

The family forest owners – key actors in Nordic forestry

Family forestry plays an important role in all the Nordic countries. This major sector of Nordic forestry, however, has recently undergone dramatic changes. Holdings have become smaller, fewer owners live on their land, and income from forestry, as well as levels of self-employment, has decreased over the last decade.

The family forester has now been the subject of a joint Nordic research project.

Over one million non-industrial private forest owners make up an important component of the Nordic forestry sector. Their holdings, often referred to as family forests, cover 59% of the total forested area in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Family forests are often located on the most productive land, and their contribution to timber supply is, thus, proportionally even greater:

In Finland, private forests supply 72% of industrial roundwood consumption, but account for only 61% of the forest land.

In Sweden, 51% of the forest area but 58% of the standing volume is in the hands of non-industrial private forest owners.



Photo: Yvonne Altemuz

Research project

The structure and trends associated with family forestry constitute a challenge for researchers. This was the incentive for the joint Nordic pilot project "Family forestry – future challenges and needs".

The project describes the current state of family forestry. In addition, it identifies the priority areas for cooperative research between Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark, with respect to self-employed forest owners.

The most important topic identified was firewood processing and safety. This topic was ranked top in all countries except Denmark, where Christmas tree production was ranked higher.

The research topic identified, collectively, as the second most important was the economics of self-employment, as it influences both individuals and society as a whole.

Other prioritised areas were silviculture, productivity and economics.

Some hard facts about Nordic non-industrial private forests (NIPF), according to the project:

	Sweden	Finland	Norway	Denmark
Total forest area (million ha)	22.5	20.3	7.0	0.5
% owned by NIPF	51	61	79	46
Average NIPF holding (ha)	55	37	57	9
Average NIPF age (yrs)	53	57		53
Number of NIPF owners (1000s)	322	600	123	26

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Read more: Nordfjell, T., Kettunen, A., Vennesland, B. & Suacidani, K. 2005. Family forestry – future challenges and needs. SLU, Arbetsrapport 145, 30 p. The report can be downloaded from **the SNS webpage**

www.nordicforestresearch.org

All goods have a price

– new value-chains in forestry

Research can increase the income from forestry, thus enhancing the rural economy.

Over the last 20–30 years, the income from timber sales in Nordic forestry has decreased. This negative trend will probably continue. It is, therefore, important to find new complementary income streams especially for those living in the countryside.

An assessment initiated by SNS suggests that the Nordic Council of Ministers should set aside resources for a proactive research program in three parts:

1. Economic development based on the forest in rural areas

Tourism and recreation may become important income sources from forests. But how should forest management be adapted to meet the needs of these activities? And how should tourism and recreation be paid for? One potential source of income from forests may be compensation for common benefits, such as biodiversity. But how should such benefits be valued, and how can they be marketed?

2. Forest, carbon and climate

The Nordic forests have great potential for carbon storage. But how should they be managed to optimize carbon storage and energy production? And how should conflicts with other environmental goals, such as biodiversity, be minimized? Focus should be placed on carbon stored in the soil. The amount is considerable, and it is important that we learn how to manage forests to avoid this carbon being released into the atmosphere.

Hunting and other outdoor activities can increase the income from a forest property.

Photo: Mats Hannerz



3. Increased use of wood

The value of the forests would increase if more wood was used as a building material. To increase such use, it is necessary that:

- a) wooden products are more homogenous, less prone to deformation and more resistant to fire, rot and pests. Technical developments are needed.
- b) research results are available to support the efficient and reliable marketing of wood products.

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You can download the report "Verdikeder i skogsektoren" (only in Norwegian) from www.nordicforestresearch.org



Nordic meeting discussed the value-chains

The report "New value-chains in forestry" was presented at "The Nordic forest conference 2005", held in Nödebo, Denmark, 29–30 August

The conference attracted 73 delegates, including Gudni Agustsson, the Icelandic Minister for Agriculture, Connie Hedegaard, Denmark's Environment Minister, and Pekka Pesonen and Jonas Bjelfvenstam, the state secretaries of Finland and Sweden, respectively, to name but a few.

The final recommendations of the conference included:

- To encourage more dialog between citizens, government, forest owners, industry and NGOs with respect to forests.
- To develop wood products and market the use of wood.
- To identify and remove red-tape and regulations that adversely affect the profitable utilization of forests and forest products.
- To promote forest management and wood utilization whilst also considering the local and global environment.
- To develop the role of forests as an attractive housing environment and for recreation.
- To promote added value through goal-oriented and strengthened Nordic research cooperation (through SNS).

"New value-chains in forestry" was presented at the Nordic meeting by Lisa Sennerby-Forse, head of Formas in Sweden.

Photo: Formas



Swedes find forests important for their well-being

Eight out of ten Swedes claim that it is important for their well-being to have access to forests. Three out of four visit a forest at least once a week. These were some of the findings of a survey on values and opinions related to the forests and their future use, conducted by the Swedish National Board of Forestry.

