

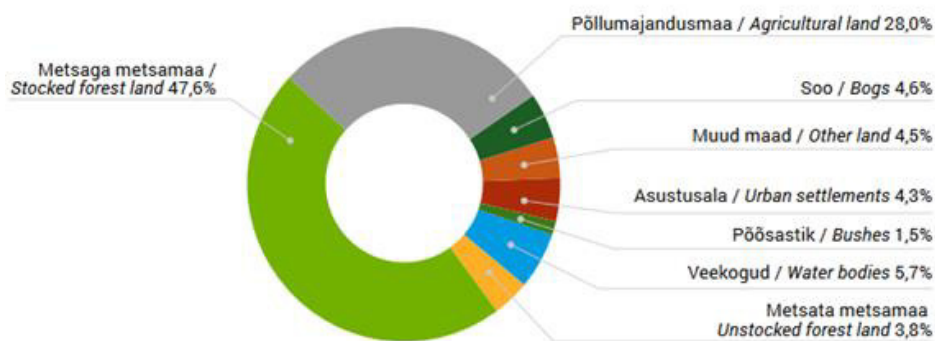
FORESTS IN ESTONIA

Woodland Coverage and woodland types

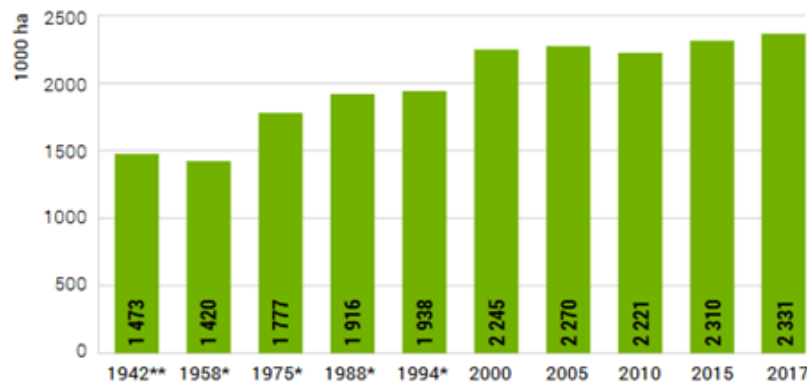
Coverage. Nearly half of Estonia is covered with forests, the total forest land area is 2 330 000 hectares.

During the 20th century forest area has increased and tree cover has expanded on abandoned agricultural land and on drained wetlands. In the past decades, forest area has remained rather stable.

Main woodland types The main tree species growing in Estonia is pine, making up 32% of the forest area, second comes birch making up 30% of the area and third comes spruce with 17,5%. The area of coniferous forests has decreased and the area of deciduous forests has increased in the past decades.



Joonis 1.4.1.1 Metsamaa pindala muutumine
Figure 1.4.1.1 Changing of forest land area



Woodland Ownership

The state owns 51% of the forest land and most of it is managed by the State Forest Management Centre RMK. 48% of the forest land is privately owned, 60% of private lands belong to private individuals, rest of it belongs to forest companies. Around 1% of the forest land still has unclear ownership status..

There are 13,1% of the forest under strict protection with an aim to protect forest biodiversity and old growth forest species, forest felling is not allowed in

these areas. Another 12,5% of the forests is classified as „protection forests“ which means that management activities are allowed but they have additional restrictions due to environmental protection functions these forests provide. Commercial forests make up 74,4% of the forest area. Main part of the protected forests are situated on the State land, 25,3% of it is strictly protected.

Authorities in charge of Forests and woodlands

The States forests are managed by the **State Forest Management Centre RMK**. It is also responsible for conservation and recreation activities on the State land. RMK holds FSC certificate on responsible forest management and last year, its felling volume was 4,3 million cubic meters. The felling volumes have increased in the State Forest in the past years and have reached their maximum.

The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for implementing the Forest Act and other legislation on forestry, also it is responsible for making forest development plans after every ten years. These plans set the main objectives and course of development in forestry sector.

The Ministry of Rural Affairs is responsible for implementing Estonian Rural Development Programme and its financial schemes for forest owners. Many different activities are financed under the plan, for example the compensation mechanisms of Natura 2000 network, infrastructure support for reconstructing forest roads and drainage, supporting tree health and help to create new woodland on forest disturbance areas etc. The financial mechanisms are administered by through the **Estonian Private Forest Centre**.

The Environmental Board is responsible for issuing felling permits and **Environment Agency** does the national forest inventory.

Challenges

Age structure. The overall area of protected forests in Estonia is big but the age structure is uneven and there are many young forest stands and not so many mature stands. This means that the protected forest network does not provide sufficient habitat for old

growth forest species. Many of these old-growth forest areas have been mapped as woodland key habitats but many have not been found and can easily end up in a clear-cut.

