
Forestry

Overview

During the reporting period (May 2025 – May 2026), significant advancements were made in the field of forestry in the Republic of Serbia towards essential systemic changes that might significantly improve the overall state in this sector. Most of the problems identified in the previous reporting period remain present, but progress has been made in developing the strategic framework. The Forest Administration of the competent ministry has initiated the process of drafting an overarching strategic[173] document for forestry in Serbia. Institutional capacities for enforcing regulations remain limited, while the problems related to the management of privately-owned forests have not been resolved. Progress has been made in monitoring and controlling illegal activities in forests through the adoption of the new Law on Placing Timber and Timber Products on the Market.

During the reporting period, the process of aligning national legislation with the European Union acquis in the area of trade in timber and timber products continued, primarily through activities aimed at preparing regulations governing placing timber and timber products on the market. At the same time, the European regulatory framework was amended through the postponement of the full implementation of the Regulation on Deforestation-free Products (EUDR), which will require further alignments of national legislation and institutional frameworks in the coming period.

At the same time, the forestry sector continued to face challenges that are being further exacerbated by climate change. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events, including storms, periods of drought and other climate extremes, is increasing risks to the stability of forest ecosystems and highlighting the need to strengthen forest resilience through sustainable forest management and long-term planning.

173 https://sumarskakomora.rs/2026/01/15/odrzan-prvi-sastanak-radne-grupe-za-izradu-programa-razvoja-sumarstva-republike-srbije-za-period-2027-2036-godine/

Implementation of a major international FOREST INVEST project[174], valued at 84 million dollars and financed by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), with co-financing from the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), has begun. The project calls for afforestation of 7,000 hectares with tree species resilient to climate change, the conversion of 51,000 hectares of degraded low forests into high forests, as well as the restoration of at least 500 hectares of abandoned private agricultural land through the establishment of agroforestry systems. These and other measures are expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 8.4 million metric tons of CO_2 equivalent. However, although the project has been underway for more than a year, no significant specific activities have been implemented to date. It also remains unclear how such a large-scale undertaking will be completed within the remaining seven years of the project period.

Progress in cross-sectoral cooperation and capacity building has largely been achieved through individual international cooperation projects and the activities of civil society organizations, while systemic solutions remain lacking. In the coming period, it will be critical to continue aligning national legislation with the EU regulations, strengthen institutional capacity and develop strategic documents that will support the sustainable management of forest resources in line with biodiversity conservation objectives.

Strategic and Legislative Framework

During the reporting period, the process of aligning the legislation of the Republic of Serbia with the European Union acquis in the areas of forestry and trade in timber and timber products continued, primarily through the transposition of the provisions of the FLEGT Regulation and the EUTR, which was recently replaced by the EUDR. Activities focused mainly on further developing the national legislative framework governing placing timber and timber products on the market, with the aim of improving traceability, strengthening controls over the legality of timber origin and meeting the obligations arising from Serbia's EU accession process.

174 https://www.fao.org/serbia/news/detail/officially-starts-the-forest-invest-project/rs

In this context, the National Assembly adopted the Law[175] on Placing Timber and Timber Products on the Market in November 2025. Its primary purpose is to introduce a so-called due diligence system, as provided for under the EUTR/EUDR framework. Entities that place timber or timber products on the market for the first time are required to implement a due diligence system. This includes collecting all necessary documentation on the origin of timber and timber products, conducting a risk assessment regarding placing illegally harvested timber and timber products on the market and taking appropriate measures to mitigate identified risks. This Law also requires traders to maintain records of their suppliers and customers throughout all stages of the timber and timber products supply chain, thereby ensuring the traceability of timber origin.

In the view of Serbian forestry experts, raised during the adoption of the Law, its main shortcoming – along with that of the transposed EU regulations – is that it recognizes only legal entities as operators placing timber and timber products on the market. This is particularly important given that more than 50% of Serbia's timber is harvested from privately-owned forests and is sold by private individuals. The Law on Forests and its provisions governing the control of timber trade will continue to apply to individuals, while legal entities will be subject to both the existing Law on Forests and the new Law. As a result, this area will effectively be governed by two separate laws.

