Background and Legal Framework of Regional Forest Program

**Background**

Regional Forest Programme is a development plan for the entire forestry sector within the region. The program harmonises the requirements of economic, social, and ecological sustainability. The objectives of the regional forest programs arise from the regions' own development needs and the objectives of the national forest strategy. The general objectives of the forest programme Forest management and use is diverse, sustainable, and highlighting the different values of the forest owners. Simultaneously, the sustainable use of forests should be profitable, and sector should have public acceptance. Also, forests and the management of them are a part of solution for climate change mitigation.

Regional forest council supervises the implementation of the program. The objectives of the provincial forest programmes arise from the regions' own development needs and the objectives of the national forest strategy. The programmes combine economic, ecological, social and cultural objectives. At the heart of the objectives is the diverse and sustainable use of forests.

Regional forest plan includes concrete actions for 6 development goals. Actions are implemented by various organizations different funding mechanisms, local, national and EU level.

**Legal Framework**

The regional forest program is a statutory provincial forest sector development plans and work program. The legislative basis for these are on Law on Finnish Forest Centre (418/2011). The regional organization of the Finnish Forest Centre create a regional forest council, a multidisciplinary organ bringing together stakeholders representing different stakeholders from the forest sector, business, management, administration, research, recreation, municipalities etc. These regional stakeholders, together with the Finnish forest centre, create the regional forest program. This program is a five year strategic document, that is revisited once after 2,5 years. Current regional forest program for Central Finland is for period 2021-2025.

**Objectives and implementation**

Central Finland’s regional forest program has six main goals: 1) Growing and vigorous forests, 2) Increased biodiversity and water protection, 3) Climate-sustainable forests, 4) Infra supporting versatile use of forests, 5) RDI in wood-based products, 6) Nature-based possibilities from forests.

Regional forest plan includes concrete actions for each development goals. Actions are implemented by various organization different funding mechanisms, local, national and EU level.

“Growing and vigorous forests” include activation of the forest owners and promotion campaigns for good and active silviculture. Resilience of the forests in increased and special attention is paid on securing the availability skilled workforce.

“Increased biodiversity and water protection” includes implementation of 1-2- water protection projects and 2-3 biodiversity-projects (e.g. EU Life) annually. It also includes active campaigning and promotion. A successful tool for voluntary-based protection is funding from the state (METSO-program).

“Climate-sustainable forests” includes diversification of the forest management practices, with the special focus on continuous-cover silviculture in peatlands. Carbon storages are increased by fertilization which support forest growth. Earning mechanisms in voluntary carbon mission compensation are developed.

“Infra supporting versatile use of forests” is about securing the critical road, railway, and storage infrastructure for the logistics of raw wood and forestry product.

“RDI in wood-based products” includes development of projects that support the RDI. Also, focus is on wood in buildings, increase in RDI and implementation, including support in public tendering process in municipalities towards sustainable wood buildings.

“Nature-based possibilities from forests” highlights the cooperation between tourism sector and forest sector. Local possibilities and sites are promoted for public. New innovations and products/services are supported.

We need to increase the added value from the forest sector. This means investments in research and innovations. Simultaneously, climate change will have effects on the sector, and we need to increase the resilience of our forests to ensure its capabilities for adapting to new climate conditions. Intensive forestry means also, that we need to put our focus more on protection of the biodiversity. Forests in Central Finland can also offer new possibilities for the tourism. Also, non-wood products and wellbeing sector can offer new possibilities in rural areas. Digitalization also has a potential in forest sector.