

International Year of Forests - 2011

UNFF Logo

Preliminary Remark

2011 is the International Year of Forests. Forests are important natural habitats, a valuable natural heritage and an indispensable resource for humankind. Forests have many faces and their functions have far-reaching significance for nearly all areas of our life. The forest is the distinguishing feature of entire landscapes, it is a home and refuge for countless animals and plants it protects the climate, water and soil, it provides us with the environmentally sound renewable resource of wood, it provides jobs, recreation and the experience of nature, and it is part of our myths and fairytales. Forest products are part of our everyday lives, they surround us, help us, teach us and entertain us, they are taken for granted without us even thinking about them. It is not just the forests in Germany that are of importance to us. Forests in other regions of this earth, too, in Siberia, in the Amazon region, on the Indonesian islands or in the Congo basin are inextricably linked with us, with our environment and with our quality of life. Forests have left their mark on our civilisation - in Germany and around the world. Without them, we would have to do without many important, and many everyday things.

The logo developed for the United Nations Forest Forum (UNFF) builds on this. It is to be used world-wide for contributions, activities and events connected with the International Year of Forests 2011 and it is to be seen in this international context. The logo is intended to work in all the different regions, climatic zones and civilisations, and in both developed and developing nations. It is intended to convey the message that forests are important for the quality of life of each and every individual, it should be “legible” for professors and illiterates alike.

The logo shows in an impressive way that forests are connected to our well-being in many ways and at many levels. For further information about forests, sustainable forestry and the International Year of Forests 2011 please go to: www.wald2011.de

1. The tree symbol



The logo is a stylised tree, with the crown consisting of twelve individual elements (so-called icons), the meaning of which will be explained in the following.

The tree as an over-arching logo represents the forests of this earth in all their variety and diversity: ranging from boreal coniferous forests to deciduous forests in the temperate climates and dry tree savannas of the subtropics to the impenetrable jungle of tropical rain forests.

At the same time the logo also represents our planet and creation per se. Creation is a coherent whole with different parts which interact in many different ways. Humans are an inextricable part of creation, it “supports“ and feeds them. They have a duty to preserve it.

The International Year of Forests 2011 aims to contribute towards ensuring that knowledge about these connections and the importance of forests for each individual is not forgotten in the highly automated, nature-alienated everyday life of our society.

2. The tree trunk as a “basis“

The tree trunk has the “supporting“ role in the logo and shows that trees are the distinguishing feature of the forest ecosystem and are hence the basis for many of the pivotal functions that forests fulfil. The tree trunk opening at the top and supporting the tree crown "with strong branches" symbolises the fact that the forests and their services represent an essential basis for the livelihood of more than a billion people in many regions and societies. In many regions, forests are a key basis for sustainable development.

Each of the forests of the world, which were formed under many different climatic and site conditions, has a typical composition of tree species and other plant species and is home to many animals and microorganisms. Natural forest communities are so elastic that, even if disruptions occur (for instance fires, storms or insect calamities), the structure of species in these communities returns to its original state after some time. This property also makes it possible to use wood sustainably without destroying the ecosystem.

3. The tree canopy

The tree canopy symbolises the multitude of productive, protective and social functions that are typical of forests, including the cultural and spiritual importance which trees and forests have in different parts of the earth. The selection displayed is intended to show the diversity and breadth of forest services, yet it does not claim to be exhaustive.

The tree canopy also stands for the fact that forests are much more than the sum of their trees. Many of the productive, protective and social functions described in the following are only generated by extensive interaction between forest trees, forest soil, forest-typical flora and fauna, air and water.

4. Humans at the centre

Humans consider themselves to be at the centre of creation, yet they are also an inextricable part of it. The logo shows the manifold and close interactions between humans and forests. On the one hand, humans utilise them, on the other hand they have a duty to preserve them. The different icons surrounding the human symbol in the logo reflect the close link between humans and forests. They symbolise these manifold interactions and represent the diversity of forest functions and uses. The logo consequently picks up on the diversity of social expectations and the demands on the forest and the resulting areas of conflicting interest.

