

German governmentt needs 800 mln euros to restore national forests: official

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German Minister of Food and Agriculture Julia Kloeckner on Wednesday called on some 800 million euros (879 million U.S. dollars) be made available over the next four years to restore Germany's national forests.

Altogether 547 million euros would come from Germany's national government while the federal states would provide the rest, according to Kloeckner who described the national forest summit as a "crisis meeting".

Germany's forests have been suffering from droughts, forest fires, storms and bark beetle plague. According to Kloeckner, more than 180,000 hectares of damaged forest had to be reforested.

"Our German forest is not doing well today," said Kloeckner during her opening speech of the summit in Berlin. "We need climate-adaptive, near-natural and sustainably managed mixed forests."

In the run-up to the summit, German environmental organizations and industry associations had already made demands regarding the different strategies for Germany's national forests.

The Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) stated that Germany should develop diverse and resilient forests that can cope with climate change while "retaining the forests' basic functions and ecological services".

"The primary objective is to establish multi-level mixed forests based on the tree species composition, dynamics and structure of natural forest communities," announced BfN.

Germany's industrial union for construction, agriculture and environment (IG BAU) demanded more employees in Germany's forestry sector. The climate-friendly conversion of the forest was a "mammoth task that can only be tackled with additional personnel," noted deputy chairman Harald Schaum.

Thousands of additional employees would be needed to repair the damage to German forests caused by the drought years 2018 and 2019 alone, estimated the industrial union IG BAU.

On Tuesday, German Environment Minister Svenja Schulze also described the state of Germany's forests as "dramatic" and stressed that Germany's forests, especially the many spruce and pine trees were "not prepared" for the impact of climate change.

"I don't want us to spend the millions with the watering can. Clear environmental criteria are needed for funding," Schulze told the German media group Funke before the summit.

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