

Lapland: State of Conflict

How the Finnish government is abusing the forest rights of Sámi reindeer herders



Reindeer herding is central to the Sami culture. Unless old-growth forests, critical to traditional reindeer herding are protected from logging, scenes such as these could become a thing of the past. © Snellman/Greenpeace

Executive summary

One thousand kilometres north of Finland's capital Helsinki lie some of the largest tracts of reindeer forest left in Lapland. These forests are also the homeland of Northern Europe's only indigenous people, the Sámi (see Box 1).¹

Traditional free-grazing reindeer herding forms the basis of Sámi culture (see Box 2). During the cold Arctic winter months Lapland's old-growth forests provide a lifeline for grazing reindeer. On the branches and trunks of trees grows the 'horsetail' lichen – an arboreal hanging lichen that is an essential wintertime food for the reindeer.²

The State claims ownership of up to 90% of the traditional Sámi homeland in Finland.³ Within the State-owned lands are areas that are, in theory, specially designated under the Reindeer Herding Act (Section 2). While the Act proclaims that these defined areas "shall not be used in a manner that causes considerable damage to the reindeer herding", in recent decades the state-owned forest company Metsähallitus has destroyed important winter grazing forests that are vital to the reindeer.

The Finnish State often claims that in the Inari municipality of northern Lapland, some 40% of forests have been formally protected and that therefore no new areas warrant protection. What they fail to mention is that these protected areas are concentrated in the least productive land. Almost all of the important winter reindeer grazing forests are excluded from these zones and remain unprotected. In fact, only around 20% of pine forest (the most important grazing land for reindeer) in Upper Lapland is protected,⁴ and most of this 20% is in unproductive or high altitude areas.⁵

"The Helsinki led practices of the state and Metsähallitus are discriminating the Sámi people... At times, it feels that we Sámi people are accepted as mannequins and decoration in our traditional costumes, but otherwise the only indigenous people in Finland seems to have no value."

Hannu Magga from the Lappi reindeer herding co-operative (2005).⁶



*Despite repeated calls for a moratorium, logging still continues in areas important to reindeer herding. This area in the Paadarskaidi Muotkatunturi co-operative was logged December 2004.
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In 2003 the reindeer herders together with Greenpeace and the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (FANC) mapped out forest areas essential for winter grazing. Over 90% of the mapped forest areas were found to be old-growth forest.

Using these maps, a coalition representing the majority of forested reindeer herding co-operatives in the Sámi area demanded a moratorium on logging in the identified areas until a decision regarding their future was reached. Sadly, logging did not stop and a number of the areas found to be vital grazing pastures have been destroyed.

In 2004, Metsähallitus claimed it was starting a new initiative and that by the end of the year it would begin updating its Natural Resource Plan (NRP) in Upper Lapland. The aim of this project was once again to harmonise the needs of reindeer herding and forestry. However, by January 2005 the revision of the NRP had not yet started. The Inari reindeer herding co-operatives published their preconditions for participation in updating the NRP (see Box 3) and sent them to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The preconditions include, once again, the demand for a temporary logging moratorium on areas under discussion until decisions regarding their further protection have been made.

Greenpeace, Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) Finland and FANC collectively expressed their support for these pre-conditions in a letter to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry on 16 February 2005.

At the end of February 2005, while the reindeer herders and NGOs were waiting for a reply to their letters, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry announced that the new NRP for Upper Lapland had already begun earlier that month. Simultaneously, Metsähallitus had started logging in one of the reindeer herding areas, had opened a road into another and was still logging in the third area. At the time of publishing this report, a response has still not been received from Metsähallitus concerning a moratorium on logging while this process is underway.

We are fast approaching the point of no return. Metsähallitus is logging some of the last tracts of old-growth forest abundant in horsetail lichen outside of protected areas (see Box 2). Approximately seventy percent of the old-growth forests logged by Metsähallitus are sold for pulp and paper production.⁷ Forests hundreds of years old, which support a myriad of wildlife and sustain the Sámi culture are being rapidly converted into magazines, copy paper and envelopes.

