



Sweden

Biodiversity in managed forests

- The Swedish model for sustainable forest management

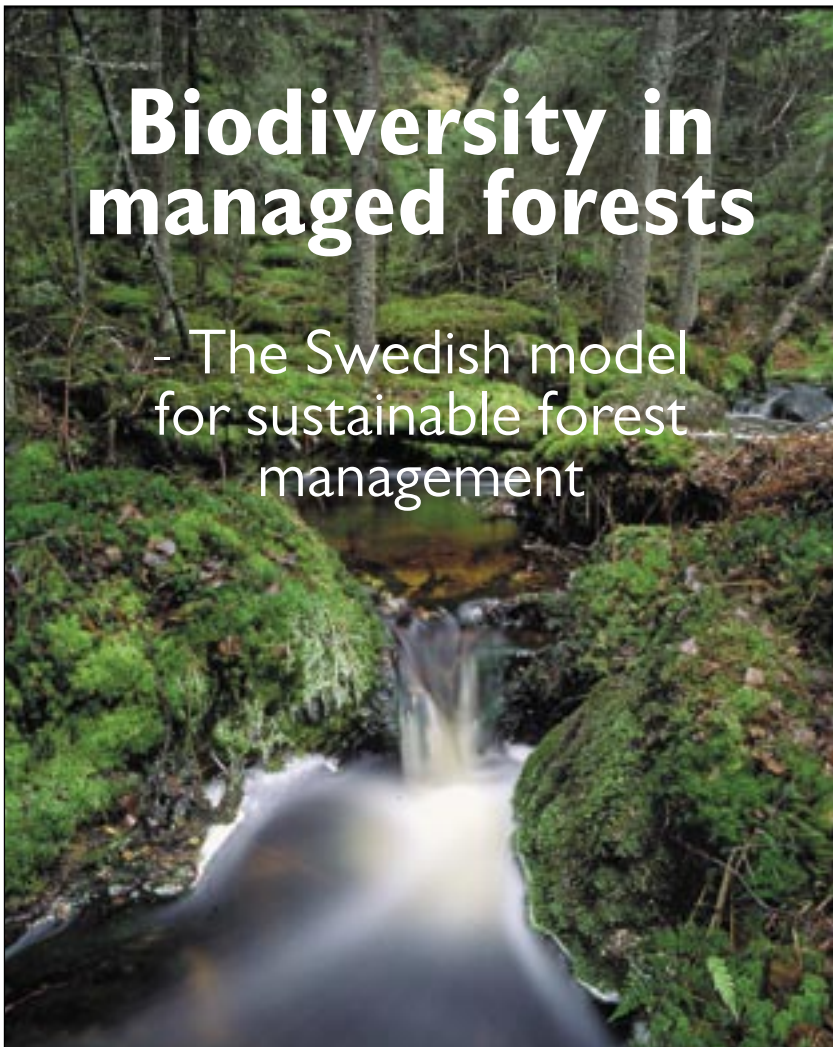


PHOTO: PER-OLAV ERIKSSON/N

Sweden is a country dominated by forests. Forests cover about two-thirds of the land area. This makes Sweden one of the major forest nations in Europe. Almost all forest land has been managed by man for generations. Today most forests are defined as semi-natural and the intention is to keep them that way.

The Swedish model for sustainable forest management combines production of timber and preservation of biodiversity. This means a combination, at the ecosystem level, of general conservation measures in all forestry operations, adapted management of certain stands or parts of the forests and establishment of protected forest areas.

The Swedish view is that biodiversity cannot be conserved by protected forest areas alone. Of equal importance are conservation measures which are an integral part of all forest operations that form part of the daily work in the forests. The need for protected areas is related to the effectiveness of all conservation measures in the entire ecosystem or landscape.