9.1.4 Kaitstava metsamaa jagunemine arenguklasside järgi

9.1.4 Distribution of protected forest areas by development classes

Arenguklass Development class	Kokku Total		Riigimetsa Majandamise Keskus State Forest Management Centre		Teised Others	
	Pindala Area (1000 ha)	%	Pindala Area (1000 ha)	%	Pindala Area (1000 ha)	%
Lagedad ja selgusetu alad Unstocked and reforestation areas	20,0	3,4	11,1	2,6	9,0	5,1
Noorendikud / Young stands	33,2	5,6	17,3	4,1	15,8	8,9
Latimetsad / Pole stands	28,9	4,8	23,7	5,7	5,2	2,9
Keskealised / Middle-aged	228,1	38,2	164,2	39,1	63,9	36,1
Valmivad / Maturing	73,2	12,3	48,7	11,6	24,5	13,8
Küpsed / Mature	213,1	35,7	154,5	36,8	58,6	33,1
Kaitstavad metsad kokku Total forests under protection	596,5	100,0	419,6	100,0	177,0	100,0

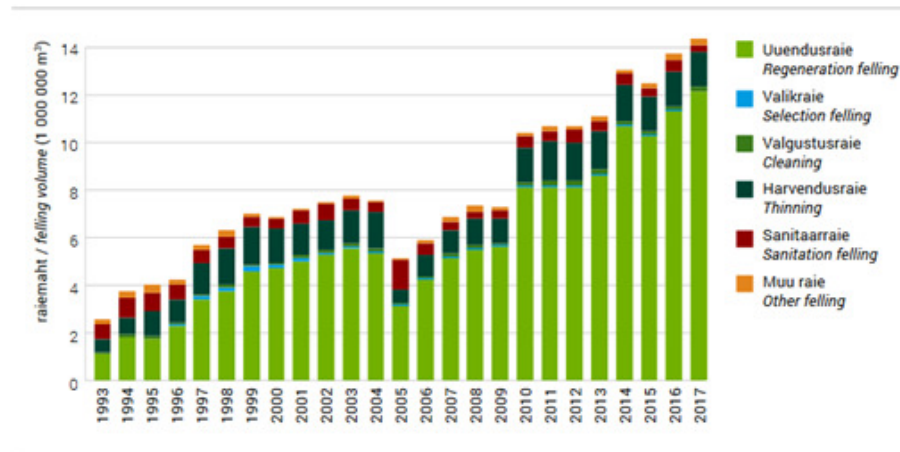
Allikas: SMI 2017, Keskkonnaagentuur / Source: National Forest Inventory 2017, Estonian Environment Agency

Clear Cutting. Currently the felling volumes are at their height in Estonia and the main felling type in Estonia is clear cutting. The clear-cutting rate has never been so high in the history and the effects of it to the environment are yet to be seen. Clear-cuts

cause fragmentation of the forest landscape and can make it impossible for old-growth forest species to spread. This has been one of the main reason the flying squirrel is in danger of extinction in Estonia.

Joonis 3.4.2.1 Raiemaht raieliigiti aastail 1993–2017

Figure 3.4.2.1 Felling volume by felling types in 1993–2017



Concepts of sustainable forest management

In the UK the Government has an overall objective of achieving Sustainable Development.

This means that Sustainable forestry recognises the same wide objectives and the importance of linking the economic, environmental and social values of forests. The intent is that today's forests are still here for our children and grandchildren. However, maintaining the quality and usefulness of forests and woodlands is vital so they need to be managed to offer the same, or enhanced, benefits and opportunities as they do today.

In England forests and woodland are seen to be key drivers for a wide range of 'products and services' that deliver or contribute towards sustainability such as landscape, recreation biodiversity, carbon

sequestration, soil protection, flood alleviation, hunting, timber production, and wood fuel.

However, ensuring that woodland management is sustains these wide and varied interests is difficult to measure. The UK has adopted the a Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) an independent certification standard for verifying sustainable woodland management in the United Kingdom. Unfortunately the nature of the work required to gain Certification is regarded as onerous, long winded and bureaucratic which is why many small woodland owners have not sought it. However, a number of larger woodland owners and timber producers do see the benefit of meeting a recognised standard

Links

- Forum Synergies: Report of the 1st Workshop on Sustainable Forestry Management ([link](#))
- Estonian Fund for Nature: www.elfond.ee/en
- The State Forest management Centre: www.rmkk.ee/en
- Ministry of Environment: www.envir.ee/en
- Ministry of Rural Affairs: www.agri.ee/en
- Environmental Board: www.keskkonnaamet.ee/en
- Environment Agency: <https://keskkonnaagentuur.ee/en>

Contact and information

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