BOX 1 – Reindeer herding co-operatives in Lapland

1 Upper Lapland area

- the administrative forestry area of Metsähallitus
- reindeer herding co-operatives 1-12

2 The Sámi area

- defined in the Finnish constitution
- reindeer herding co-operatives 1-12 and 21

3 The area especially designated for reindeer herding

- defined in Reindeer Herding Act
- reindeer herding co-operatives 1-15, 17, 18, 21-23



Introduction

Finland’s old-growth forests

Some of the last areas of old-growth forests left in Europe are found in Finland. Less than five percent of the country’s 23 million hectares of forest is considered old-growth.⁸ These precious last stands of natural forest support an enormous range of plant and animal species, many of which are threatened or near-threatened with extinction.⁹

Currently, only half of Finland’s old-growth forest areas are set aside and protected from other land uses such as logging.¹⁰ Logging has been so intense in southern Finland that once common species have become regionally extinct.¹¹

Every year the Finnish Government’s own logging company, Metsähallitus, logs and destroys more and more of the remaining old-growth forest areas, despite urgent pleas from reindeer herders for greater protection. These areas are needed to sustain the traditional reindeer herding activities of the Sámi people.

The Sámi - Northern Europe’s last indigenous people

There are more than 150 million indigenous peoples worldwide in more than 60 countries.¹³ On every inhabited continent, from the hottest to the coldest environments, societies have developed their own traditions and cultures.

Across the globe, conflicts over competing uses of indigenous lands go unresolved. In many countries, governments have assumed control of land that has never been owned,



*All largely natural old-growth forests should be excluded from industrial logging if the aim is to prevent the mass extinction of species. Ikka Hanski, Professor of Ecology, University of Helsinki, 1999¹²
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only inhabited, and used sustainably for thousands of years. In the name of economic progress, loggers, miners, ranchers and developers have taken over, destroying the land – and with it, people's lives and culture.

The Sámi are the only indigenous people in Northern Europe,¹⁴ populating areas of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia.¹⁵ In Finland many Sámi in the north (Lapland) still practise traditional reindeer herding, relying on the country's remaining old-growth forest to provide vital food for their reindeer especially during the cold winter months. Sadly, they too are experiencing conflict over their traditional lands.

The aim of this report is to document the ongoing struggle of the Finnish reindeer herders to protect not only their reindeer forests but also their way of life.

BOX 2 – The Sámi, Reindeer Herding and Horsetail Lichen

- **The Sámi** are the indigenous people of northern Europe traditionally living in northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia.
- **Reindeer herding** is an ancient livelihood that forms one of the fundamental building blocks of Sámi culture. As such it has been protected by numerous Finnish and international regulations, agreements and resolutions.

Reindeer herding is practised everywhere in northernmost Finland by both Sámi and Finns. Nomadic in nature, traditional reindeer herding is based on the migration of herds between seasonal pastures. Land is not divided up and owned by individual herders as it is in farming. Reindeer herding is conducted jointly in herding co-operatives (Paliskunta in Finnish) made up of varying numbers of different families. Each co-operative operates in a specified area ensuring that its reindeer only feed in pastures traditionally used by that co-operative.

- **Food sources** for the reindeer have traditionally been provided by nature. Nowadays, however, supplementary feeding is needed in some areas due to a lack of natural food sources.

In summer food is abundant. The reindeer have a choice of over 300 different plant species that grow in wild areas. In winter life becomes more challenging as a thick layer of snow covers the ground. In early winter reindeer dig through the snow to find ground or reindeer lichen. As spring approaches, the snow cover becomes too hard and thick for the reindeer to penetrate.



The most important winter food for reindeer is the arboreal lichen commonly known as **horsetail lichen** that grows on the branches and trunks of trees in old-growth forests. The reindeer eat the lichen as high up as they can reach. Harsh winter winds blow the rest off the higher branches onto the snow, changing its colour from white to black.

Horsetail lichen is the most vital food source for reindeer when winter is at its harshest. In old-growth forests the density of horsetail lichen is between 270-575 kg/ha. In a logged forest this dwindles to 2.7kg/ha.¹⁶ © Aikman/Greenpeace

Lapland: State of Conflict

On the surface numerous Finnish and international regulations, agreements and resolutions protect the rights of the Sámi to practise traditional reindeer herding in Lapland. However, the state-owned forest company Metsähallitus – which has dual responsibility for regulating the competing resource needs of reindeer herding and forestry – has failed repeatedly to respect these rights. The logging industry wants to cut the same forests to feed pulp mills in Finland. In fact, up to 70% of the old-growth timber logged by Metsähallitus in Sámi areas goes to pulp and paper production – to end up as magazines and copy paper.

