

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL POLICY AND REGIONAL PLANNING

OPINION

for the Committee on Agriculture
on the Motion for a Resolution (Doc 1-122/80)
on Community forestry policy
tabled by Mr Maher on behalf of the Liberal
and Democratic Group

Draftsman: Mr BLANEY

12.1.82

On 13 May, 1981 the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning appointed Mr BLANEY as draftsman.

The Committee considered the draft opinion at its meeting on 26 November, 1981 and adopted it unanimously.

Present : Mr DE PASQUALE (President), Mr BLANEY (draftsman), Miss BOOT, Mrs EWING, Mrs FUILLET, Mr GENDEBIEN, Mr O'DONNELL, Mr TRAVAGLINI, Mr J.D. TAYLOR.

1. In its Communication to the Council, on December 6, 1978, about "Forestry Policy in the European Community" the Commission stated that:

'Because of its multiple functions forestry policy influences and is influenced by other policies at both the national and Community levels There are strong links with agricultural and regional policy because large areas of forest and of marginal and submarginal agricultural land which is suitable for forestry occur in the poorest regions of the Community where forestry and the industries based on it provide opportunities for employment and help to ensure a reasonable standard of living for the local population.' (1)

and added that:

'Forests cannot be managed sensibly if their various functions and links with other policies are considered separately and piecemeal.' (2)

The Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning fully endorses that view.

2. Forestry is relevant to regional policy in the following ways:

- (i) as a source of employment, providing jobs without which many more people would be forced to leave outlying and country areas. Expansion of forestry can mean new jobs both in exploiting existing forests and in afforestation. In addition, it has been estimated that for one job in planting, five jobs result in exploitation and processing of wood;
- (ii) as a source of income for small farmers, enabling them to achieve a level of income sufficient for remaining on the land;
- (iii) as a source of energy. This is an aspect the significance of which has only been realised very recently, thanks to the growing volume of research into bio-mass. It is sufficient in itself to justify a new look at forestry potential and a new effort to stimulate its development;

(1) 'Forestry Policy in the European Community'. Communication from the Commission to the Council, 6 Dec. 1978.

(2) Idem para 4.

3. Forestry policy offers a unique chance to make a major contribution to the Community's balance of payments equilibrium, whilst at the same time helping with the economic development of many of the least-favoured regions. Wood is currently the second largest item after oil, in the Community's import bill: only 40% of timber requirements are met from Community sources, and consumption is rising twice as fast as production. Yet the Commission in its 1978 memorandum identified a potential for increasing wood availability from indigenous sources by over a quarter in the short run, and for more than doubling it in the long run. (3) In addition, the use of forestry for energy production - wood residues currently going to waste, forests not otherwise commercially exploitable, and short rotation forestry for bio-mass - can make a far from negligible contribution to energy needs, and thus indirectly also to reducing the energy import bill. By far the largest part of the potential for the development of forestry is in the poorer agricultural regions, and this fully justifies treating forestry policy as a priority instrument for regional development. An area of forestry which will also require particular attention, especially with Portuguese accession in prospect, is the production of cork, and this too can furnish an important element in the development of some of the most disadvantaged areas of the Community.

4. There are four main ways in which wood production could be raised, bringing direct advantages to the regions involved in terms of employment and level of economic activity, namely:

- (i) increased harvest from existing forests. According to the Commission there are 19 mi ha of 'productive high forest', where an immediate increase of 10 mi m³ of wood production (over the existing 80 mi m³ per annum) could be achieved by additional harvesting from mature stands and harvesting of thinnings in young stands. In the longer run careful choice of species, efficient management and use of research could yield a further 35 mi m³ per annum. The implications for the level of forestry activity in the regions involved are evident;
- (ii) rendering other forest productive. An estimated 4 mi ha of the Community's remaining 12 mia ha. could be made productive by clearance and re-planting with suitable species. Most of this is land owned by small woodland owners: 2,950,000 out of the 3 mi. woodland owners in the Community have less than 50 ha, and as most are farmers or local residents, so there would be an assured

(3) Idem Main elements para 37

impact both on the incomes of smaller farmers owning woodland, and on regional economies. The potential extra yield is estimated at 24 mi m³ per annum;

(iii) the use of bare land or abandoned former farming land.

