



Three publications from Tapio – the left is about culture in the forest, the central presents "good silviculture", the right addresses extension services. Background photo Lobke Thijssen, Wikipedia commons

Tapio translates research into best practice

The Finnish organisation Tapio became the limited company Tapio Oy at the start of 2015."

The different Nordic countries have approached their forest extension programmes and communication in a variety of ways, often split between many organisations. Tapio is an exception, being almost the sole knowledge transfer organisation in Finland. A description of Tapio is, therefore, of interest to other Nordic countries.

Tapio's history spans more than 100 years. *Suomen Metsänhoitoyhdistys Tapio* ("Finnish forest management society") was founded as an NGO in 1907 and has since had the mission of promoting silviculture and good forest management. Tapio's responsibilities grew, and it became the central executive organisation for forest improvement activities, forestry planning and for providing extension



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Ritva Toivonen, head of Tapio. Photo: Tapio

services to forest professionals. On 1 January 2015, Tapio became a 100% state-owned organisation reporting to the Prime Minister's Office.

What does this change mean?

News & Views asked Ritva Toivonen, head of Tapio, to guide us.

– Despite the change of legal status, Tapio's mission remains the same as it has been for 100 years, she says. This is to gather, analyse and synthesise academic research and develop it into tools, methods and studies serving decision-making. The information must also be transferred into a form that it is as easy as possible to use. We target all levels, from practical forestry to business and policy.

– Being a limited company makes management and decision-making somewhat more straightforward. But, being business-based also means that all activities must have a customer.

She is convinced that the new status will enhance efficiency and customer-orientation.

The most important direct customer is the Finnish government, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture and



Forestry, who commission and finance studies and development projects. Indirect customers include forest industries, entrepreneurs, forest owners' organisations and private landowners. The second most important group of direct customers is the forest industry, followed by forest sector organisations.

Private landowners subscribe to the magazines and buy forestry-related books and tree seeds. Tapio's best practices and recommendations for forest management are most commonly delivered to landowners via forest management associations, other service providers, the forest industry or *Skogscentralen*.

Guidelines and tools

Typical examples of current projects include the development of guidelines for good forest management and tools for METSO (a voluntary forest nature protection programme).

– We develop a large number of best practice guidelines for specific purposes, such as for water management, timber and energy wood production, land use planning, she says. The best known is Tapio's recommendations for good forest management, which is a large collection of best practices for forest management for various landowners' strategies.

The mission also includes evaluation and analysis, for example of policy programmes within the EU and examining how they impact the Finnish forest sector.

– Our magazines, *Metsälehti* and *Metsälehti Makasiini*, are important direct channels to forest landowners. These are complemented by web services. The second most important channel is books, either digital or printed. We also offer education and training services, nowadays mainly e-based.

Together, Tapio and its subsidiary Metsäkustannus produce some 20–30 book titles per year. Some of the guidelines and handbooks are also free to download as pdf-files.

Knowledge portal for forest owners

The webpage *Metsään.fi* ("My forest") provides up-to-date information to registered users about their properties. Tapio was responsible for developing this, but transferred the concept and its maintenance to *Skogscentralen* in 2012. *Metsään.fi* can be used both by forest owners and forest professional partners to direct forest management activities. The service includes forest data, suggested actions, maps and air photographs of the property.

Close contact with academia

New findings from academia must, of course, be incorporated into guidelines on an on-going basis. This is a challenging task for Tapio, but Ritva Toivonen stresses that the relationship with universities and institutions is close.

– We have a continuous forum for developing best practices in forest management, where we bring together researchers and practitioners under various themes. However, my opinion is that this is an area in Tapio that needs even more focus and increased strength. The world is becoming increasingly complicated and we need to understand and be involved with an increasing number of disciplines.

The "best practice processes" follow well defined plans and targets for each year. Last year, almost 30 organisations participated.

For the landowner, the challenge is probably not access to information, but the fact that it is difficult to synthesise. What is science actually telling us about a forest management issue? To gain a complete picture it is necessary to analyse several research reports and areas of science.

– This is an area where Tapio brings added value, she says.

Read more:

www.tapio.fi (also in English) and www.metsalehti.fi (only in Finnish)

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About Tapio

The Tapio Group has a turnover of 11 M€ and a staff of 60 (about 20 in the parent company). The headquarters of the Tapio Group are in Helsinki, and affiliations (including the seed centre) are located in Oitti, near the city of Lahti.

Tapio Oy offers expert and development/research services exclusively to the government.

Tapio Silva Oy offers expert, extension and development/research services, training, and tree seeds from the Tapio seed centre. (100% owned)

Metsäkustannus Oy – a publishing company issuing the journals *Metsälehti* ("Forest newspaper") and *Metsälehti Makasiini*, as well as books (100% owned).

The Tapio Group also has a stake in **Pohjan Taimi Oy** – a producer of plants, equipment and services for forest regeneration. Tapio owns 29.6% of the company.

Forest knowledge dissemination in Finland

While Tapio is an important organisation specialising in knowledge transfer to professionals, research institutions and universities also disseminate their own work. This is however usually at the level of single projects/large programmes.

Luke (formerly Metla) publishes forestry statistical data, a task of great importance for practice and research.

The forest industry also has their own research company – **Metsäteho Oy** – which focuses on disseminating information on wood logistics.

In addition, the private organisation, **The Work Efficiency Association** (TTS), is active in research that is very close to practice and training related to forestry issues.

With a beard of lichen and eyebrows of moss

Tapio is a forest spirit or god of eastern Finland, who figures prominently in the Kalevala. Hunters prayed to him before a hunt. His wife is the goddess of the forest, Mielikki. He was the father of Annikki, Tellervo, Nyriikki (the god of hunting), and Tuulikki. Fitting the Green Man archetype, Tapio has a beard of lichen and eyebrows of moss.

Source: Wikipedia