The Finnish law that aims to protect the rights of reindeer herders is of particular importance in Lapland because the State claims ownership of up to 90% of the traditional Sámi homeland. Within these State-owned lands are areas that are, in theory, specially designated under the Reindeer Herding Act (1990).¹⁸ Paragraph 2 of the Act proclaims that these defined areas, “shall not be used in a manner that causes considerable damage to reindeer herding”. In addition, paragraph 53 states that, “When planning operations concerning state lands that would considerably affect reindeer herding, state officials have to negotiate with representatives of the local herding co-operatives”.

Despite this legislation being in place since 1990, Metsähallitus has consistently prioritised other forms of land use, such as forestry, over reindeer herding. The old-growth forests that reindeer depend upon have been reduced piece by piece, project by project, and without considering the cumulative effects of all these activities.

Over the last few decades, Metsähallitus has persistently logged important winter grazing forests. Today, many of the best lichen areas have already been logged.²⁰ With each area of old-growth forest that is lost to logging, the herders must get their reindeer to adapt to changes in their grazing circulation. This means countless hours of extra work, costly supplementary feeding and dramatically increased fuel costs, which reduce a herder's income.²¹ The loss of winter grazing pastures also puts extra grazing pressure on areas that remain intact. In 1997 and 2000, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry actually reduced the quota of reindeer allowed because there was simply not enough winter pasture to support greater numbers.²²

Metsähallitus often claims that enough forest areas have been protected in Lapland. Some 40% of forest land has been formally protected in the Inari municipality in the north.²³ However, what they fail to mention is that protected areas have not been established with the needs of reindeer herding and Sámi culture in mind. In fact the reverse is true. For example, all of the winter pastures of the Muddusjarvi co-operative have been slated for logging. For other co-operatives some areas have been protected but other crucial areas have not.²⁴

What Metsähallitus fails to recognise is that reindeer rely on the ability to move from one pasture to another to find food. The whole practice of traditional reindeer herding is nomadic: the locations of specific winter grazing pastures are fundamental not just to reindeer herding but to the survival of Sámi culture. Reindeer herding co-operatives have never been given the opportunity to participate in meaningful negotiations with Metsähallitus about which forest areas are scheduled for logging. Their input is only sought on the timing of logging. By this point, whether an area will be logged or not has already been decided without them.²⁵

“The future of reindeer herding depends here on a few years. One hill is cut clear every year... The young should still have the possibility to continue reindeer herding. Yet now everything is destroyed in one generation.”

Kalevi Paadar, Sámi reindeer herder, Nellim (2005).¹⁷

Conflict of Interests

Through Metsähallitus, the Finnish State is not only logging the remaining unprotected areas of Sámi reindeer forest, it is also the single largest shareholder in the main company that buys most of the pulp logs coming from these areas. The State owns nearly one quarter of the voting shares in the Finnish-Swedish paper giant StoraEnso.²⁶

StoraEnso supplies virtually all the larger European paper processors, printers and publishers. Ranking among the five largest integrated forest companies in the world, it is involved in the whole production chain: from wood procurement via milling and pulping to final products, such as sawn timber and consumer goods such as magazines and copy paper. In 2004, the company generated a turnover of Euros 12.4 billion.²⁷

Kemijärvi, located 200 km south from the Sámi area, is StoraEnso's main pulp mill that sources logs from Metsähallitus's operations in the region. Trees, most of them 200-500 years old, which once supported many plant and animal species and helped sustain the Sámi tradition of reindeer herding, go into the mill and come out as pulp.

