

## Responsibility as a basis for a sustainable bioeconomy

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At its simplest, sustainability means that present generations do not eat away the living conditions of future generations. The basis of bioeconomy is that harvesting is geared towards new growth so that the capital and growth capacity do not reduce. In Finland, forestry has been systematically and goal-oriented practised since the 19th century, with the aim of harvesting forests less than they grow. This has been a tremendous success. The volume of wood in Finnish forests is now 1.7 times higher than a hundred years ago. In Lapland, the only slip from this principle of sustainability was at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, when a political decision was made that war compensations and the reconstruction of a country recovering from war required greater logging than what was indicated by sustainable plans. Fortunately, forests were actively regenerated, and now there is 417 million m<sup>3</sup> of timber in our forests, compared to 270 million m<sup>3</sup> in the 1970s.

However, this perspective of sustainable development is too narrow and it should be defined much more broadly. Sustainable development should be defined much more broadly. The UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030) have been designed to *turn the global development into a path where human welfare and human rights, economic prosperity and stable societies can be secured in an environmentally sustainable manner. In addition, every form of extreme poverty is to be eradicated from the world.*

The goals of Agenda 2030 describe sustainability as a broader responsibility related to society and natural resources. There is a lot of talk about responsibility these days. But talk without acts is just greenwashing. Genuine responsibility means goal-oriented work and joint development for a more sustainable, responsible and equal future.

Metsähallitus, the manager of state-owned forests and water areas, is a key player in the development of a sustainable bioeconomy. The responsibility principles and responsibility programme of Metsähallitus define actions that will contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The starting point is that the legitimacy of the existence of

Metsähallitus' activities can only be achieved by best practices and by coordinating the needs of different stakeholders so that they benefit people, society and nature as well as possible.

The responsibility work of Metsähallitus is guided by the responsibility policy, responsibility programme and Code of Conduct. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP) lay the foundations for the Agenda. The responsibility programme describes the basis for sustainable production in a broad sense:

*We lead and act ethically. We respect human rights. We ensure fair and equal operations and treatment. We do not tolerate discrimination, bullying or harassment.*

*We take into account climate impacts, adaptation to climate change, biodiversity and sustainable economy and employment in all our activities.*

*We create economic and social value for the state. Economic value consists of income recognition for the state and the development of long-term sustainable production opportunities. Social value arises from the combined effects of the activities of public administration, business and general social obligations taken into account in business. The operations of Metsähallitus have a significant impact on the regional economy through co-operation companies and local customers.*

*We identify the key areas of responsibility in our operations, as well as the related risks that we manage as part of the risk management system. We monitor compliance and implementation of responsibility and take corrective measures if necessary.*

The focus areas of Metsähallitus' responsibility programme are leadership, people, society and the environment. The UN Sustainable Development Goals, which are affected by the activities, are focused on priority areas:

**Leadership:** *We manage responsibility ethically and on the basis of information and by developing activities and digital services in cooperation with customers and partners.*



**Environment:** *We safeguard biodiversity and protect, manage and monitor valuable habitats and animal and plant species in the areas controlled by us. We strive to mitigate climate change and adapt to the changing conditions it will create.*



**People:** *We respect human rights and ensure fair and equal operations and treatment for our employees, customers, partners and stakeholders. Our Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan promotes equality and eliminates discrimination in employer activities and services that are aimed at customers, partners, citizens and stakeholders. The plan also outlines measures to safeguard the rights of the Sámi people.*



**Society:** *We guarantee the optimum sustainable return on state-owned land and water areas over generations, enhancing well-being and regional vitality. We also reconcile the expectations for the areas in a responsible and interactive manner.*



I was involved in drafting Metsähallitus' responsibility programme, and sometimes I wondered if we were only packing everything we had done in the past in new wrapping. But it is really a question of broadening the mindset and considering the significance of one's own work. Sustainable production is concrete action in response to global challenges. The UN Sustainable Development Goals and Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are commonly agreed tools for a better world. It is up to us to transform them into practical measures.