The Commission estimates that there are at least 4 mi. ha. of land that has become sub-marginal for farming but is eminently suitable for timber growing: this could be used either for afforestation or for bio-mass production using short rotation forestry. A considerable amount of this land is in Ireland and the United Kingdom. If the 4 mi. ha. were to be afforested the Commission estimates an additional production of 24 mi m³ of timber per year. An afforestation programme of this kind would have considerable regional benefits in terms of employment and of stimulus to the regional economies.

(iv) conversion of agricultural land to forestry. Given the low return on capital value of land afforested, and the long timelags, there is little incentive to farmers to turn over part of their land to forestry. But the situation may have been radically altered by the rapid development of bio-mass techniques, in conjunction with rising energy prices. Partial conversion of land to forestry could provide farmers in poorer regions with a complement to their income from farming.

Forestry as a source of energy.

5. In its Communication of 1978 the Commission devoted only one line to forestry as a source of energy ('in the long run the use of wood ... as a source of energy may open up large and valuable new markets') adding with a caution characteristic of its approach to alternative energy sources that 'the desirability of a more intensive research effort in this field deserves close attention'. (4) There was no reference to energy in the draft Council resolution. Since then things have moved fast, and the small solar energy unit in the Commission's directorate-general for research has done pioneering work on the energy potential of bio-mass in the Community. (5)

(4) Idem para 30

(5) Cf Energy from Biomass: 1st EC Conference Ed. Palz & Chartier, applied Science Publishers

It is already clear that energy production, both from more efficient use of forest and wood waste and from energy plantations, must in future be an integral and important part of forestry policy. It brings with it further promise of development possibilities for the regions.

6. Forest and wood waste as energy source. Some 8-10 % of wood production in the Community is currently used directly as fuel. A recent Commission study notes moreover that with rising energy costs farmers in France have been having increasing resource to woodland which they own as a fuel source. (6)

However, there is massive wastage of wood at all stages of both harvesting and processing. Commission experts consider that large wood surpluses and wastes could be locally available for energy production (7). They quote claims that 25 % of the forests in France are under-exploited. (8) At present 'typically 45 % of the produce is left in forests on harvesting in the form of tops, branches, stumps and roots, etc! Large quantities of waste arise in the wood processing industries. Overall the estimate given for wood waste potentially available in the Community, expressed in terms of its energy potential, is 16.3 million tonnes oil equivalent. (7)

To this may be added the fact that if a programme of clearance and up-grading of forests were embarked upon, there could be considerable additional supplies available for energy production on a once-off basis.

7. Planted forest sources of energy. Forest energy plantations are one of the 'energy crops' being investigated as part of current research on bio-mass as an energy source. Interest is concentrated on 'short rotation forestry' using tree species with high growth rates, and in particular deciduous hardwoods with renewable growth from cut stumps (as with traditional coppiced plantations for construction poles, and annual cuttings of willows for basket-making). (9).

Many complex factors determine the suitability of land for short rotation forestry: high annual rainfalls are vital, and the most promising areas are marginal land unsuitable for agriculture (uneven topography, sand dunes, marshes). In the Community it is only in Ireland

(6) The Role of Small Woodlands in Rural Areas. Commission of the EC DG for Agriculture Doc. VI/2345/80, pp 210-211. This document also contains valuable general comments on the value of forestry for regional development Cf pp 229 and 303 especially.

(7) Cf Energy from Biomass in Europe. Ed Palz & Chartier, Applied Science Publishers p 93.

(8) Commission of the European Communities, Energy Research and Development Programme 1978

(9) Energy from Biomass in Europe op.cit. p 121

and possibly Scotland and France, that substantial reserves of such land are available.

The Irish Central Statistical Office reports up to 2.2 mi. ha of land unused for agriculture, (10) and with high rainfall much of it could be suitable for short rotation forestry, especially worked-out peat land, where forestry work is already being carried out. Ireland already has the highest rate of afforestation in the Community, running at 10,000 ha per year. But this figure itself indicates the potential that remains to be exploited.

From the regional point of view it is important to note that short rotation forestry offers the best prospects in large-scale projects, in low-population areas. But because of the cultivation, fertilisation, irrigation and harvesting needed, it is a labour-intensive activity offering serious employment prospects for the regions.