During the reporting period, significant progress was made in the national strategic framework for forestry development. On December 31, 2025, the Forest Administration of the competent ministry established a Working Group for Drafting Forestry Development Program for the Territory of the Republic of Serbia for the 2027–2036 Period. Under the Law on Forests, this is the overarching strategic document whose absence has been highlighted for years. From January through May 2026, the Working Group prepared the first draft of the document, which is currently undergoing legal review by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management's Department for Normative Affairs. Following the review, the document is potentially to be revised, after which it is expected to proceed to the public consultation stage. The Working Group responsible for preparing the initial draft included representatives of

175 https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-stavljanju-na-trziste-drveta-i-drvnih-proizvoda.html

two civil society organizations operating at the national level in the forestry sector — the Serbian Environmental Movement and the National Alliance of Private Forest Owner Associations DendroSrbija. According to participants involved in the drafting process, the document sets out long-term forestry development objectives, measures for their implementation, as well as a financing system, implementation timeline and allocation of responsibilities.

At the European Union level, the regulatory framework for preventing deforestation and the degradation of forest ecosystems continued to evolve. The Regulation on Deforestation-free Products (EUDR), which replaces the previous system based on the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR), remains a key piece of legislation with which the Republic of Serbia will need to align its national legislation as part of its EU accession process. During the reporting period, a decision was made to postpone the full implementation of this regulation in order to give Member States and economic operators more time to comply with the new requirements related to traceability, geolocation data and due diligence systems.

Strengthening institutional capacity of competent authorities also remains a prerequisite for fulfilling international obligations in the forestry sector. This primarily involves more effective coordination between institutions responsible for forestry, nature conservation, inspection supervision and international trade. In the coming period, particular attention should be given to preparing institutions and economic operators for the implementation of the new European requirements, as well as to improving systems for verifying the legality of the origin of timber and timber products.

Implementation of Regulations

Implementation of forestry regulations remains one of the sector's key challenges. Although the existing legislative framework addresses most issues relevant to forest management, its consistent implementation in practice continues to be hampered by insufficient institutional capacity, weak coordination among the competent authorities and long-standing issues in forest management, particularly in privately-owned forests.

By-laws[176] to support the implementation of the Law on Placing Timber and Timber Products on the Market have been developed. By May 2026, all legal entities had received the required documentation for establishing and maintaining records under the due diligence system.

Illegal logging remains one of the most significant problems, particularly in areas where private forest holdings are highly fragmented and property rights remain unresolved. In addition, limited capacity for inspection supervision and monitoring makes it difficult to effectively detect and prevent illegal activities, while available data on their extent remain neither up to date nor comprehensive.

An additional challenge is the need to improve information systems and the quality of data on forest resources, particularly with regard to privately-owned forests. Reliable and up-to-date data are essential for forest management planning, monitoring forest conditions and making evidence-based decisions. However, the collection and sharing of such data among the relevant institutions remain a weak point.

Damage to State-Owned Forests[177]

Indicator	Republic of Serbia	Belgrade Region	Vojvodina Region	Šumadija and Western Serbia Region	Southern and Eastern Serbia Region	Kosovo and Metohija Region
2024						
Volume (m³)	181,544	332	66,394	58,799	56,019	...
2025						
Volume (m³)	140,753	119	992	75,310	64,332	...
Surface area (ha)	6,183	4	406	3,490	2,283	...
Damage – man-made (m³)	42,241	119	992	3,501	37,629	...
Surface area (ha)	290	2	17	38	233	...
Damage – insects (m³)	34,389	–	–	33,663	726	...

176 http://demo.paragraf.rs/demo/combined/Old/t/t2026_04/SG_034_2026_007.htm

177 https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2026/Html/G20261164.html

Surface area (ha)	1,972	–	267	1,696	9	...
Damage – wildlife (m^3)	–	–	–	–	–	...
Surface area (ha)	16	–	16	–	–	...
Damage – natural disasters (m^3)	20,453	–	–	15,481	4,972	...
Surface area (ha)	1,320	–	–	944	376	...
Damage – disease (m^3)	20,486	–	–	20,459	27	...
Surface area (ha)	629	–	–	627	2	...
Damage – fire (m^3)	23,184	–	–	2,206	20,978	...
Surface area (ha)	1,956	2	106	185	1,663	...
Number of fires	93	3	11	22	57	...

