

## **Forest Crime File: Country profile**

### **Finland – logging its last ancient forests**

*“In relation to species conservation the situation is unsustainable. For example, the main responsibility for the preservation of flying squirrels habitats is on the operators of the forest machines.”*

The South Savo Environment Centre, September 2000

Throughout the world, ancient forests are in crisis. Some 80% of the world's original ancient forest cover is already gone, while illegal and destructive logging poses the single greatest threat to what remains.<sup>1</sup> The uncontrolled international trade in ancient forest products fuels this destruction. As part of its campaign to protect what is left of the world's ancient forests, Greenpeace is carrying out investigations into logging companies involved in illegal, destructive and abusive activities and is calling on consumers, trading partners and governments around the world to stop their role in driving this unscrupulous industry.

#### **Logging in Finland**

*“Forest certification will mostly cause paperwork in the Forest Park Service and will hardly affect actual operations in the forests.”*

Forest Park Service personnel magazine, October 1999

The logging industry in what remains of northern Europe's ancient forests<sup>2</sup> is one which is characterised by destruction – both of its forests and of its people's livelihoods. In Finland the majority of the country's remaining old-growth forests are owned by the state and logged by the state-owned Forest and Park Service (FPS). The industry makes much of the fact that significant areas of forest have been certified by the industry-driven FFCS (Finnish Forest Certification System)<sup>3</sup>, yet a recent report by Greenpeace and the Finnish Nature League, Luonto-Liitto, has demonstrated the scheme's basic failure to protect biodiversity. Moreover the report has revealed numerous violations of even this weak scheme's ecological criteria.<sup>4</sup>

One of the main factors driving this industry is the demand from the international marketplace – that is the demand from importing nations that turn a blind eye to the devastation that this industry leaves behind. Unless there is a real change in consumer attitudes – and in that of the Finnish government – these last ancient forests, and the plants, animals and people that depend on them – could disappear.

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<sup>1</sup> WRI (1997)

<sup>2</sup> see also Greenpeace (2002)

<sup>3</sup> The FFCS was acknowledged as part of the controversial Pan European Forest Certification scheme (PEFC) in May 2000. Controlled purely by industry stakeholders, the FFCS has no support from any major Finnish environmental NGO. To date the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification scheme represents the only international certification and labeling system that uses globally endorsed ecological performance standards, ensures a traceable chain-of-custody from production to final consumption and brings together a broad range of environmental, social and economic stakeholder interests.

<sup>4</sup> Greenpeace and Finnish Nature League (2001) [www.pefcwatch.org](http://www.pefcwatch.org)

### *Finland's ancient forests*

The last ancient forests of northern Europe combine Europe's few remaining tracts of ancient forest in Scandinavia with the adjoining forest of European Russia. These boreal forests – Europe's last intact ancient forests – have ensured the survival of numerous plant and animal species, including the Siberian jay and the eagle owl.

In Finland, only around 5 percent of the country's forests are old-growth, supporting hundreds of species including the red-listed flying squirrel (*Pteromys volans*), the Siberian jay (*Perisoreus infaustus*) and the three-toed woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*). The forests, located largely in the north and east of the country, are not only a valuable habitat for these species, but those in the north are also fundamental to the livelihoods of many indigenous Saami<sup>5</sup> and other Finnish people who herd reindeer in these forests. Yet despite their ecological, economic and cultural significance, only half of these ancient forests are protected.<sup>6</sup> The rest are largely owned – and logged – by the state.<sup>7</sup>

### *Destroying Finland's ancient forests*

*"... the amount of old-growth forests species habitat will further decrease in the area [of the landscape ecological plan]<sup>8</sup> as a result of the fragmentation of forests."*

Forest and Park Service, 17 May 2000

Finnish forestry is amongst the most intensive in the world and takes place throughout the country. Ancient and other high conservation value forests (HCVF) are being destroyed by clearcutting, regular thinning of forests, ditching of soils and road construction, all of which are leading to severe and extensive fragmentation of natural habitat and significant changes in microclimate.

Numerous expert reports published between 1996 and 2002 reveal that Finland's current protected areas are insufficient to maintain critical habitats leaving hundreds of species of plants and animals vulnerable. A report published in 1999 recommends that "The present reserve network should be enlarged ... The biologically important areas of old-growth forests, mainly situated in northern and eastern Finland, should be preserved".<sup>9</sup> The most recent expert report concludes that "...the fragmentation of forest landscapes and decreasing of dead wood caused by forestry is still threatening the survival of the species living in old-growth forests."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Finland's remaining indigenous people, the Saami live in the northern parts of Sweden, Finland and Norway as well as the Murmansk region of Russia.

