

Creating an innovative bioeconomy: forests offer more than wood

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The forest-based bioeconomy could offer more potential for sustainable growth and new investments in the EU, according to **Jyrki Katainen**, European Commission Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness. Mr Katainen was speaking at a high-level ThinkForest seminar held in Brussels on 15 November, which discussed how to build an innovative and resilient forest bioeconomy.

Technical progress now allows the conversion of biomass into a broad range of novel products. Research and innovation are crucial for developing the forest-based bioeconomy still further, said Mr Katainen. Advanced wood-based materials and chemicals are expected to play a major role, providing opportunities to maintain and create jobs and income. He stressed the potential of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), for creating new, innovative projects from wood.

Panellists discussed how new technologies could bring 'added value'. Wood for biofuel can be a transition technology but there are much better technologies around the corner. The future is forests which provide ecosystem services, value-added materials (eg engineered wood), and innovative consumables like bioplastics. **John Bell**, Director of Bioeconomy, DG Research and Innovation highlighted the importance of "knowing what we know and developing what we don't know". New technologies and innovation could create "bioeconomic diversity", giving more options and building more sustainable value and jobs close to the ground.

A major issue was how to raise the awareness of this added value that forests are offering, to be able to bring the bioeconomy to life. "We need to tell a fact-based narrative which is appropriate for an urban-based population", said **Lauri Hetemäki**, EFI's Assistant Director. We shouldn't just talk about wood, added **Fredrick Federley**, MEP. We need to open out and broaden our viewpoint. We should talk about fibre, its uses for fabric, the new innovative materials being made from cellulose.



Lively discussions emphasised that it was important to have an understanding of the different contexts in different countries, and a common understanding of the sustainability of a forest-based

bioeconomy. Here, [EFI's new From Science to Policy study](#) provides insights into the potential use of forest-based indicators for bioeconomy monitoring and assessment.

The ThinkForest event 'Building an innovative and resilient forest bioeconomy' was held at the International Press Center, Brussels on 15 November 2016. The event was chaired by ThinkForest president **Göran Persson** and was hosted by **Miapetra Kumpula-Natri**, MEP.

[View the recording of the event](#)

[From Science to Policy 4: Forest bioeconomy – a new scope for sustainability indicators](#) was published by EFI on 15 November.

[FOREST EUROPE Statement on the occasion of the ThinkForest event Building an Innovative and Resilient Forest Bioeconomy](#)

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ThinkForest is facilitated by the European Forest Institute, an independent, science-based international organization. ThinkForest is a high-level discussion forum which brings together policy makers, the scientific community and stakeholders, building bridges on pan-European forest and bioeconomy issues. Since 2012, 17 events have been held, attended by over 1,000 people.

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