

LET'S STOP **CLIMATE** CHANGE!

SUSTAIN **FORESTS** – THE RESOURCE OF FUTURE.

FOREST & PEOPLE

Germany is a Land of Forests

Germans love their forests and there's a good reason for this. Throughout its history, Germany has always been a land of forests. This is also reflected in our culture. Whether it is the invention of the printing press or the construction of musical instruments, the setting of our fairy tales or songs or even in the names of cities, there is most often a direct or indirect connection to the German forests, their trees or the timber. Following the great timber shortage in Germany over 300 years ago, Carl von Carlowitz developed the principle of sustainability: To leave the forest for the next generations in a better condition than present. This still remains a top priority in forestry management. Today, 32% of Germany is covered by forests.

Forest functions

For our society, the forests fulfil a wide range of useful, protective and recreational functions. They are important habitats for animals and plants, they protect soil, water as well as climate and clean the air. In addition to the renewable material wood, they provide mushrooms, fruits, meat and other products. Not least, they are major recreation areas.

Unlike plantations, or forest areas where nature conservation objectives are given absolute priority, the multifunctional forestry management implemented on the by far largest part of the German forest area, offers a wide variety of services for the national economy and the welfare in the very same area. Sustainable forestry secures forests and their ecosystem services for the future. Wood production, nature conservation and recreation ensure jobs and added value in rural areas.

Water resources

40 Percent of the water protection areas are located in woodlands. About 2.1 millions of hectares of forest are drinking water conservation areas. 10,000 square meters (1 ha) of forest soil are able to store three million litres of water. In heat years, the forests contribute to the humidification and cooling of the environment.

Air

Trees produce oxygen. A 100-year-old oak tree grows eleven metric tons of carbon dioxide per year and hectare from the air, producing about three tons of plant material (leaves, bark, roots, flowers, fruits, wood) and up to eight tons of oxygen. Altogether, the forest generates about 25 to 38 million metric tons of oxygen per year in Germany. The leaves and needles of the trees filter dust and pollutants from the air. A single hectare of forest filters up to 60 tons of dust per year, so the air in the forest is particularly clean: it contains up to 100 times less dust than the air in big cities.

Economic performance

The national cluster forestry and wood covers all economic sectors, including trade, printing and publishing. This cluster provides income for around 2 million forest owners and around 1.1 million employees (only forestry: 64,000) in some 125,000 companies. In 2014, it generated sales of EUR 178 billion with a gross value added of EUR 55 billion. As a result, the cluster forestry, wood and paper is one of the most important economic sectors in Germany in terms of turnover and jobs. "Wood and other products" produce about 430 EUR yield per hectare in the state, community and private forests.

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Recreation, leisure and health

In Germany, all forests, even those privately owned, may be entered for recreation (§ 14 Federal Forest Law). Going for walks or hiking is very popular. More than 55 million people in Germany (70% of the population) visit the forest at least once a year. The average is about 28 visits per person per year; so annually there are an estimated 2.3 billion forest visits in Germany. The forestry provides an infrastructure that allows visiting the forest in large parts: About 512,000 km of forest roads and 62,000 km of foot, riding and cycling trails.

Medical studies show that forest visits increase human well-being and promote physical, mental and social health. Being in the forest works on body and psyche, and it is soothing and relaxing. It strengthens the immune system, and it helps to reduce stress and mental stress. This is especially true for the combination of forest visits and sporting activities.

Forest education

Forest education as a part of the education for sustainable development, wants to enable people to shape their future in a responsible and sustainable manner. It uses the forest as a fascinating place for holistic learning and gaining inspiring experience. People who know and cherish the forest and nature will preserve them. Corresponding educational programs have increased considerably in recent years. Important elements of forest education are the forest kindergartens where infants are educated in the woods only. Today their number is estimated at more than 1,000 nationwide.

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COP23 FIJI
15-19 NOV 2017

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