<sup>6</sup> Finnish Environment Institute (2000)

<sup>7</sup> Aksenov *et al* (2000)

<sup>8</sup> According to the *National report of Finland for the CBD on forest ecosystems* in 2001, Landscape Ecological Plans (LEPs) developed by the FPS are one of the key elements for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Finland. The long-term objective of Landscape Ecological Planning is "to assure the survival of the area's native species as viable populations ...," yet it is clear that the FPS planning process will guarantee no such thing.

<sup>9</sup> Finnish Environment Institute (1999)

<sup>10</sup> The report adds that, "The retention trees saved in logging operations in commercial forests are absolutely insufficient to secure the continuity of the diversity of dead wood, essential for demanding old-growth forest species. The key biotopes which are left outside

A recent survey of 55 FFCS-certified forestry operations found more than 30 examples of logging or planning to log in ancient (old-growth) forest and several more logging or planning to log in high conservation value forest – including areas of forest that are considered critical to developing the forest protection network in southern Finland. Almost all operations were found to be ignoring the presence of threatened species, some also posed a serious threat to the economic and cultural survival of the indigenous reindeer herding Saami people.

### **Reindeer herding, the Saami and the logging industry**

Reindeer herding is a central part of the culture of the Saami, the indigenous people of northernmost Europe who live in the northernmost parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and in the Kola Peninsula in Russia.

Old-growth forests with ground and arboreal lichens are natural pastures for reindeer, those rich in arboreal lichens forming crucial winter pastures when the snow cover is thick and hard.

In Finland, the right to herd reindeer and to preserve the Saami culture are protected by law. Yet in practice this legal protection means very little as Finland's government-owned Forest and Park Service (FPS) continues to systematically log and fragment what remains of the Saami region's ancient forest – the critical pastures for the reindeer.

Since May 2000, the forests in the Saami region have been certified under the FFCS (Finnish Forestry Certification System), an industry-driven certification recognised by the controversial Pan European Forest Certification (PEFC) scheme. However, according to reindeer herders, this certification has not improved Forest and Park Service (FPS) management or planning practices, and the FPS still often refuse to cancel planned loggings unless the herders take the issue to the courts.

In the 1990s and up to the present day, many reindeer herders have started to demand moratoria on logging in the late winter grazing forests. However, these demands and related lawsuits have usually been without success and the steady erosion of these essential forest resources continues.

### *The products*

In 2000, the Finnish forest industry consumed 63.5 million cubic metres of domestic wood, of which 46% was processed into pulp and paper, the rest going into sawn goods, plywood, veneer and board products. In the same year the country exported 12.4 million tonnes of

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of logging operations are too small fragments to safeguard the survival of most of the species dependent on old-growth forests." Kainuu Regional Environment Centre (2002) **FULL REF?**

paper and paperboard products - almost 15 % of the world's total exports of paper and paper board.<sup>11</sup> Magnificent trees of spruce (*Picea* spp) and pine (*Pinus* spp) which can be up to several hundred years old, end up as raw materials for magazines, newsprint and printing papers and even toilet tissue and junk mail throughout western Europe. In total, 25% of the world's printing and writing paper comes from Finland.<sup>9</sup>

### *The players*

One of the key players in Finland's timber is the Finnish government itself. Owning most of the country's last old-growth forests, the Finnish government - *via* its Forest and Park Service - is also actively logging in the old growth forests of Kainuu, Lapland, Ostrobothnia in the north and east of the country. The state-owned enterprise is also logging in other high conservation value forests elsewhere in the country.

The FPS's logging operations include clearcutting areas of up to tens of hectares, logging in habitats of threatened and vulnerable species, logging in areas of special scenic or cultural value and logging in areas whose ecological values have been required to be preserved according to the decision of the Finnish government.<sup>10</sup> In the forestry centres of Kainuu and Northern Ostrobothnia, the FPS has even clearcut areas that had been previously been defined by the FPS itself as ecologically valuable old-growth forests - forests that offered refuge for several red-listed species. It is hardly surprising that some of the state enterprise's practices have been criticised by regional environmental authorities for destroying ecological connections.<sup>12</sup>

Recent investigations reveal a number of companies to be buying wood from destructive logging in Finland's last ancient forests. These companies include the Finnish sawmills Kuhmo and Vapo Timber, but the great majority goes to the international timber giants Stora Enso, UPM-Kymmene, and Metsä-Botnia.