5. Apple symbol

In Germany people have already mostly forgotten that many of our fruit species (fruit, berries and nuts) originate from forests. They were further developed by selection and breeding, and apart from a few exceptions (e.g. sweet chestnuts, forest berries and mushrooms) they are cultivated in the increasingly rare fruit-tree meadows, in gardens and mainly in fruit plantations.

In many other regions of this world the wild fruits of a forest and in particular many tree fruits still represent an important source of food and income for the local population and at the same time a stable part of regional and urban markets. Forest fruit from other countries – in some cases still from a gatherer economy, but today frequently cultivated in plantations – make a major contribution to our high quality of life in Germany: coffee, cocoa, coconut, oranges, bananas, mangos, avocados, papayas, olives, different nuts and many more fruits all enrich our diet.

6. Raincloud symbol

Forests are of major importance for the climate, at both regional and global level. The forest exerts a strong influence on the climate in the shade of its trees and in the surrounding area. It has a cooling effect in summer, it provides protection from wind and frost, and mitigates climatic extremes. It cleans the air of impurities and dust and it fulfils important functions in water cycles (see No. 7).

In addition, forests are an important element of the global carbon cycle: forests are an important carbon sink and they contribute to mitigating climate change. As a sink and source of CO₂, forests, and the productive use of forests, influence the concentration of this climate-impacting trace gas in the atmosphere and hence influence the global climate.

7. Water symbol

Forests can only grow if sufficient water is available. Water in its different forms (such as precipitation, soil moisture, groundwater and surface waters) is an essential prerequisite for forests. At the same time forests play a central role in local, regional and also global water cycles. They absorb water, store it and evaporate it.

Forests play a vital role in the formation of groundwater. Forest soils filter and clean the water and thus feed the groundwater with valuable clean seepage water. Forests protect the soil from erosion, make water drainage stable, and thus reduce the risk of flooding.

Forests are full of springs. Many brooks, rivers and streams originate in forests. At the same time they are important points for animals and plants regarding propagation and migration, but may also constitute natural barriers.

Moreover, they fulfil a function which has already been forgotten in Germany. In many forest regions, rivers are the only transport and access routes for the local population.

8. House symbol

Since time immemorial, forests have offered all important basic materials for the construction of human dwellings. In addition to a range of different materials from tree trunks, leaves and fruit, they are the source of the important raw material of wood. Wood from sustainable forestry is a permanently available source of raw materials with a wide range of possible uses and excellent ecological and economic benefits.

In many regions of the earth - including Germany - wood is still an indispensable raw material for many areas of life. It serves as a construction material for everyday objects including furniture and houses, at the same time it is an important source of energy. If produced sustainably, the use of wood is environmentally sound and CO₂-neutral. Wood and wood-based products are effective and often long-term carbon sinks (e. g. in housing construction).

The use of wood as a construction material or the use as an energy source can be helpful in reducing the consumption of fossil energies such as coal, crude oil or natural gas and hence the accumulation of carbon in the atmosphere. In this way, wood from sustainable production plays an important part in reflections on how to limit the greenhouse effect caused by humans.

9. Conifer branch symbol

The conifer branch stands for the boreal conifer forests. These forests only grow in the cold moderate climatic zone in the northern hemisphere (Scandinavia, Siberia, Mongolia, Canada and Alaska) and in high mountain areas. With some 1.4 billion hectares, boreal coniferous forests are the biggest coherent forest complex on earth and frequently only consist of very few tree species (e.g. firs, pines, spruces and larches) in their core areas. They are, however, inhabited by a large number of animal and plant species. Many plant species grow on the soil of these clear forests (shrubs, herbs, moss and lichen). In addition, boreal coniferous forests are home to more than 300 bird species and many mammals. Rivers and lakes in boreal coniferous forests are home to many different fish species, including many types of salmon. Despite the cold there are also many species of amphibians and reptiles.