8. Energy plantations, and in particular short rotation forestry, thus offer new perspectives. Further research is needed on the relative advantages of conventional forestry (which has its own yield in biomass terms from use of wastes) and of energy plantations, taking into account the full range of considerations: employment, regional development, environment, etc. This would seem to be a task to be undertaken by the Commission, in close cooperation with the national authorities, as a prolongation of its existing research work on bio-mass. A full picture of the potential of the Community for additional wood and energy production, under an optimum scenario, would be a useful background to national and Community programmes.

There is a link that should not be neglected between the use of cork for insulation, as part of widespread energy saving campaigns, and the expansion of cork production with its potential contribution to employment and to regional development in certain areas.

Action so far by the Community.

9. The Commission's first proposals on forestry, (for a directive on measures to encourage afforestation and conversion of forests) were tabled in 1974, but little progress was made by the Council. In a Communication with a draft Council resolution, tabled in December 1978, the Commission expressed its intention "to propose the development of a common forestry policy, but only in the sense of having some clearly defined objectives and principles of national forestry policy which are common to all member states." (11)

(10) Idem p 123

(11) Forestry policy ... op cit Intro para 4

By May 1981 agreement seemed near, but with the Federal German delegation insisting that the Resolution must involve no extra charge on the Community budget, 'either within or without the EAGGF'....

10. Under a Council Regulation of February 1979 (12) 184 mi. EUAs are being spent over five years on programmes for afforestation, improvement of forests, forest roads and fire protection in the Italian mezzogiorno and the French Midi. This might have seemed the start of a regional approach to forestry policy, but has not been followed by other measures.

11. The programme for the improvement of farm structures in the Western counties of Ireland (13), adopted by the Council in 1980, includes provision for the afforestation of 24,000 ha. of marginal agricultural land over ten years. The aim is to stimulate farmers to undertake private forestry schemes on parts of their land marginal for farming; grant aid ranges from 70 to 85 % of approved costs.

12. Under the Commission's solar energy research programme, a series of projects under the heading bio-mass deal with the energy potential of forestry: use of forest waste, thinnings, and coppice wood for bio-mass; and short rotation forestry.

Recommendations.

13. The Committee on Regional Development and Regional Planning notes with regret the failure of the Council to make any real progress towards a common forestry policy for the Community, along the lines proposed by the Commission. The major differences in the structure and the relative importance of forestry from one member country to another offer only a partial explanation. There seems to have been a systematic reluctance on the part of national authorities to see greater Community involvement. To this must be added specific reticence on the part of some governments about the prospect of additional burdens on the Community budget - whatever the potential benefits to the Community as a whole. The Commission for its part has done less than it might have done to promote its point of view.

(12) Official Journal of the EC No 117 of 20.5.1978

(13) Official Journal L 38 of 14.2.1979

14. The Committee considers that in these circumstances the Commission should be urged to approach forestry pragmatically, from the triple angle of wood production (and its relevance to the balance of payments), regional policy and energy policy. An up-dated Communication from the Commission should be produced as a matter of urgency, assessing the potential of forestry from these three angles. Such a document should make allowance for the differing situation and potential of the different regions. It should recommend measures to be taken nationally, and should outline specific proposals for Community action (research, development projects, etc.) to promote the expansion of forestry.

15. Whilst the potential of forestry is not difficult to identify, the obstacles to expansion of production are considerable. The economics of conventional forestry, with low return on capital, make it unattractive to investors. Adequate measures to ensure that the returns in the sector were comparable to those in other sectors could unleash considerable resources from institutional investors (insurance funds, pension funds, etc.). Study needs to be made of the scope for a formula involving annuities. By contrast with other major wood-producing countries, there is little forest ownership by forest industries. The wide spread of ownership of private forest among some three million owners is not conducive to rapid change. It is the view of the Committee that the Commission should be asked by the Parliament to study, and if possible make practical recommendations or submit formal proposals on, the following:

- tax structures and their impact on forestry, in particular the scope for removing disincentives to the exploitation of forests
- measures to overcome the particularities of the forestry sector which render it less attractive to institutional and other investors
- subsidies for thinning, in particular to permit conversion of coppice to more productive high forest. This has a particular regional angle, for as the Commission has pointed out, while the price of wood of small dimensions may be low in relation to the cost of harvesting, the value added in processing and the impact on the economy of a region can be great. (14)
- transfer to public ownership. The Commission should examine the possibility of extending the system applying in several Länder of the Federal Republic, whereby a private owner is allowed the choice between transferring his forest on advantageous terms to the public authority, or monetary compensation, subsidies or tax reliefs. This system applies in the Länder to measures owners are required to take for environmental reasons, but its extension to more efficient forest exploitation should be examined. (15)

(14) Forestry policy. op cit. Main elements para 32

(15) The role of small woodlands op cit. p 303

- improved information. Greater availability of information on forest management, new techniques, and new possibilities now opening up (e.g. short rotation forestry) is vital if small private owners are to be stimulated to contribute to a major expansion of forestry.

