

In 2014, Mistra-SWECIA conducted an extensive survey of forest owners and forestry advisors in Sweden. The aim of the study was to gain a more comprehensive picture of how foresters in Sweden view climate change and adaptation. The survey asked about the risks associated with climate change, views on different adaptation measures, and the importance of having science-based information for decision-making.

National survey of forestry professionals in Sweden

The results from the survey show that almost one third of forest owners and forestry advisors believe that climate change will imply serious risks for forests. A slightly lower number of professionals express concern about climate change impacts on their own forests. At the same time, more than a quarter believe that climate change will affect Swedish forestry in a positive way. Moreover, the survey shows that, in general, forestry professionals in Sweden are less concerned about climate change than the general public.

The survey helps to explain why forest owners have different views about the risks of climate change and the use of adaptation measures. Results show that forestry owners who have recently experienced extreme weather events are more aware of climate change. Having knowledge and experience with risk mitigating measures and believing that climate change is true are also factors that are correlated with higher awareness about climate change and higher willingness to take adaptation measures.

Interestingly, the survey also shows that forest owners and forestry advisors have different views about the suitability of different adaptation measures. For example, more than 40 per cent of the forest owners

believe that alternative forest management practices that avoid clear-cutting is an effective way of dealing with climate change. Only 17 per cent of the forestry advisors share that opinion. There was also a difference in opinion regarding earlier, more intensive felling and clearing. More than 80 per cent of the advisors preferred that method, but only half of the owners.

The survey results also show a substantial share of forest owners consider taking climate adaptation measures as an urgent matter. About one fifth of the forest owners who took part in the survey said they would soon have to take steps to adapt their forest to climate change, almost half of all forest owners stated that they would take risk-minimising steps in the coming five years.

Insufficient knowledge seems to be one of the main obstacles preventing forest owners from taking climate adaptation measures. The study shows that less than a quarter of the forest owners feel they have sufficient knowledge to adapt their forest to climate change. Moreover, a quarter of them expressed a high degree of distrust regarding climate research, while the corresponding figure for forest advisors was only 15 per cent.

The study also identified how science communi-

cation can increase awareness of climate change and help forest owners with adaptation. The forest owners who took part in the study were compared with a group of forest owners who had recently taken part in an education projects run by the Swedish Forest Agency on adaptation to climate change. Those forest owners had been informed about the risk of climate change and about possible adaptation measures through seminars, workshops or individual consultations.

When these two groups are compared, it appears that communication can be an efficient tool for promoting climate adaptation. In general, the forest owners who had taken part in the education project about climate change felt better equipped to take on adaptation measures. More than 37 per cent of them felt they had enough knowledge to adapt their forestry. 31 per cent also expressed that they would soon need to take steps. Only 23 per cent of the forest owners who had not taken part in the education project said that they had enough knowledge, while 20 per cent said they would soon need to take steps. □

The survey was done under the Mistra-SWECIA research programme, in collaboration with the University of Gothenburg and with support from the Swedish Forestry Agency. A questionnaire was sent to 3000 forest owners, 1100 forestry advisors, and to 4000 people who represented the Swedish general public. Half of the forest owners in the survey had taken part in one of the Swedish Forestry Agency's education programmes on climate change adaptation. The survey asked respondents about their experience of extreme weather events, risk-minimising measures, views about the risks of climate change, and knowledge about climate adaptation. 2568 forest owners, 364 forestry advisors and 1215 members of the general public filled in the questionnaire.

