political drivers

Geopolitical shifts, conflicts and cyber threats are straining global governance and fragmenting cooperation. Polarisation around values and interests challenges institutions and decision-making, while misinformation, including on forests and climate, erodes trust in science and policy.

Economic drivers

Globalisation deepens interdependence but also creates vulnerabilities, as shown by recent pandemics and conflicts. Overexploitation of natural resources exposes the unsustainability of prevailing economic models, with major implications for prosperity and stability.

Social drivers

Demographic trends such as growth, ageing, urbanisation and migration are reshaping consumption and land use. Inequalities within and between societies risk undermining cohesion and the ability to achieve inclusive sustainability transitions.

Technological drivers

Digitalisation, artificial intelligence and biotechnology create opportunities for innovation and sustainability but raise questions of access, equity and governance. Without inclusive frameworks, they risk deepening divides and power imbalances.

Environmental drivers

Climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation and pollution are eroding the resilience of ecosystems and societies. These environmental shifts are both direct threats and multipliers of political, social and economic risks.

Cultural drivers

Shifts in values and norms influence behaviours, governance expectations and engagement. Disagreements over sustainability transitions reflect differing views of justice and equity, while polarised narratives put the role of science and reliable information under pressure.

These global drivers create risks but also opportunities where EFI can add value by:

Providing integrated knowledge

Forests are shaped by political, economic, social, technological, environmental and cultural forces. We help decision-makers understand interlinkages and trade-offs.

Strengthening foresight

As shocks become the norm, we help to build resilience through future insights, scenario building and monitoring.

Investing in trust

Polarisation and misinformation erode decisions. We foster transparent, inclusive dialogue grounded in evidence.

Leveraging innovation responsibly

We highlight bio-based innovations that enhance sustainability and support more equitable societies.

EFI generates knowledge and helps our partners apply it to navigate uncertainty, manage risks and seize opportunities. Together we can create a sustainable and hopeful path forward.

Vision

“

A future where forests and people thrive together for a resilient society and a healthy planet.

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This vision expresses EFI's aspiration for a future in which forest ecosystems and human societies coexist in balance. It reflects our belief in the deep interdependence between thriving forests and human wellbeing. Forests are not just commodities to use, nor untouched places to be set aside. They are living ecosystems that sustain biodiversity, regulate climate, provide livelihoods and enrich cultures.

A “resilient society and a healthy planet” signals our aspiration to foster sustainability, through inclusive and adaptive approaches that restore ecosystems, empower communities and respond to global challenges.

This vision embodies who we are: a forward-looking, science-driven network enabling transformative change through knowledge, collaboration and responsible governance.

Mission



Connecting knowledge
and action.



This mission highlights EFI’s role in generating, expanding and facilitating the use of knowledge in forest-related decision-making. Knowledge is not only transferred to support action, but also co-created between science, policy, practice and civil society actors through ongoing interaction and mutual learning.

By “knowledge,” we refer to a broad spectrum that includes scientific research, expertise, practical experience, traditional and local knowledge, and policy insights. The mission signals a commitment to ensuring that this diverse knowledge base is accessible, actionable and relevant, while being grounded in robust evidence.

Strategic goals

Our three strategic goals define how we put this mission into practice. They serve as the bridge between EFI's vision and the more detailed strategic themes. In other words, the goals describe what we aim to achieve, while the themes outline where we will apply these efforts to make a difference.

Advancing forest knowledge through collaborative research

We are committed to deepening the understanding of forests as integral parts of social-ecological systems. Our dynamic research and knowledge network will be further strengthened by promoting collaboration across disciplines, institutions and regions, and by drawing on the diversity and expertise of our members. This strong community provides a unique foundation for generating robust, relevant and timely knowledge and insights. We aim to develop and support evidence-based solutions and generate opportunities for their co-creation with practitioners, decision-makers and society.

Empowering decision-makers with evidence-based knowledge

We strive to support informed and forward-looking decision-making by providing reliable and policy-relevant knowledge on forests. We equip a wide range of actors, including policymakers, practitioners, civil society and the private sector with insights that reflect the interconnected nature of environmental, social and economic challenges and opportunities. By translating scientific evidence into actionable pathways and facilitating dialogue among diverse actors, decisions are grounded in evidence, inclusive perspectives and long-term sustainability.