16. The European Investment Bank has so far made no loans specifically for forestry. The Bank should be encouraged to include both forestry development, afforestation and energy plantation in the range of projects which it finances.

17. The Commission and Council should be encouraged to allocate more funds to bio-mass research, where the number of projects submitted far exceeds current resources. The Committee wishes to emphasise the advantages in terms of regional development, as well as of energy policy, that are to be expected from this research.

18. The relevance of forest care and maintenance, and of afforestation, to the development of tourism as an economic activity in outlying and disadvantaged regions is considerable. With pollution, irresponsible development and over-crowding reducing the appeal of the coasts on the one hand, and the trend to longer holidays increasing demand on the other, there is a potential here that should be taken fully into account in regional planning, and in assessing the social as well as the economic viability of forestry programmes. Given the Europe-wide dimension of tourism, it should fall within the competence of the Commission to ensure that this aspect (even if dealt with primarily in other institutional contexts, such as the Council of Europe) is taken fully into account in approaches to forestry policy.

19. The Committee for Regional Development and Regional Planning is of the opinion that the Parliament should express its regret at the restrictive and piecemeal approach of the Council towards action in the forestry field. It should express the hope that a new approach from the Commission, stressing the urgent need for a major expansion of forestry activity, from the point of view of wood production (and the foreign trade balance), regional policy (employment, farm incomes, tourism) and energy policy, will meet with a positive response from the Council and from the Member States. It should urge the Commission to adopt this new approach and to do so with a sense of urgency matching the challenge and the opportunities existing for the Community in this field.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

OPINION

for the Committee on Agriculture

on the motion for a resolution tabled
by Mr Maher on behalf of the Liberal
and Democratic Group on Community
forestry policy (Doc. 1-122/80)

Draftsman: Mr M. Mertens

5 October 1982

OPINION

of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

Draftsman: Mr M. MERTENS

On 5 February 1982 the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection appointed Mr M. MERTENS draftsman. It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 25 May and 21 September 1982 and at the latter meeting adopted it unanimously with one abstention.

The following took part in the vote: Mr COLLINS, chairman; Mr McCARTIN, vice-chairman; Mr JOHNSON, vice-chairman; Mrs WEBER, vice-chairman; Mr MERTENS, draftsman; Mr ALBER, Mr BERKHOUWER, Mr BOMBARD, Mr CERAVOLO (deputizing for Mr Spinelli), Mr DEL DUCA, Mr EISMA (deputizing for Mrs Spaak), Mr FORTH, Mr GHERGO, Mrs VAN HEMELDONCK, Miss HOOPER, Mrs KROUWEL-VLAM, Mrs LENTZ-CORNETTE, Mr MUNTINGH, Mr REMILLY, Mrs SEIBEL-EMMERLING, Mr SHERLOCK and Mrs SQUARCIALUPI.

1. The objectives of a common or coordinated Community forestry policy, viz:

- to preserve and improve the environment,
- to promote the recreational function of forests,
- to increase wood production,

will naturally be considered by our committee from the point of view of the environment.

2. It can generally be assumed that forestry and silviculture are equivalent to environmental protection and soil conservation. Wood production and the preservation of natural growth are not only compatible, they are dependent on each other. The more naturally silviculture and forestry exploitation are pursued - exploitation in this case of course being taken to mean 'in accordance with the rules of forestry' - the easier it is for environmental considerations to be respected. In other words, the more naturally forests are exploited, the more valuable they are from the ecological point of view.

3. In this context it is encouraging that in some Community countries the area covered by forests, even in densely-populated regions, has not receded in recent years and has, in fact, slightly increased. This means that the local recreational facilities for people living in densely-populated areas have not only been preserved but improved. The importance of forests in providing recreational facilities cannot be overestimated. However, it is regrettable that in other countries the areas covered by forests have been reduced or jeopardized by the uncontrolled influence of the human population.

