



Some might think that protecting forests is an expensive luxury requiring huge resources so that we have pretty scenery to look at while driving to the golf course. But the fact is that the forests of Europe are of huge economic importance, and could provide the inspiration for the essential green restructuring of the European economy. There is already big money being made from forests. According to the Confederation of European Forest Owners, the annual turnover of the forest-based industry is €450 billion, contributing 9% to the GDP of the European manufacturing sector. Other goods like Christmas trees, berries, fruit and cork come directly from the forests and are important sources of income for many Europeans. But seeing forests only in terms of their economic significance does not really reflect the true worth of the continent's forests. European forests also provide essential ecological services to humans, animals and plants everywhere, merely by forming 25% of the world's forests.

The State of Europe's Forests 2011 report, co-authored by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (FOREST EUROPE), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) describes the European forest sector as being increasingly ecologically and socially sustainable. Such an evaluation is justified in many ways. Europe's forests are growing - over the last decade they grew by an area the size of Switzerland, so it seems that European forestry is looking at the long-term health of forests rather than short-term gains.

### **Green Economy in the making?**

The State of Europe's Forests 2011 report indicates that in many ways the forest sector is looking more and more like a 'Green Economy'. This year, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) described



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