Jorma Lansman, a reindeer herder from the Muotkatunturi co-operative, had important winter pastures logged while his co-operative tried to negotiate a postponement of forestry operations in the area. Jorma said, "It doesn't fit in anyone's clear mind, when you think of how long and slow the trees have grown and then they're cut and boiled for pulp, just like that."²⁸

As recently as December 2004, Greenpeace tracked pulp logs as they were transported from two of Metsähallitus's logging operations in northern Lapland - Kessi and Paadarskaidi - to the Kemijärvi mill.

In Kessi, Metsähallitus logged an important reindeer grazing forest despite resistance from the Paatsjoki herding co-operative. According to the Chairman of the co-operative, he was told by Metsähallitus to leave its office when he tried to discuss the logging plans in question. In Paadarskaidi the pleas of the local reindeer herding co-operative were as usual ignored.

From Kemijärvi the pulp goes to another mill, StoraEnso's Veitsiluoto, where it is transformed into paper. Veitsiluoto produces over 760,000 tonnes of paper annually. Coated magazine papers account for about half of that volume with the rest being divided between uncoated fine papers for office use (copy papers) and envelopes. After a single use as a magazine or glossy brochure, or a run through the photocopier, these once magnificent reindeer forests end up in the bin.



Kemijärvi, located 200 km south of the Sámi area, is StoraEnso's main pulp mill and sources logs from Metsähallitus's operations in the Sámi homeland. StoraEnso is the leading supplier of copy papers in Europe.²⁹ © Greenpeace

"It doesn't fit in anyone's clear mind, when you think of how long and slow the trees have grown and then they're cut and boiled for pulp, just like that."

Jorma Lansman,
Muotkatunturi co-operative²⁸

State forestry - a history of abusing Sámi rights³⁰



At the end of October the reindeer 'round-up' is the biggest event of the year. The whole herd is brought together - some are chosen for slaughter, the rest are counted, vaccinated and transported to winter pastures.
© Liimatainen/Greenpeace

State forestry has been destroying old-growth forest areas important to traditional reindeer herding since the 1950s. Since the 1960s the issue has become a major problem. In recent decades, as more and more winter pastures have been lost, individual reindeer herding co-operatives have tried in vain to stop the logging.

In the last few years, various reindeer herding co-operatives have made attempts to find a solution to the conflicts between reindeer herding and forestry:

10 October 2001 – The largest reindeer herding co-operative in Finland – Kemin-Sompio in Eastern Lapland, outside the Sámi area – made an appeal in an open letter to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). As the problem was becoming so severe, they demanded that Metsähallitus stop logging in areas essential to reindeer herding.

21 March 2002 – A delegation from four Inari reindeer herding co-operatives and one Inari sub-group (Nellim) went to Helsinki to demand a reduction in logging. They delivered a document to all the relevant ministries that clearly stated the importance of natural grazing areas to reindeer herding, the impact of logging and the longstanding discrepancy between the protection theoretically afforded by national legislation and the current reality. The document proposed that all future logging be confined to areas that had already been logged in the past. To achieve this, Metsähallitus's financial targets would have to be reduced.

3 May 2002 – MAF appointed an arbitrator, Mrs Pirkko Saarela, in an effort to reconcile the competing interests of reindeer herding and forestry in the Sámi region of Upper Lapland. The Saarela process, as it came to be known, received written statements from numerous stakeholders, including: Metsähallitus; MAF; reindeer herding co-operatives; the association of reindeer herders; municipalities; forest workers' unions; the Vapo Timber company; the Forest Research Institute; the Finnish Game and Fisheries Institute; and other relevant stakeholder groups.

2 July 2003 – The Saarela proposal was presented to MAF, recommending that some areas designated for logging be placed under a moratorium. However, the Saarela process had no actual power to implement any of its recommendations. In addition, most of the important reindeer co-operative areas were excluded from the proposal and the areas under the suggested moratorium were unevenly distributed among the herding co-operatives.

22 December 2003 – MAF prepared an Action Plan in response to the information gathered by the Saarela process. The Action Plan included a research programme and the opening of a new round of the Metsähallitus Natural Resource Plan (NRP) that commenced at the end of 2003. The Action Plan also recommended that the areas proposed for protection by the Saarela memorandum, as well as forests inside Wilderness Areas, should be preserved until a decision has been reached on their final status.