4. From the point of view of environmental protection forests are extremely important on account of:

- (a) the formation and preservation of specific eco-systems,
- (b) the stabilization of the soil,
- (c) their role in shaping the landscape and nature,
- (d) formation of oxygen and the filtering of the air,
- (e) the absorption of pollutants,
- (f) water cleaning, assimilation and retention after rainfall,
- (g) their contribution to soil fertility through humus formation,
- (h) the protection of the land from hydrogeological disturbances,
- (i) the conservation of a wide variety of game and specific fauna.

5. From the point of view of environmental protection, forestry implies:

- (a) the conservation of natural woodlands,
- (b) tending the forests, thinning-out existing forest areas and avoiding high fire risks, especially during periods of drought,
- (c) reafforestation of de-forested areas,
- (d) reafforestation of bare land,
- (e) conversion into forests of agricultural areas yielding marginal returns.

6. Reafforestation measures involve a careful selection of tree varieties and the application of research for these purposes. It is important for the knowledge of those concerned with silviculture and forest exploitation in Europe to be improved. In this connection the idea of ecological mapping agreed in the Second Environment Programme should be used for Europe's woods and forests to provide surveys and maps drawn up scientifically which take account of the various regional characteristics of the forests and indicate all important data.

7. In each case it is essential to select tree varieties which the latest research has shown to be the best suited to the climate and soil of the region concerned. These criteria indicate deciduous trees as being particularly suitable, all the more so since they have great recreational and ecological value and are comparatively resistant to forest fires. Their cultivation should therefore be promoted.

8. Reafforestation programmes can also be coordinated with projects for the active involvement of the local population in the preservation of forests or for the use of available land for agriculture combined with forestry (agro-forestry), which can yield economically favourable results while respecting ecological requirements-

9. Consideration should also be given to the vast tracts of forest, often under multiple ownership, which are no longer economically viable because of the steep gradient of the land and the lack of infrastructures and which are therefore abandoned, creating areas of high risk for man and nature.'

10. The production of hardwoods will in the long term reduce the need to import exotic varieties of hardwoods. At the same time, the last remaining tropical rainforests, which are the richest ecosystems in the world, will consequently stand a greater chance of survival since they will no longer have to serve as a source of hardwoods for the Community.'

11. Reforestation is of particular importance in the Mediterranean area, although the situation there is quite different from that of Northern Europe. In that area the problem is not to preserve beautiful forests - although that would be desirable - but, on account of erosion and for the conservation of flora and fauna, it is also important to plant brushwoods.

Greater efforts also need to be made in the Mediterranean region to prevent the gigantic forest fires that occur every year. What is the point of years of painstaking reforestation when every year thousands of hectares are lost because of forest fires? There surely remains much to be done in this area to make the forests more productive or to encourage their purchase by the public administrations in order to ensure their maintenance and surveillance, appropriate infrastructures and also selection of the right method of planting.

12. Given their importance for the environment, the life of forests should be extended as much as possible (in terms of sustained yield and cutting cycles). Particular care must be taken to preserve those areas of forest which are of special value (protective, recreational and natural woodlands). Since they provide a suitable environment (ecosystem) for biotopes or for symbiosis, they should be accorded the appropriate treatment and necessary minimum surface areas.

13. The European Community's requirements of wood and wood products are considerable. After energy imports these products represent the second largest negative item in the European balance of payments. If the tropical forests continue to shrink at the present rate - according to the Global 2000 report one third of the present tropical rain forests will have disappeared by the year 2000 - the countries outside Europe will soon no longer be in a position to meet the rising demand for wood and wood products.

14. The European Community should now start using its influence to ensure that political measures and development aid prevent the grubbing-up and de-forestation of the tropical forests with all the negative ecological and economic consequences resulting from the exhaustion of natural resources.

15. The above consideration also implies an immediate need to plant forests everywhere in Europe where it is possible to do so and for this purpose the most appropriate method of planting should be sought, taking account of soil and climatic conditions and all other important ecological factors.

16. In this connection there are, from the point of view of environmental protection, three problem areas:

- (a) The preservation of the overall forest stand appears to be jeopardized by increasing environmental pollution, in particular SO₂ emissions and the formation of 'acid rain' resulting from the cumulative effects of various pollutants and chemical reactions. The precise causes of the formation of 'acid rain' are not yet fully known. Nevertheless, European legislation on emissions and nuisances should be introduced to put a stop to atmospheric pollution. This legislation should include, in addition to SO₂, the other main gas compounds and heavy metal dusts, such as cadmium, zinc, chromium, nickel and lead.