Two contrasting opinions are highlighted by the study: that forests are suppliers of raw material for industry, and that they are important for health, recreation and experiencing Nature. The first opinion is espoused by the forest industry, the second by nature organizations, county and community administrators, and a majority of the public. The opinions of modern private forest owners fall halfway between the two, according to the survey.

Poor understanding of forestry

Public opinions were surveyed using questionnaires sent out to a random sample of Swedish citizens between 16 and 79 years old. In addition, representatives of other groups were interviewed.

The analysis shows that the modern urban citizen has a very poor understanding of the forests as suppliers of raw materials. On the other hand, the

forest industry does not pay sufficient attention to public concerns and wishes related to the forests, according to the survey.

Forests enhance public health

Although most people live in cities today, as many as 50% of the interviewees were raised in the countryside. Also, young people, born in the period 1974–1980, have quite a “rural” background, since 40% of them claim to have been raised in the countryside.

The perceived importance of the forests differed only marginally between city dwellers and people in the countryside. The authors of the survey conclude that forests are important for all people, regardless of where they live. Only four percent of the public indicated that the forest is unimportant for them.

The forests enhance public health, nature conservation, preservation of cultural features and recreation. These are the primary concerns that should determine the use of the forests, according to the survey. The forest as a producer of wood raw material or game had a much lower ranking.

Walking and exercise

Three out of four Swedes visit the forest at least once a week. This is a rather high figure, compared with earlier investigations. It is explained by the use of a wider definition of a “forest visit”.

The main activity in the forest is simply walking. Over 90% claim that they take a walk in the forest at least once a year. The distance to the forest is an important factor for the visit frequency. In the countryside, 20% of people visit the forests daily, while only 6% of the people in the large cities do so.

Exercising is the second most common activity in the forests. More than one in four respondents exercise in the forest every week.

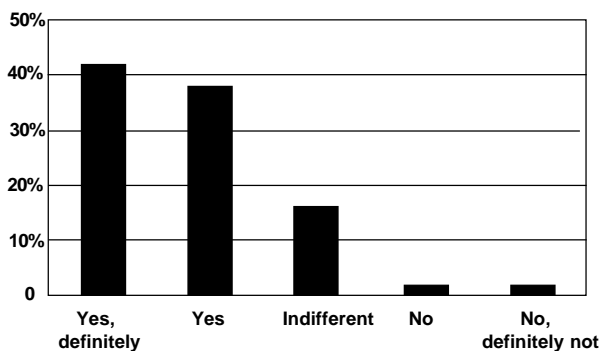
Picking mushrooms or berries is also still a common activity. Seventy percent do so at least once a year, and about 30% use the forests for hunting or fishing at least once a year.

Very few people work in the forest. Only one percent claim that they work in the forest on a daily basis, and 18% that they work there at least once a year.

Source: www.svo.se

Photo: Skogforsk

Is it necessary for your well-being to be in the forest?



SNS and the journal gain exposure in Australia

This year, the IUFRO world congress, which is held every five years, attracted 2100 forest researchers from 96 countries around the world.

During the one week congress in August 2005, they shared their knowledge through over 900 presentations, 800 posters and 75 in-conference excursions.

The location was Brisbane, Australia, and the theme was "Forests in the balance – linking traditions and technology".

SNS (the Nordic Forest Research Cooperation Committee), as well as its journal, the *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*, was there. Josh Kolltveit, head of SNS, and Mats Hannerz, scientific editor of the journal, manned a stand in the exhibition hall, and disseminated

information to delegates about SNS, Nordic forest research and the *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*.

The Nordic countries were well represented at the conference. Among the delegates, 16 were from Denmark, 55 from Sweden, 17 from Norway and

71 from Finland.

The previous congress, in 2000, was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and the next, in 2010, will be hosted by Seoul in Korea.

Read more on www.iufro2005.com

Mats Hannerz, the editor of Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research (left), and Josh Kolltveit, chairman of SNS (right) at the exhibition booth in Brisbane.



Shortcuts

Less stress in green surroundings

Nature has a positive impact on health and spiritual well-being, at least according to 93% of the respondents to a survey by Forest and Landscape in Denmark.

Karsten Bruun Hansen sent a questionnaire to 2000 Danes aged between 18 and 80 years. Generally, people enjoy walking, cycling, gardening or relaxing in green surroundings.

The research also revealed the links between stress and

the natural environment. The closer people lived to nature, the less stressed they were. Even more important was the frequency of visits to natural places. Stress levels were substantially lower for those visiting natural areas four times a week compared to those visiting only once a week.

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Source: www.sl.kvl.dk

Finland's forests among the healthiest in Europe

In 2004, the mean defoliation, i.e. premature loss of needles and leaves, of trees growing on mineral soils was 9.1% for Scots pine, 19.2% for Norway spruce and 12.5% for broad-leaved trees. Compared to the level in the rest of Europe, coniferous forests in Finland suffer less defoliation.

Defoliation in Finland is mainly the result of stand aging, unfavourable climate and weather conditions, and

damage caused by fungi and insects.

Since 1985, Finland has participated in the UN-financed pan-European Forest Condition Monitoring Programme (ICP Forests), and since 1995, monitoring activities have been funded and coordinated by the EU.

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