

European Forest Growth, 2005 – 2015

Introduction

Forest growth is often compared to simple measurement which gives context to a complex subject. Using the findings from the latest FAO report - *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015. How are the World's Forests Changing?*, Two Sides seeks to define European forest growth using simple, yet accurate, comparisons.

Summary

“European Forests have been growing by over 1,500 football pitches every day”

The growth of forests in Europe has been the result of afforestation (e.g. planting and seedling of trees on land that was not previously forested) and through natural expansion of forests such as on abandoned land. Today forests amount to about 180 million ha making Europe one of the most forest-rich regions in the world with more than 40% of land covered by forests. ([European Environment Agency, 2015](#))

Table 1 highlights the key figures concerning European forest growth over four time periods – 2010-2015; 2005-2015; 2000-2015 and 1990-2015. Two Sides will focus on the data for the period 2005-2015.

Forest Area Summary				
	2010-2015	2005-2015	2000-2015	1990-2015
Time period (years)	5	10	15	25
Total Growth km ²	18,750	44,160	64,030	132,320
km ² /year	3,750	4,416	4,269	5,293
m ² /year	3,750,000,000	4,416,000,000	4,268,666,667	5,292,800,000
FIFA football pitch dimensions m ²	7,140	7,140	7,140	7,140
number of pitches/year	525,210	618,487	597,852	741,289
number of pitches/day	1,439	1,694	1,638	2,031

Source: Using data from FAO, 2015

* Size of football pitch is measured as 105m x 68m in accordance with official FIFA regulations.

Using the data from FAO, it can be claimed that European forests, between 2005 and 2015, grew by a total area of 44,160 km².

This is an area larger than the land area of Switzerland (39,516 km²). [The World Bank, 2015](#)

It can also be claimed that, on average, European forests grew by an area equivalent to 1,694 football pitches every day over the 10-year period.

Definitions

“Forests”

Forests are lands of more than 0.5 hectares, with a tree canopy cover of more than 10 percent, which are not primarily under agricultural or urban land use.

Forests are determined both by the presence of trees and the absence of other predominant land uses. The trees should be able to reach a minimum height of 5 meters in situ. Areas under reforestation which have yet to reach a crown density of 10 percent or tree height of 5 m are included, as are temporarily unstocked areas, resulting from human intervention or natural causes, that are expected to regenerate. The term specifically includes: forest nurseries and seed orchards that constitute an integral part of the forest; forest roads, firebreaks and other small open areas; forest in national parks, nature reserves and other protected areas such as those of specific scientific, historical, cultural or spiritual interest; windbreaks and shelterbelts of trees with an area of more than 0.5 ha and width of more than 20 m; plantations primarily used for forestry purposes, including rubberwood plantations and cork oak stands. The term specifically excludes trees planted primarily for agricultural production, for example in fruit plantations and agroforestry systems.

Source: [FAO definitions](#)

References

European Environment Agency, 2015. [State and Outlook – 2015](#).

FIFA, 2015. [Laws of the Game 2015/2016](#).

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2015. [Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015. How are the World's Forests Changing?](#)

The World Bank, 2015. [Land area \(sq. km\) Switzerland](#).

Data table

Forest area (1 000 ha)					
	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015
Austria	3,776	3,838	3,851	3,860	3,869
Belgium	677	667	647	681	683
Bulgaria	3,327	3,375	3,651	3,737	3,823
Croatia	1,850	1,885	1,903	1,920	1,922
Cyprus	161	172	173	173	173
Czech Republic	2,629	2,637	2,647	2,657	2,667
Denmark	543	586	558	587	612
Estonia	2,206	2,243	2,252	2,234	2,232
Finland	21,875	22,445	22,143	22,218	22,218
France	14,436	15,289	15,861	16,424	16,989
Germany	11,300	11,354	11,384	11,409	11,419
Greece	3,299	3,601	3,752	3,903	4,054
Hungary	1,801	1,917	1,983	2,046	2,069
Ireland	465	635	695	726	754
Italy	7,590	8,369	8,759	9,028	9,297
Latvia	3,173	3,241	3,297	3,354	3,356
Luxembourg	86	87	87	87	87
Lithuania	1,945	2,020	2,121	2,170	2,180
Malta	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	345	360	365	373	376
Norway	12,132	12,113	12,102	12,102	12,112
Poland	8,881	9,059	9,200	9,329	9,435
Portugal	3,436	3,343	3,296	3,239	3,182
Romania	6,371	6,366	6,391	6,515	6,861
Slovakia	1,922	1,921	1,932	1,939	1,940
Slovenia	1,188	1,233	1,243	1,247	1,248
Spain	13,809	16,977	17,282	18,247	18,418
Sweden	28,063	28,163	28,218	28,073	28,073
Switzerland	1,151	1,194	1,217	1,235	1,254
United Kingdom	2,778	2,954	3,021	3,059	3,144
Europe 28 +Norway and Switzerland	161,215	168,044	170,031	172,572	174,447

Source: FAO, 2015