PHOTO: MICHAEL EKSTRAND

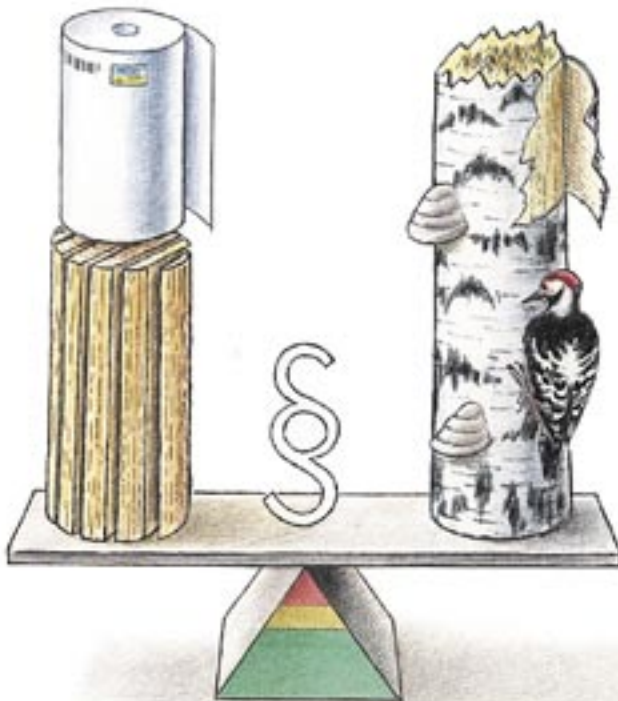


PHOTO: SVEN-ERIK NORD/N

The general measures for all forestry operations include the retention of eternity trees, retention of groups of trees and small habitats, and of woody debris. Protective zones, preservation of nesting sites, unique features and red-listed species also form part of the concept.

The Swedish Forest Policy

The Swedish Forest Policy from 1993 formulates a production goal and an environmental goal. The production goal focuses on sustainable and valuable yield while the environmental goal is calling for protection of genes, species and habitats. Both goals shall have equal weight in forest management.



In addition, the Swedish Parliament has adopted 16 environmental quality objectives to be obtained within one human generation. One of those is "Sustainable Forests".

In March 2005, the Swedish Forest Agency formally adopted a set of objectives for the nation's forest sector. They include overall policy objectives laid down by the Swedish Parliament and thirteen quantitative targets to be fulfilled within a specified time. A involvement of a wide range of stakeholders at a national, regional and local level has been crucial in the development and implementation of the objectives and the quantitative targets. The objectives take into account economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects of forests and forestry and are broken down to regional and local levels and are regularly followed-up.

Translation of policy into real action – forest owner's key actors

The Swedish Forest Policy underlines that the forest owners have the main responsibility for management of their forests. Private forest owner's generally have good knowledge of sustainable forest management. To maintain their skills, forest owners are offered a variety of courses and training opportunities annually, this being part of an old extension tradition in Swedish forestry. The responses from the forest owners normally are very good and positive.



PHOTO: MICHAEL EKSTRAND

Getting the message through

The working methods of the Swedish Forest Agency are characterised by local cooperation, improving awareness and knowledge and continuous dialogue with different stakeholders and interest groups.

The local districts with their personal contacts and local knowledge are of fundamental value when solving interests or legal conflicts. The Swedish Forest Agency is known for being a decentralised and accessible organisation.

To raise interest and knowledge about sustainable forest management, the Swedish Forest Agency invites forest owners and other interested stakeholders such as entrepreneurs, timber purchasers and local interest groups to courses and meetings.



PHOTO: BO GÖRAN BACKSTRÖM

Through a combination of theoretical studies and practical demonstrations in the field, forest owners have come to realise how the visions of the policy can be converted into practical actions, based on responsible management with the view to build values for the future.

All actions are in line with national priorities and international agreements.

Showing policy in practise

The Green Forest Management Plan exemplifies how long-term objectives can guide the management of individual stands on a private property. The main objective for a stand can focus on either production of wood or conservation of biodiversity depending on the stands potential for the future and the current situation of the surrounding landscape. The idea is that this will give, at national level, the best possible combination of high and valuable wood production and the safeguarding and enhancement of plant and animal habitats. Protection of the cultural heritage and of social values of the forests also forms part of the message.

Green Forest Management Plan



Good profitability through high and valuable production and conservation of biodiversity are important ingredients in sustainable forest management. Swedish forestry is not supported by subsidies or public grants. It has to compete and be successful through its own actions. One precondition for success as a forest owner is that you know your forest, what it can produce and where to find the vulnerable habitats to be protected. Good planning, in Sweden through Green Forest Management Plans makes it easier to be consistent and to make the right decisions.

Certification through FSC and PEFC are also important tools to increase the preservation of biodiversity in the Swedish forests. Certification are exclusively market driven tools without interference from the state.