Strengthening co-creation of knowledge through dialogue

We recognise that credible and durable forest-related solutions are built on trust, inclusiveness and shared ownership of knowledge. Dialogue and collaborative approaches help connect scientific and professional expertise with public values and societal needs. We are committed to co-creating and sharing knowledge with diverse actors, including local communities, youth, media, practitioners, policymakers and researchers, to enable forest-related decisions and narratives to become more relevant, trusted and broadly supported.

Strategic themes

The strategic themes shape the scope of EFI's activities. They define the thematic areas where we advance knowledge, support evidence-informed decision-making and strengthen dialogue and co-creation to achieve impact.

Building social-ecological resilience through sustainable forest management

This theme focuses on strengthening the adaptability and long-term resilience of forest landscapes. It integrates sustainable forest management with biodiversity conservation and enhancement, climate-smart practices, and ecosystem restoration and adaptation.

Resilience is essential in rural, urban and peri-urban settings, where forests and trees provide critical benefits for communities and their wellbeing. It recognises that resilience depends on ecological diversity, adaptive capacity of social systems, cultural values and governance.

Addressing the growing impacts of disturbances, it also highlights the need for viable ownership structures, stable markets and profitability to sustain forests and support a resilient bioeconomy and reduced use of fossil resources.

Advancing smart and circular forest-based solutions for a sustainable economy

This theme highlights the role of traditional and innovative forest-based products, services and green infrastructure in building sustainable and circular economies.

EFI supports cross-sector partnerships, innovation and evidence-informed policies that drive prosperity while safeguarding ecosystems. This includes assessing both the benefits and risks of technological solutions, and strengthening the role of forests, trees and agroforestry in diverse landscapes.

Such approaches contribute to sustainable development, climate adaptation, and more liveable and healthier rural and urban environments.

Supporting inclusive and adaptive governance for resilient forest landscapes

This theme centres around governance systems that are inclusive, equitable and knowledge-based. It examines how such systems are developed and function, and how they can enhance transparency, empower local actors, respect rights, and strengthen conflict-resolution capacity.

Education, public awareness and international cooperation are essential for effective governance.

Adaptive systems are needed to link forest, land-use and climate agendas across sectors and jurisdictions, and to integrate forest governance into wider urban and landscape approaches.

Strengthening engagement to enable co-created solutions

This theme focuses on identifying and advancing approaches that foster meaningful participation and co-creation.

EFI works to understand what enables inclusive dialogue, mutual learning and trust-building among scientists, policymakers, forest owners, businesses, media and citizens. Attention is given to methods that combine different knowledge sources, encourage youth engagement, and use digital innovation to broaden access. By testing and promoting effective practices, we support co-created forest-related solutions that reflect diverse values, experiences and knowledge systems.

Putting the Strategy into action

The EFI Strategy 2040 sets the overarching framework for our vision, mission and strategic direction. Its implementation will be guided by a five-year Strategy Implementation Plan that translates ambitions into concrete objectives, measurable indicators and thematic priorities.

Together, the strategy and plan provide a coherent roadmap to keep EFI responsive, impactful and accountable in a rapidly changing world.

About EFI

The European Forest Institute (EFI) is an international organisation established by European States through an intergovernmental convention. EFI is a platform for forest-related research, policy support and knowledge exchange.

We have a diverse network of member organisations from across Europe and beyond, bringing together research institutes, universities, public bodies and civil society.

We provide independent, unbiased, policy-relevant knowledge on forests and forestry. We connect science, expertise and society, helping to ensure that dialogues and decisions concerning forests are informed and inclusive.

Our work is grounded in the following core values:

Integrity & Responsibility

We uphold ethical standards, transparency and impartiality, ensuring trust in our work and credibility in our actions.

Inclusiveness & Engagement

We foster collaboration across disciplines, sectors and borders. EFI promotes diversity, respect and active participation in shaping forest-related solutions.

Innovation & Excellence

We embrace curiosity and forward-thinking approaches. Through interdisciplinary work and continuous learning, we strive for lasting impact.

These values guide how we work with each other and our partners. They underpin our role as a trusted, collaborative and innovative organisation working for forests and people.



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