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## Climate and the Sámi people threatened as Finland attempts to hide its forest emissions

**(Brussels), March 8, 2017 - Finland's industrial logging is threatening the climate and its indigenous Sámi people, reveals a [report published today](#) by the Brussels-based forests and rights NGO, [Fern](#).**

Last year the Finnish government [confirmed](#) its intention to increase harvesting the country's forests by [nearly 25 per cent from present levels by the year 2030](#).<sup>1</sup>

The carbon dioxide released from the logging is set to be so vast that according to Finland's own [Impact Assessment of its Energy and Climate Strategy](#) (1) the country's overall carbon emissions would remain at current levels or even increase despite Finland cutting its use of fossil fuels.

Fern's report, [Arctic Limits: How Finland's forest policies threaten the Sámi and the climate](#), comes as the European Parliament and European Council discuss a new regulation on emissions from the forests and land use sector, known as LULUCF.<sup>2</sup> This regulation was issued by the Commission in July 2016.

To avoid accounting for its extra forest emissions, Finland is currently leading a group of countries, including Austria, who are trying to change the European Commission's proposed rules over how emissions from the land and forests sector are measured.<sup>3</sup>

"Fern has serious concerns that key members of the European Parliament and Member States such as Finland and Austria are doing their utmost to weaken the Commission's proposal, which is already not ambitious enough," said Hannah Mowat, forests and climate campaigner at Fern.

"Forests are increasingly important in fighting climate change, and can be a key weapon in helping us limit global warming to 2 degrees. They [could even put the 1.5 degrees target within reach](#) if the right policies are pursued. MEPs and Member States should be helping to develop a serious LULUCF policy that deploys forests to do their utmost for the climate, and doesn't ignore the emissions from them when they are harvested," she added.

The Sámi are the northern most indigenous people living in the European Union. Their traditional lands stretch across the Arctic area of Sápmi (which today encompasses Norway, Sweden, Russia and Finland).

Fern's report shows that in Finland, the Sámi are seeing their way of life eroded by the twin pressures of the country's industrial logging policy and climate change.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure is based on an increase in logging to an estimated 80 million cubic meters by 2030 [logging will increase by 15 million cubic meters].

<sup>2</sup> LULUCF stands for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry, See: [http://unfccc.int/land\\_use\\_and\\_climate\\_change/lulucf/items/3060.php](http://unfccc.int/land_use_and_climate_change/lulucf/items/3060.php)

<sup>3</sup> Since the [Renewable Energy Directive was introduced in 2009](#), the EU has encouraged its members to burn wood instead of fossil fuels to create energy. This has pushed countries to harvest more wood. Emissions released when the wood is burnt are not counted as emissions by power stations; instead they are – or should be - counted when the trees are cut.

For centuries, reindeer herding has been crucial to the Sámi's survival. But now the lichen which is the reindeers' main food source during the brutally cold winter months is disappearing: logging of old growth forests is eradicating tree hanging lichen, and climate change means that ground lichen is increasingly frozen beneath the surface snow (due to higher levels of rainfall), where reindeers can't access it.

[Tiina Sanila-Aikio](#) is a former reindeer herder and current President of Finland's Sámi Parliament. She sees logging and climate change as an existential threat to the Sámi way of life.

"Are we still an indigenous people if we don't have a connection to the nature?" she asks.

Fern urges Member States and the European Parliament to strengthen the European Commission's proposed LULUCF regulation by ensuring accounting rules are honest, transparent and credible, and prepares EU land and forests to play a bigger role in tackling climate change.

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**Note to editors:**

- (1) Sampo Soimakallio, senior scientist and the Finnish Environment Institute and one of the authors of the impact assessment of Finland's climate and energy law, will be in Brussels on 8 March and available for interviews. To arrange an interview, contact Fern (contact details at top of press release).
- (2) On 8 March, Fern and the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation are organising an [event in the European Parliament](#), hosted by MEP Paul Brannen, who is shadow rapporteur for the LULUCF regulation in the ENVI Committee for the S&D group and MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen from the EPP group.