



METSO Newsletter

FOREST BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMME FOR SOUTHERN FINLAND (METSO) 2003-2007

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FOREST OWNERS SATISFIED WITH NATURAL VALUES TRADING

According to a survey carried out by the Department of Economics of the University of Oulu and the Finnish Forest Research Institute, most of the forest owners are satisfied with the practice applied in natural values trading, and over 70 per cent had a positive attitude to nature conservation in forests.

Natural values trading (NVT) is a pilot scheme tested in the Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland, METSO. It is one of the new voluntary means offered to private forest owners in order to maintain and increase biodiversity of forests in Southern Finland. In NVT, the landowners receive a premium for committing to a voluntary fixed term contract concerning the maintenance or enhancing of biodiversity in their forests. More research results on METSO will soon be published, since METSO is backed up by research programmes.

Active in NVT, active in forest management

According to the survey results, the landowners with large forest holdings seemed to be the most active in natural values trading. In Finland, a forest holding of a few hundred hectares is considered "large". Nearly three quarters (72%) of the forests in Southern Finland are owned by private families, the average holding size being only 42 hectares. Therefore they contribute to the most of the timber production for industrial purposes, as well as to the forest biodiversity.

The forest owners having participated in natural values trading were approximately as active in forest management as forest owners in average. The forest owners having participated natural values trading were more often highly educated and forestry professionals than the average forest owners in Finland. The researchers supposed them being more conscious of the new opportunities than the forest owners in average.

Most of the forest owners having participated in natural values trading were satisfied with the applied practice. Most of those who expressed dissatisfaction had offered sites for natural values trading but the offer had not led to a contract (for the reasons of, e.g. high price or low biodiversity value). Over 70 per cent of landowners having participated in NVT had a positive attitude to forest conservation,



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Project leader Anu Rautiainen evaluating a forest site together with the landowner. The site was offered for natural values trading in Lohja region in Southern Finland.

and they had also protected natural values on their land on their own initiative more frequently than the forest owners in average. For natural values traders, multiple use was emphasized in their objectives of forest ownership.

Premium important

The premium was a precondition for participating in the NVT. However, forest owners were unwilling to set the premium on their own initiative due to the difficulties experienced in determining the appropriate price. Some of the responses indicated that the forest owners may aim to negotiate as high a premium

as possible. This indicates that positive attitudes to forest conservation do not necessarily result in lower premium requirements.

The majority of forest owners who concluded a contract announced they would have harvested the site during the following decade without NVT contract. One third would have protected the site without the contract they now concluded. Most of the forest owners involved in NVT told they would like to continue the contract after the current contract period. The researchers regard this positive for the future of the conservation of forest biodiversity, because ten years is considered a short period for ensuring the maintenance of the natural values at a specific site.

The pilot project of natural values trading was launched in 2003 in the territory of the South-West Finland Forestry Centre. The METSO Programme will be evaluated in 2006, and the decision on the continuation of forest conservation in Southern Finland will be made in 2007. There is more research to come in the becoming years, since METSO is backed up by large research programmes.

Further information:

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Publications referred: Juutinen, A. *et al.* 2005. (In Finnish only).
Horne, P. *et al.* 2004: English abstract: www.metla.fi/julkaisut/mt/2004/933-en.htm.



Only a very qualified spruce is chosen for the Christmas tree...

METSO AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

The METSO Programme is an integral part of Finland's implementation of various international agreements. METSO makes significant contributions to meeting the objectives for sustainable development set out by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), and the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE). Maintaining and enhancing the biological diversity of forests is one of the resolutions of the MCPFE Vienna Conference (April 2003)

METSO IN BRIEF

METSO - the Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland 2003-2007 - is part of Finland's National Forest Programme 2010. METSO contains 17 sub-programmes, including pilot projects designed to test innovative voluntary means for landowners to promote biodiversity in the forests of southern Finland. The METSO Programme aims to design and test cost-effective measures to acquire the most ecologically valuable forest sites in southern Finland for temporary conservation or permanent protection.

Forestry is typically practiced on a small scale in southern Finland, where average cutting areas are only 1-2 ha. METSO is piloting new ways to increase biodiversity under such conditions, complementing the work done through several other programmes since the 1997 Forest Act.

The METSO Programme was carefully prepared through processes involving many stakeholders such as forest industry associations, forest owners' organisations, the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation and WWF Finland, as well as the two ministries responsible for the Programme, so as to complement and supplement Finland's National Forest Programme 2010. Like the rest of the National Forest Programme, METSO is backed up by intensive research and survey work and will be evaluated.

METSO Programme: www.mmm.fi/metso or www.ymparisto.fi/metso