

European Forest Growth, 2005 – 2020

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 2020*. Two Sides seeks to define European forest growth using simple, yet accurate, comparisons.

Summary

“European Forests have been growing by 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 over 200 million ha in Europe (excluding Russian Federation). ([FAO, Global Forest Resources Assessment, 2020](#))

Table 1 highlights the key figures concerning European forest growth over four time periods – 2010-2015; 2005-2015; 2000-2015; 2005-2020. Two Sides will focus on the data for the period 2005-2020.

Forest Area Summary				
	2010-2015	2005-2015	2000-2015	2005-2020
Total Growth Hectres (ha)	1,464,000	4,440,000	6,427,000	5,839,000
Total Growth Square Kilometres	14,640	44,400	64,270	58,390
Time period (years)	5	10	15	15
ha/year	292,800	444,000	428,467	389,267
km ² /year	2,928	4,440	4,285	3,893
m ² /year	2,928,000,000	4,440,000,000	4,284,666,667	3,892,666,667
FIFA football pitch dimensions m ²	7,140	7,140	7,140	7,140
Number of pitches/year	410,084	621,849	600,093	545,191
Number of pitches/day	1,123.52	1,704	1,644.09	1,494

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

Using data from the FAO, it can be claimed that European forests, between 2005 and 2020, grew by a total area of 58,390 km².

This is an area larger than the land area of Switzerland (39,516 km². [The World Bank, 2018](#))

It can also be claimed that, on average, European forests grew by an area equivalent to 1,494 football pitches every day over the 15-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

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2020. [Global Forest Resources Assessment](#).

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

The World Bank, 2018. [Land area \(sq. km\) Switzerland](#).

Data table

Forest area (km ²)							
	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2005 - 2020 Net Growth
Austria	37,760	38,380	38,510	38,630	38,690	38,990	480
Belgium	6,770	6,670	6,470	6,900	6,830	6,890	420
Bulgaria	33,270	33,750	36,510	37,370	38,230	38,930	2,420
Croatia	18,500	18,850	19,030	19,200	19,220	19,390	360
Cyprus	1,610	1,720	1,730	1,730	1,730	1,730	0
Czech Republic	26,290	26,370	26,470	26,570	26,670	26,770	300
Denmark	5,430	5,860	5,580	5,860	6,120	6,280	700
Estonia	22,060	22,430	22,520	23,360	22,320	24,380	1,860
Finland	218,750	224,450	221,430	222,420	222,420	224,090	2,660
France	144,360	152,890	158,610	164,190	169,890	172,530	13,920
Germany	113,000	113,540	113,840	114,090	114,190	114,190	350
Greece	32,990	36,010	37,520	39,020	40,540	39,020	1,500
Hungary	18,010	19,170	19,830	20,460	20,690	20,530	700
Ireland	4,650	6,350	6,950	7,200	7,540	7,820	870
Italy	75,900	83,690	87,590	90,280	92,970	95,660	8,070
Latvia	31,730	32,410	32,970	33,720	33,560	34,110	1,140
Luxembourg	860	870	870	890	870	890	20
Lithuania	19,450	20,200	21,210	21,700	21,800	22,010	800
Malta	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Netherlands	3,450	3,600	3,650	3,730	3,760	3,700	50
Norway	121,320	121,130	121,020	121,020	121,120	121,800	780
Poland	88,810	90,590	92,000	93,290	94,350	94,830	2,830
Portugal	34,360	33,430	32,960	32,520	31,820	33,120	160
Romania	63,710	63,660	63,910	65,150	68,610	69,290	5,380
Slovakia	19,220	19,210	19,320	19,180	19,400	19,260	-60
Slovenia	11,880	12,330	12,430	12,470	12,480	12,380	-50
Spain	138,090	169,770	172,820	185,450	184,180	185,720	12,900
Sweden	280,630	281,630	282,180	280,730	280,730	279,800	-2,380
Switzerland	11,510	11,940	12,170	12,350	12,540	12,690	520
United Kingdom	27,780	29,540	30,210	30,590	31,440	31,900	1,690
Europe 27 + Norway, Switzerland, and UK	1,612,150	1,680,440	1,700,310	1,730,070	1,744,710	1,758,700	58,390