15 December 2003 – Metsähallitus issued a statement saying that there would be a moratorium on logging in forest areas mentioned in Saarela's proposal and in 'untouched old forests'. However, the latter are not delineated on any maps, nor has Metsähallitus given any detailed definition of what 'untouched old forests' means, despite multiple requests to do so. The logging has continued in areas such as the Kessi and Kirakka forests, which are in a natural ecological condition, despite the felling of single trees almost a hundred years ago.

Under the pressure of constant change reindeer herding has lost its profitability... As a cumulative effect of the environmental change, there have been job losses in reindeer herding and a part of the families involved have had to give up the full-time profession ... The Sámi culture will gradually disappear. So, the stronger conquers the weaker; the Finnish State destroys the only indigenous people of the country."

Hannu Magga,
Lappi co-operative (2005).³¹

31 December 2003 – Metsähallitus opened negotiations for the re-established NRP process. The co-operatives demanded a moratorium on logging in the most important reindeer grazing areas.

February 2004 – Negotiations ended without resolution after the reindeer herders once again requested a moratorium on logging in the most important grazing areas and a corresponding reduction in Metsähallitus's logging objectives. Metsähallitus stated that this was impossible. Since that time, logging in areas important to reindeer herding has continued according to plan.

November-December 2004 – The MAF Action Plan stated that the NRP would begin.

16 January 2005 – The reindeer herding co-operatives once again appealed to MAF for a moratorium on logging in the most important reindeer grazing areas for the span of the negotiation process. In addition, they published their preconditions for participation in the NRP (see Box 3).

8 February 2005 – Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) Finland, the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (FANC) and Greenpeace sent a letter to MAF supporting the reindeer herders' preconditions.

22 February 2005 – Metsähallitus announced that the new NRP process had already begun, without full consultation with the reindeer herding co-operatives.

"The pastures have been felled so ruthlessly that the reindeer are left without wintertime feed. The east side of the herding group's grazing grounds has been logged so badly that there is only one place where the reindeer like to stay, where there is still some old forest left."

Kalevi Paadar, Sámi reindeer herder, Nellim (2005).¹⁹

Establishing a new status quo

The fundamental problem with both the Saarela process and the Action Plan that followed is that Metsähallitus works on the assumption that its current level of profitability from logging will remain unaltered. From the very beginning any outcome was biased towards the financial turnover of Metsähallitus, with 90 percent coming from the sale of timber.³² This situation makes it impossible to achieve a genuine assessment of which areas should be placed under formal protection. In addition, the Action Plan handed the responsibility for solving the dispute back to Metsähallitus, which has proven time and time again that it does not have the interests of traditional reindeer herding at heart.

There is still no fair or equitable negotiation mechanism between the various forest stakeholders. The re-established Natural Resource Plan (NRP) is essentially a Metsähallitus internal planning procedure for forestry activities, largely based on a series of briefings and discussions. At the end of the process Metsähallitus prepares its forestry plans for the next ten years. The outcome is determined by Metsähallitus alone.

The situation remains that most of the vital grazing forests marked on the co-operatives' maps remain slated for logging. Logging has continued in all co-operatives that have published such maps, except the Sallivaara co-operative. These include:

- the Nellim forests (Nellim sub-group of Ivalo co-operative)
- the Paadarskaidi forests (Muotkatunturi co-operative)
- the Kessi forests (Paatsjoki co-operative)
- Kirakka, and many other locations (Hammastunturi co-operative)
- Otsamo (Muddusjärvi co-operative)



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As this logging continues unabated, Metsähallitus' powerful position makes fair negotiations with reindeer herders impossible. The abject failure of the Finnish State to protect the herders rights is reflected in a November 2004 statement from the United Nations Human Rights Committee:³³

“... [the Committee] regrets that it has not received a clear answer concerning the rights of the Sámi as an indigenous people (Constitution, sect.17, subsect.3), in the light of article 1 of the Covenant. It reiterates its concern over the failure to settle the question of Sámi rights to land ownership and the various public and private uses of land that affect the Sámi 's traditional means of subsistence - in particular reindeer breeding - thus endangering their traditional culture and way of life, and hence their identity.” [emphasis added]

“The [Finnish] State party should, in conjunction with the Sámi people, swiftly take decisive action to arrive at an appropriate solution to the land dispute with due regard for the need to preserve the Sámi identity in accordance with article 27 of the Covenant. Meanwhile [the Finnish State] is requested to refrain from any action that might adversely prejudice settlement of the issue of Sámi land rights.” [emphasis added]

'Reindeer herding provides an occupation for whole families. There are harder and lighter tasks that demand many kinds of knowledge and skills. Working together is a lot of fun and keeps up the traditional knowledge and social networks'.