Old-growth forest wood logged in Kainuu region in February 2002, destined for Stora Enso's Oulu pulp and paper mill.

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<sup>11</sup> The Finnish Statistical Yearbook of Forestry (2001), [www.forestindustries.fi](http://www.forestindustries.fi)

<sup>12</sup> Greenpeace and Finnish Nature League (2001)

Stora Enso is the Forest and Park Service's largest customer, purchasing more than 40 percent of their total harvest each year.<sup>13</sup> Greenpeace has also shown that timber from the old-growth forests logged by the Forest and Park Service in the Kainuu and north Ostrobothnia regions was destined for the Stora Enso mills in Kemi and Oulu. These mills use timber to produce pulp, magazine grade and fine paper.<sup>14</sup>

### **The international market: driving destruction**

One of the strongest factors driving both this industry and the destruction of Finland's last ancient forests remains the international market, comprised of those nations worldwide who choose to import these wood-based products regardless of their social and environmental consequences. For Finland, the European Union (EU) is the most important market, importing more than 67 % of the country's exports. Germany is the most important market (19.6%), followed by the UK (14.9%) France (7.0%) and the US (6.2%).<sup>15</sup>

Companies importing from Stora Enso, and other companies sourcing from Finland's ancient forests should be aware that they are also driving the destruction of these forests. Such companies include major publishing houses such as the German Axel Springer Verlag,<sup>16</sup> and also smaller independent printers worldwide buying from retailers such as Mac Papers (US), Brunzl Fine Paper (Switzerland) or the Papier Union (Germany). Ironically, even the 2000 environmental report of the Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI) was printed on Stora Enso paper coming from ancient forest destruction.

Unless they are importing only timber products that have been certified to the standards required by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)<sup>17</sup>, it is inevitable that each of these importers is importing wood, paper or other products which are destructive in origin.<sup>18</sup>

### **Greenpeace call for action**

In the run up to the forthcoming Ancient Forest Summit<sup>19</sup>, Earth Summit II<sup>20</sup> and beyond, Greenpeace is urging governments of all importing countries to immediately stop their role in the destruction of the world's ancient forests by committing to:

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<sup>13</sup> Calculations by GP Nordic, based on figures from [www.storaenso.com](http://www.storaenso.com) and [www.metsa.fi](http://www.metsa.fi); see also Stora Enso (1999).

<sup>14</sup> Greenpeace and Finnish Nature League (2001)

<sup>15</sup> Finnish Statistical Yearbook of Forestry (2001). Additional EU markets include: Spain (5.2%), the Netherlands (4.6%), Be-Lux (4.1%), Italy (3.6%), Sweden (3.3%), Denmark (2.7%), Austria (1.2%) and Greece (0.9%).

<sup>16</sup> Springer Home Page ([www.asv.de/inhalte/umwelt/frame.htm](http://www.asv.de/inhalte/umwelt/frame.htm))

<sup>17</sup> see footnote 3

<sup>18</sup> Greenpeace's demands to the Finnish government are for the protection of all Finland's remaining natural and semi-natural old-growth forests; immediate inventories of the high conservation value forests (HCVFs) of southern Finland followed by a protection programme drawn up by expert ecologists; moratoria on logging in Finland's southern HCVFs until the protection programme is operational; appointment of expert committees on the management of state forests and the revision of the Forest Act to better conserve biological diversity in managed forests.

<sup>19</sup> The Ancient Forest Summit is the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. It will be held in April 2002, in The Hague, The Netherlands and will have a mandate to agree a 10 year program on forests in preparation for Earth Summit II (Rio + 10) which will take place in Johannesburg in August/September 2002.

- **stop the destruction**  
by stopping any further industrial activities in intact ancient forest until responsible plans for forest conservation and sustainable use have been agreed
- **clean up the timber trade**  
by ensuring that timber is produced and traded in a legal and ecologically responsible way; by refusing to trade with companies known to be operating illegally or destructively; and by demanding that all wood and wood products entering national ports must come from legal and well-managed forest operations according to high social and ecological standards.<sup>21</sup>
- **come up with the money**  
by providing at least US\$15 billion each year to pay for forest conservation and sustainable development

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<sup>20</sup> Earth Summit II is the United Nations' World Summit on Sustainable Development which will take place in Johannesburg in August/September 2002

<sup>21</sup> The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is currently the only international certification and labelling system that uses globally endorsed ecological performance standards, ensures a traceable chain-of-custody from production to final consumption and brings together a broad range of environmental, social and economic stakeholder interests.