

# 3 BILLION TREES PLEDGE & FOREST MONITORING

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**ABOUT:** As part of its Forest Strategy for 2030 and the Biodiversity Strategy, the EU has committed to a non-binding target of planting 3 billion additional trees. The objectives of this pledge are to increase the EU's forested areas, increase forest resilience, reverse biodiversity loss, and mitigate climate change as well as adapt to its effects. The Pledge is part of the Green Deal Biodiversity Strategy to restore nature through specific targets, as the Green Deal stipulates: "in addition to protecting EU primary and old-growth forests, the EU should aim to increase the quantity, quality, and resilience of its forests."

The Pledge aims to double the EU's current forest expansion rate between 2005 and 2020. The Commission emphasizes that the objective of the pledge is feasible due to the potential of additional trees that could be planted for the purposes of nature restoration as well as available abandoned land (see Roadmap for 3 billion trees).

The Pledge is expected to contribute to objectives under the Forest Strategy for 2030, including: planting new forests, restoring degraded forests, improving the management of existing forests, and planting trees in agricultural land as part of sustainable agro-forestry.

The Pledge includes a roadmap emphasizing long-term planning to ensure that trees are able to grow and mature as well as outlining how it can be met in full respect of ecological principles. Trees must be planted according to the following criteria: they must be additional compared to a business-as-usual scenario and therefore exclude trees that are planted for legal reasons; trees should not be harvested for several decades; they must be planted in line with the do no significant harm principle, benefit both biodiversity and climate, and exclude planting of invasive species; and lastly, initiatives should plant native tree species unless it is not possible to do so.

For initiatives that receive EU funds, trees must be planted in accordance with the guidelines developed by the Commission on biodiversity-friendly afforestation and reforestation, agroforestry, and urban trees. For trees that are planted using funds from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, inappropriate afforestation of sensitive habitats, such as peatlands or areas under High Natural Value Farming, or sites designated as Natura 2000 must be avoided.

## MONITORING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Pledge relies on monitoring through the Forest Information System for Europe (FISE) and through the app MapMyTree, which allows citizens to upload and monitor their trees and progress. The system includes forms to submit planting records, which is hosted on the EEA website via the data reporting platform Reportnet 3.0, which will enable the EEA to collect information and feed it into the monitoring platform. To ensure that submitted information is reliable, users are required to submit a declaration of honour.

A tree counter has been established to monitor progress and provide estimates of additional trees planted, which is integrated with other counters to ensure that double counting does not occur as well as to ensure that planting occurs in accordance with the principle of additionality.

### **HOW CAN THE FOREST MONITORING FRAMEWORK PLAY A ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE 3 BILLION TREES PLEDGE?**

In addition to tree counting, the Pledge will rely on an area-based approach. The areas may be extracted from existing databases or detected by remote sensing. Such estimates vary by tree planting scheme (afforestation, landscape element, agroforestry) and species and may also require regional or local adjustments. For example, afforested areas can be detected by satellite-based remote sensing.

Monitoring applications and related analytical functions embedded in a Forest Monitoring Framework can provide key insights and evidence to enable a better understanding of the state of forests, and provide situational awareness over vast areas in a timely manner. Remote sensing will play a key role in the EU-wide integrated forest monitoring framework which can provide support in verifying progress towards the 3 billion trees pledge.



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