These problems can no longer be solved by individual states on their own responsibility. Atmospheric pollution knows no frontiers. It would therefore seem urgent from the point of view of forestry policy for regulations to be introduced at Community level.

Reports of the death of spruce, pine, fir and beech trees in the Black Forest, the Bavarian Forest and the Solling have recently become increasingly frequent and show that this problem is particularly urgent.

- (b) Chemicals are used in forestry as in agriculture, albeit to a much lesser extent, to destroy weeds and combat pests. After the all-too-incautious use of these products in the past it is now important for the use of chemicals to be kept to an absolute minimum. Exceptions should be made only in cases where the massive presence of pests makes their use unavoidable. In such cases only the absolute minimum amount should be used and the greatest caution should be observed. It would also seem appropriate for those using these substances to be appropriately informed and trained and for the equipment used for this purpose to be subject to technical supervision.
- (c) The inadequate care and attention which most European forests receive is to be regretted for ecological as well as for other reasons and above all because of the fire risks. It must be the aim of forestry policy to use the specific structure of this economic sector, characterized by a large number of small forest owners, for the conservation and care of the forest. The utilization of brushwood obtained during deforestation and which is particularly labour-intensive and unproductive is a problem here.

17. The Committee on Agriculture is requested in its opinion to take account of the following requirements for a European forestry policy from the environmental point of view:

- (a) The coordination of forestry policy in the Community would seem urgent from the point of view of environmental protection. It is necessary to obtain a scientific basis for subsequent measures by implementing the ecological mapping provisions of the Second Environment Programme in respect of Europe's woods and forests.
- (b) The reforestation of deforested areas (particularly in the Mediterranean regions), of bare land and agricultural land yielding marginal returns should be encouraged.
- (c) Equal importance should be attached in all forestry measures to the protection of nature and ecological conservation, but overlapping between nature protection legislation and forestry legislation should be avoided.
- (d) The protection and conservation of Europe's forests should be ensured by appropriate legislation on emissions and nuisances at european level.
- (e) The withdrawal of ground water, which has a destructive influence on the viability of forests, must be stopped by responsible planning.
- (f) The same applies to the cross-cutting of forest stands by roads, supply pipelines and housing development.
- (g) It would be highly desirable for the Commission to make a proposal for joint action to combat forest fires, involving:
 - the pooling and coordination of manpower, equipment and technical resources and
 - a programme of mutual assistance to combat major fires (similar to the disaster relief programme which has been called for).

Aware of the great damage which is caused by forest fires, the committee stresses:

- the urgent need to achieve a quantitative and qualitative improvement in essential forest fire-fighting equipment and techniques,
 - and, specifically in order to finance such measures, to earmark funds in proportion to the danger and damage which may be caused.
- (h) The practical training of forest owners, especially in the use of pesticides and in the field of utilization and marketing of brushwood should be encouraged.

- (i) Better agricultural structure, especially in the Mediterranean countries, is essential for the success of economic measures. This means that there must be no more overutilization of forests and agricultural areas as is constantly happening at present, because of poverty, in the form of overgrazing in agricultural and wooded areas.
- (j) The only practical measure so far implemented at European level - the regulation in favour of certain zones in the Mediterranean area of the Community (southern Italy and the south of France) - makes available 184 million EUA over five years for afforestation, improvement of deteriorated woodlands, the laying of forest paths and protection against fire. The fire protection measures are of particular importance from the environmental point of view, firstly because gigantic forest fires release enormous quantities of CO₂ and secondly because the destruction of woodlands has ecologically adverse consequences.
- (k) These measures - especially fire protection measures - should be intensified, their renewal guaranteed after five years and extended to other regions of the Community.
- (l) The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection draws particular attention to the fact that the Albertini Report (1979) on the communication from the Commission of the European Community to the Council on the forestry policy of the Community covers all the main points of a common forestry policy in detail. The same applies to the opinion drawn up by Mrs Squarzialupi on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection for the Albertini report.
- All the environmental problems set out in those documents and the resulting demands can still be reiterated today.
- (m) It seems utterly incomprehensible to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection that the same demands have been made by Members of Parliament year after year without any results being achieved, that the Commission has devoted so much work and effort to relevant programmes, proposals and communications to the Council and the Council is still unable - or unwilling - to take the appropriate decisions.