

Forest experts warn against actionism in the German forest crisis and demand end of 'wood factories'

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In the light of the current forest crisis in Germany, a group of forest experts, forest practitioners, forest owners and representatives of environmental associations and NGO demands to turn away from conventional forestry in an open letter to Federal Minister Klöckner. It says: "We call on the state forestry industry to, instead of expensive rushed actions, finally carry out an expert analysis of its own work and to involve all stakeholders in this process. What is called for is a consistent departure from plantation forestry and a radical shift towards a management that treats the forest as an ecosystem and no longer as a wood factory."

Co-signatory Wilhelm Bode, former head of the Saarland Forestry Administration and author of the book 'Waldwende' emphasizes: "We finally need a shift in forestry, which will strengthen natural processes of production in the forest and not weaken them further. That is why first forestry itself is asked to take back operational stressors and to rely on nature for reforestation."

Forest ecologist and nature conservation scientist Prof. Pierre Ibisch says: "The current forest crisis in Germany is not only a consequence of climate change - the way forests are managed also bears considerable responsibility. There are too many poorly structured and species-poor forests that have been cut up by too many trails. Forest soils are driven on too intensively, and in many places the inner forest climate is damaged by thinning and excessive timber removal." Criticism is also voiced of the plan to tackle current forest damage with actionism by quickly salvage-logging damaged trees and conducting reforestation. Co-initiator and forest activist Norbert Panek stresses: "We finally need resting periods for the forest in Germany, which has been exploited for centuries. We need a new, ecologically oriented concept for the future forest - not a hectic "forest conversion", but simply forest development – closer towards nature, which leaves forest as an ecosystem the necessary leeway to be able to react to the looming environmental changes in a self-regulating way."

The aid for forest owners to be paid by all citizens through their taxes might be justified - but only if they are used to create a future-proof forest. It is required to work through past mistakes and to avoid them. László Maraz, coordinator of the Working Group Forest of the 'German Forum on Environment and Development': "It would be a waste of tax money to now plant millions of trees, when they are eaten by game as before. A forest-compatible reduction of the wild population is more urgent than ever before."

The signatories of the letter include scientists as well as forest experts with decades of experience, heads of environmental associations such as 'Deutscher Naturschutzring', Greenpeace, NABU, Friends of Nature and 'Deutsche Umweltstiftung', representatives of citizens' initiatives and renowned authors such as Franz Alt or Peter Wohlleben.