



# Estonia

**Estonia is one of Europe's smallest countries with a land area of 43,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1.4 million. Estonia will join the EU in 2004.**

**Forestry is one of the most important branches of the nation's economy. In 2001, forest products accounted for more than 13% of the total value of Estonian exports.**

The area of forest land in Estonia has more than doubled since the second world war, to cover 2.3 million hectares. That is 51.5 % of Estonia's mainland territory.

Privatisation of land started soon after independence from Soviet occupation in 1991. In 2002, 37% of the forests were private, while another 25% were in the process of being privatised.

There are today about 60,000 forest owners, whose average property covers just 12 hectares. Only a few of them are members of a private foresters association. About 10% of the Estonian forests belong to foreign investors.

## Pine and birch dominate

Scots pine is the most important tree species of the Estonian forests (covering 32% of the forested area), followed by birch species (31%),

Norway spruce (19%), grey alder (8.5%) and aspen (5%). However, there are marked differences in the distribution of dominant tree species between private and state-owned forests:

- Conifers constitute 60% of the area in state-owned forests, where pine is the dominant species.
- Private forests have more equal shares of Scots pine (28%), birch (31%) and Norway spruce (25%). In addition, grey and black alder are important on private land, and alder is also an important species in the wood industry.

## Increasing harvest

The annual harvest has increased rapidly during the last decade, from 2.5 million m<sup>3</sup> in 1993 to 6.4 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2000. Most of the wood is taken from final fellings, but the size of thinnings has also increased.

## Multiple purposes

Four national parks have been established and state-owned forests are certified through the Forest Stewardship Council.

To a large extent the forests are used for multiple purposes, including production of timber and other goods, environmental protection, recreation and tourism.

Everyone has rights to public access and to pick wild berries and mushrooms, provided by the Forestry Act. Berry and mushroom picking is economically important in Estonia. Bilberry is the most frequently purchased berry, with crops of 3,500 tonnes in good years, and the value of bilberry exports has increased to almost 70 million EEK in good years.

*Read more at:*

<http://www.eau.ee/~muurim/FRI.htm>

<http://www.eau.ee/~met/>

*Forest management and protection in Estonia, Estonian Ministry of the Environment, April 2003.*

## Forest research in Estonia

Estonian forest research has been re-organised recently. Two main actors used to be involved: the Faculty of Forestry at the Estonian Agricultural University, and the previously independent Estonian Forest Research Institute. Today, they are both part of the Estonian Agricultural University.

Several other institutes also pursue activities related to forest research, including the Environmental Institute and the Institute of Zoology and

Botany, which are part of the Estonian Agricultural University.

The University of Tartu performs research in botany, ecology and physiology, while Tallinn University of Technology has a department of wood technology. The Centre for Basic and Applied Ecology is one of six Centres of Excellence in Estonia. One group hosted by the Centre is the Sustainable Forestry Group, which includes a research team from the Faculty of Forestry.

### Serial publications from Estonian Agricultural University:

***Baltic Forestry***, the Journal of Forest Science in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, is an international peer-reviewed scientific journal. It is jointly published twice a year by several universities and institutes in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

***Metsanduslikud uurimused – Forestry Studies*** – is a periodic publication from the Estonian Agricultural University with articles, or at least summaries, written in English.

### Estonian Agricultural University I Forest Research Institute

Since 1998, the Forest Research Institute has been a research and development arm of the Estonian Agricultural University. It has two departments:

- The Department of Forest Biology in Tartu
- The Department of Ecophysiology in Tallinn.

The activities of the Institute include research, consultation and development, not only in fields of

forest science and forestry *per se*, but also in other areas related to forests and forestry, such as nature conservation, environmental protection, wildlife management, forest entomology and pathology.

The Forest Research Institute has a staff of about 30, with 20 in Tartu and 10 in Tallin. Twelve of the researchers have doctorates (PhDs). Finance comes from the state budget, research funds and various contracts.



The Director of the Institute is Dr. Kalev Jõgiste. Photo: Mats Hannerz

### Estonian Agricultural University II Faculty of Forestry

The main activities of the Faculty of Forestry are based in Tartu. The Faculty has three main departments:

- Silviculture
- Forest Management
- Forest Industry.

Järvelja Training and Experimental Forest Centre also belongs to the faculty. The faculty has a teaching staff of 42 persons, some of whom work part-time and are mainly based in other organisations such as the Forest Research Institute.

The faculty examines about 60 candidates for bachelors degrees, and about 15 for masters each year. The

Faculty also trains PhD students.

An external evaluation of the faculty was carried out last year, in which the quality of the research was graded "good", and the practical implementation of the research "good to excellent". Expectations and challenges for the faculty to meet include: increasing its publication output in international journals; recruiting new PhD students and post-doctoral scientists; and increasing its level of cooperation in research.



The Dean of the faculty is Dr Paavo Kaimre. Photo: Mats Hannerz