Conclusion

Some of the last areas of ancient forests in Europe are currently condemned to further destruction by the state-owned forest company Metsähallitus. As reflected in the recent statement from the UN Human Right Committee, it is time for the Finnish State to live up to its national and international responsibilities and protect the rights of the Sámi to practise traditional reindeer herding in Lapland.

If this issue continues to be ignored, future generations of reindeer herders will not be able to practice reindeer herding using traditional methods. This is already happening in the south of Lapland, which has experienced some of the most intensive forestry in the world. In the south, the reindeer no longer run free in the winter but are taken to private ranches to be fed.³⁴

At the end of February 2005, while the reindeer herders and NGOs were waiting for a reply to their letters, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry announced that the new Natural Resource Plan (NRP) had already begun earlier that month. Simultaneously, Metsähallitus had started logging in one of the reindeer herding areas, had opened a road into another and was still logging in the third area. At the time of publishing this report, a response has still not been received from Metsähallitus concerning a moratorium on logging while this process is underway.



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Greenpeace calls on the Government of Finland to:

- Implement an immediate moratorium on all industrial logging in important Sámi reindeer forests, as mapped by the Inari reindeer herding co-operatives and Nellim sub-group.
- Support the negotiation preconditions for the Natural Resource Plan (NRP) in Upper Lapland, as set out by the Inari reindeer herding co-operatives and Nellim sub-group - see Box 3.
- Transfer responsibility for State forests in the Sámi area, including Upper Lapland and the co-operative of Lappi, to the Metsähallitus Nature Conservation Department.
- Carry out an ecological gap analysis on protected areas in the Sámi area.

Greenpeace calls on StoraEnso and its customers to:

- Stop buying wood fibre derived from Metsähallitus's logging operations in areas mapped by the Inari reindeer herding co-operatives and Nellim sub-group.
- Support the negotiation preconditions for the Natural Resource Plan (NRP) in Upper Lapland, as set out by the Inari reindeer herding co-operatives and Nellim sub-group.

BOX 3 – Inari reindeer herding co-operative's preconditions for participation in revising the Metsähallitus Natural Resource Plan (NRP)

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and the reindeer herding co-operatives start bilateral negotiations on the issue. The NRP process begins only after an acceptable decision has been reached in the bilateral negotiations.
- The NRP process is based on the agreement between MAF and reindeer herders.
- In the negotiations each co-operative of Upper Lapland affected by Metsähallitus's forestry is represented. If a sub-group of any co-operative should consider it necessary to appoint its own representative it may do so.
- A lawyer is appointed to assist the reindeer herding co-operatives in the negotiation process. MAF covers the costs.
- The objective of the negotiations is to secure the operational preconditions for reindeer herding in each co-operative/sub-group. Parties decide on the extent of forestry in each area, forestry methods and the principles on which further negotiations with reindeer herders are based.
- MAF defines the operational preconditions for reindeer herding together with co-operatives (or sub-groups), based on the information held by the reindeer herding livelihood and produced by the research bodies.
- Co-operatives/sub-groups draw up forestry plans with Metsähallitus for each co-operative/sub-group based on the principles, areas and methods agreed with MAF.
- During the negotiations no logging is carried out in the important reindeer forests mapped by the Inari reindeer herding co-operatives and Nellim sub-group.
- The agreement may not be confirmed unless the representatives of all co-operatives and sub-groups agree on the decisions.
- The negotiations can be re-launched during the planning period in case safeguarding the preconditions of reindeer herding or maintaining the profitability of reindeer herding for any reason so require, for instance if the research provides new information on preconditions or profitability, or the conditions affecting them change.
- During the negotiations the process will be evaluated every fourth month.
- Negotiation parties can inform other interest groups on the negotiations.

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