

Forest, wood, wood products and the consumers – Some empirical evidences and strategies

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Keywords:

Forestry, wood, wood houses, window frames, consumers, transformation strategies

Addressed topics:

Product policy, market transformation

Forestry is often regarded as an excellent example for sustainability due to a sustainable use of the resource wood. A series of LCA-studies have shown – at least to a certain degree – environmental advantages of wood as material for constructing in comparison to other materials (like steel, concrete). The debate on sustainable innovations is based on this belief of a certain trust in these results.

However, markets need not only producers which offer environmentally more benign products, but also consumers who are willed to buy them. (Private) Consumers seem to have a high preference towards wood. A series of consumer surveys tell us a high relatedness towards forestry.

Also in an abstract manner, the “outcome” of forestry – wood – possesses a high level of sympathy and a positive image among consumers. Wood is often regarded as material contributing to wellness and a healthy environment. Consumers indicate to be interested at an increase of the application of wood in the construction and building sectors. However, we can observe a mismatch to the empirical degree of wood in this sector. That means that real demand for wooden products has a considerable deviation from potential demands.

In the paper, we will - first - report on some empirical evidence deriving from consumer surveys. Second, we will present some strategical proposals to overcome barriers and to reduce the gap between real and potential share of the application of wood in the area of private construction. Empirical evidence is based on international and German consumer surveys and on a still ongoing research project (see www.zufo.de) of which the recent results will be presented.

The contribution is organised according to three stages of the forest-wood-chain, namely forestry, wood and wooden products.