The impacts of climate change are increasingly affecting the condition of forest ecosystems through more frequent periods of drought, severe storms, pest outbreaks and an increased risk of wildfires. These circumstances further underscore the need to improve monitoring systems, strengthen preventive measures and promote adaptive forest management in order to increase forest resilience to future pressures.

Some progress has been made through international projects and programs that contribute to the development of professional capacities, improved monitoring and exchange of expertise and experience. However, these efforts have not yet been translated into systemic solutions that would enable long-term improvements in regulatory enforcement and more effective management of forest resources.

Financing

The financial framework is one of the key factors determining the capacity to effectively implement forestry policies. Sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, restoration of degraded forest ecosystems,

improved monitoring and climate change adaptation require stable, long-term investment. However, available funding remains insufficient to achieve the set objectives.

During the reporting period, there were no significant changes in the way the forestry sector is financed. Financial resources continue to be directed primarily toward routine management of state-owned forests and the implementation of core activities by public enterprises, while investment in biodiversity conservation, development of information systems and forest monitoring remains limited. This funding structure makes it more difficult to implement measures that contribute to the long-term resilience of forest ecosystems and to fulfilling the international obligations of the Republic of Serbia.

A particular challenge is the provision of financial support for the management of privately-owned forests. Given the significant share of private forests in the Republic of Serbia's total forest resources, the limited availability of financial incentives and technical assistance constrains forest owners' ability to apply sustainable forest management principles, implement forest maintenance and restoration measures and invest in strengthening the resilience of forest ecosystems. At the same time, the fragmentation of private forest holdings further complicates the efficient use of available resources and the implementation of joint activities on the ground.

Additional funding to support the development of the forestry sector is provided through international projects and cooperation programs, including projects financed by the European Union and other international donors. These projects contribute to the development of professional capacity, improved monitoring, application of new methodologies and exchange of experience with EU Member States. However, their contribution remains project-based and time-limited, and therefore cannot substitute for a stable national financing system for the forestry sector.

In addition, the expected alignment with new requirements under European legislation, particularly in the areas of timber traceability, data digitization and strengthening control systems, will require additional investment in

institutional capacity, information infrastructure and employee training. Without proper financial planning, there is a risk that implementation of future obligations will be hampered, potentially slowing the process of alignment with the EU acquis.

In the coming period, it will be necessary to improve the sector's financing system by increasing investment in activities of public interest, strengthening the Budget Fund for Forests, developing incentive measures for private forest owners, and establishing long-term financing mechanisms for implementing measures related to the protection, restoration and sustainable management of forest ecosystems. At the same time, greater transparency in the planning and use of available funds will be needed to improve the efficiency of investments and ensure the achievement of national policy objectives and obligations arising from the European integration process.

Recommendations

Strategic and Legislative Framework

1. Organize a public consultation on the national strategic document (development program) for forestry, which is currently being prepared, as a prerequisite for ensuring the participation of interested members of the public and relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process. This document is to provide a long-term vision for development of forestry in Serbia, with an action plan that includes defined sources of funding, competent institutions and implementation dynamics. In its preparation, account should be taken of the relevant documents currently being developed at the EU level, including the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and other documents from the Green Deal package.
2. Continuously monitor the regulatory implementation, including the application of the EUTR and FLEGT Regulations, and ensure appropriate supervision of their enforcement.

Implementation of Regulations

3. Improve cooperation with other sectors (nature protection, energy, climate change, water management) in order to integrate forest ecosystems management. Improve the quality of data on privately-owned forests and strengthen control over their use.

Financing

4. Secure realistic planning of funding for the Budget Fund for Forests, with more resources directed toward afforestation, maintenance and forest protection measures.

FORESTRY

DAMAGE TO STATE-OWNED FORESTS[1]

SERBIA

93 forest fires

23,184m³ Volume of damage

1,956ha Area affected

Southern and Eastern Serbia

57 forest fires

20,978m³ Volume of damage

1,663ha Area affected

Šumadija and Western Serbia

22 forest fires

2,206m³ Volume of damage

185ha Area affected



1 https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2026/Html/G20261164.html