Yet the needle branch also represents the most important tree species under forest management in the northern hemisphere. Conifers are not only present in the boreal climatic zone; they are also widely spread in the moderate climate zone. In Central Europe and also in Germany, spruces, for instance, are the forestry cash cow. The decisive factors for this species and for other species are their straight and rapid growth, the minimal demands placed on the site and the many possible uses of the wood. This includes the production of paper and pulp, being used for construction and furniture, and even to provide a resonance body musical instruments. In the highlands and steep slopes of our mountains, spruces fulfil an important protective function since, as closed forests, they protect the populated valleys from avalanches and rock slides.

10. Lizard symbol

This symbol stands for biodiversity and the abundance of species that live in forests. At global level, tropical, moderate and boreal forests together are home to the large majority of the terrestrial species on our earth.

This vast biodiversity of the forests is not just a natural habitat which must be protected, and a treasure for humankind; it is also the basis for many products and environmental services provided by the forests. After all, this biodiversity, which also goes hand in glove with genetic diversity, holds an immeasurable potential for future developments (pharmaceutical substances, food products, new materials etc.) and is hence also of considerable economic importance (venison, fruit and berries, medicinal plants and many more.).

11. Duck symbol

The symbol of the duck stands for the domestication of today's domestic and farm animals. Many of these animal species are originally descended from wild animals living in the forest (e.g. cattle, pigs, chicken and even insects such as bees and silk moths).

The domestication was based on the selection and isolation of individuals of a species in order to promote certain properties. The purpose of domestication is to use the animals as domestic or farm animals with the aim of securing a supply of raw materials and food products of animal origin more easily and more reliably than was possible by hunting and collecting. Later, animals were also domesticated because of their services as draught animals and animals of burden.

12. Tree-leaf symbol

This symbol stands for the forests in the moderate climatic zone. At global level they cover some 700 million hectares, in particular in North America, Europe and Asia. If left to nature, the moderate zone would be covered by forests almost entirely. There are exceptions caused by humidity (e. g. moors, fluvial plains), by aridity (e. g. on steep slopes) or by too short a vegetation period in high mountain regions.

Forests in this zone were used from very early on. Even as early as in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, there was large-scale clearing of trees because of the incipient population growth, and the emerging seafaring and economic development. After centuries of mismanagement, large areas were deforested; the introduction of a regulated forestry has been able to stop this development and partly reverse it.

12. Medicine bottle symbol

This symbol stands for the healing effect of the forest and its flora and fauna. There are countless medicinal plants growing in the forests of the earth. Many forest trees themselves contain valuable medicinal substances in their bark or leaves (ethereal oils, anti-inflammatory substances etc.) This knowledge can be found and is rooted in all primeval societies, yet today many people have forgotten this knowledge. Witch-doctors, shamans, herb wives or druids – they all obtain many of their medicinal herbs and active ingredients from the forest. Many active ingredients used in naturopathy have proven to be highly effective and have started to be used in our medicines. In regions without access to modern medicine, this is often the only possibility to get medical treatment.

The medicinal, or at least relaxing, effect of forest walks around here is put down not only to the physical exercise and the breathing of pure forest air, but also to the ethereal oils released into the air by forest trees and in particular conifers.

13. Deer symbol

This symbol stands for wildlife and for hunting. People have hunted in forests from as early as the Old Stone Age. Hunting was mainly aimed at obtaining food and in particular protein-rich food, but in addition it also supplied valuable animal products such as bones, skins/hides and tendons as tools for many areas of life. As a consequence of people beginning to settle and domesticate animals, hunting as a basis for one's livelihood took a back seat in many regions and became an instrument of wildlife management, forest protection and of leisure activities in natural surroundings.

In many developing countries, venison is still an important food for the rural population, and even in our region it is a popular addition to the normal menu.