

## 2016 Young Leadership Programme on Forest-Based Bioeconomy: Focus on Russia

### Background

The global forest sector is becoming more complex, interlinked and cross-sectorial. It is increasingly affected by climate-change impacts, energy policies, and advances in new technologies, role of provided by forests services is also increasing. The concept of “forest-based bioeconomy” are beginning to replace the conventional concept of the “forest sector”. The challenges between different industries and service sectors related to the use of wood and forests, and potential trade-offs between environmental values and material use are heightened. From this point of view, Russian forests can play significant role in global bioeconomy.



*Yury Tarasov – Fotolia*

Russia has the world’s largest forest area, making it a key country in global forest sector in many ways. It provides crucial ecosystem services and renewable resources essential for human well-being at global scale.

The Russian forests:

- Represent more than 20% of the planet’s forest estate
- Serve as unique refuges for terrestrial biodiversity
- Provided above 90% of the carbon sink of the world’s boreal forest in 2000–2007
- Provide the largest exports of industrial roundwood in the world (18% world total in 2011)
- Provide 9.2% of the value of timber and timber products imported into the EU (in 2011).

Despite these facts, the Russian forest sector has not been able to unlock its socio-economic potential. Russia’s share in the world forest products trade is below 4 percent, and the share of the forest sector in the gross domestic product is only 1.3 percent; in industrial production 3.7 percent; in employment

one percent; and in export revenue 2.4 percent. Clearly, the Russian forest sector resource base and economic potential is very much underutilized, including its potential in bioeconomy.

Recently, FAO (2012) published the Russian forest sector outlook study and its key conclusion was that, if Russia is to pursue the positive and innovative future scenario for its forest sector, “it needs the realization of reforms related to its restructuring and improved governance. Broad international cooperation will be an essential factor in achieving this....”. The analysis of FAO (2012) also concluded that the Russian forest sector is facing a unique historic opportunity for the major reconstruction and creation of a fundamentally new forest sector for the 21st century.