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Federal Act on Forest

(Forest Act, ForA)

of 4 October 1991 (Status as of 1 August 2025)

The Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation,
 based on the articles 74 paragraph 1, 77 paragraphs 2 and 3, 78 paragraph 4 and
 95 paragraph 1 of the Federal Constitution^{1,2}
 and having considered the Federal Council Dispatch dated 29 June 1988³,
decrees:

Chapter 1 General Provisions

Art. 1 Aim

¹ This Act is intended to:

- a. conserve the forest in its area and spatial distribution;
- b. protect the forest as a close-to-nature community;
- c. ensure that the forest can fulfil its functions, in particular its protective, social and economic functions (forest functions);
- d. promote and maintain the forestry sector.

² It is furthermore intended to contribute to the protection of human life and important material assets against avalanches, landslides, erosion and rockfall (natural events).

Art. 2 Definition of forest

¹ Forest is defined as any area that is covered with forest trees or forest shrubs and can fulfil forest functions. Origin, type of use and land registry designation are not decisive.

² Also defined as forest are:

- a. grazing forests, wooded pastures and chestnut and walnut groves;

AS 1992 2521

¹ SR 101

² Amended by Annex No 8 of the FA of 21 June 2013, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2015 3631; BBl 2009 8533).

³ BBl 1988 III 173

- b. unstocked or unproductive areas of a forest plot, such as clearings, forest roads and other forest structures and installations;
- c. plots subject to compulsory afforestation.

³ Isolated groups of trees and shrubs, hedges, avenues, gardens, planted areas and parks, tree plantations established on open ground for short-term use and trees and bushes on check dams and in the immediate foreground of such installations are not defined as forest.

⁴ Within the framework defined by the Federal Council, the cantons may determine the width, area and age, from which an area newly colonised by forest shall be defined as forest, and the width and area from which other wooded areas shall be defined as forest. If the wooded area fulfils social or protective functions, in particular, the cantonal criteria are not definitive.

Art. 3 Forest conservation

Forest area should not be reduced.

Chapter 2 Protection of the Forest against Intervention

Section 1 Deforestation and Declaration as Forest

Art. 4 Definition of deforestation

Deforestation is the permanent or temporary change of use of forest land.

Art. 5 Prohibition on deforestation and derogations

¹ Deforestation is prohibited.

² In exceptional cases a deforestation permit may be granted if the applicant proves that there are important reasons for the deforestation that outweigh the interest of forest conservation and, furthermore, the following conditions are fulfilled:

- a. the proposed site must be essential to the works for which the deforestation is to be carried out;
- b. the works must essentially fulfil the spatial planning requirements;
- c. the deforestation does cause any serious threat to the environment.

³ Important reasons do not include financial interests, such as the potentially profitable use of the land or the low-cost acquisition of land for non-forestry purposes.

^{3bis} If the authorities have to decide whether to grant permission for the construction of installations for the generation of renewable energies and for energy transportation and distribution, when weighing up interests the national interest in constructing such installations is to be considered equal to other national interests.⁴

⁴ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

⁴ The protection of nature and cultural heritage must be taken into account.

⁵ A time limit shall be set for deforestation permits.

Art. 5a⁵ Wind energy facilities

¹ Wind energy facilities and their access routes in the forest are considered permanently installed if they are in the national interest and provided the access routes are adequate for the construction and operation of the plants. Proof of site permanency must be provided if the wind energy facility is to be erected in one of the following areas:

- a. at a site listed in an inventory in accordance with Article 5 of the Federal Act of 1 July 1966⁶ on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage (NCHA);
- b. in a forest reserve in accordance with Article 20 paragraph 4;
- c. in a federal game reserve in accordance with Article 11 of the Hunting Act of 20 June 1986⁷.

² In the case of wind energy facilities not located at a site that falls under Article 5 NCHA, interests shall be weighed in application of Article 3 NCHA.

Art. 6⁸ Responsibility

¹ Exceptional permits are granted by:

- a. the federal authorities, if they are competent to decide on the construction or alteration of works, for which deforestation is to be carried out;
- b. the cantonal authorities, if they decide on the construction or alteration of works, for which deforestation is to be carried out.

² Before the cantonal authority decides on a derogation, it shall hear the Federal Office for the Environment⁹ (Federal Office), if:

- a. the area to be deforested exceeds 5000m²; if several deforestation applications are made for one and the same project, the total area is decisive;
- b. the forest to be deforested is located in several cantons.

⁵ Inserted by No IV of the FA of 29 Sept. 2023 on a Secure Electricity Supply from Renewable Energy, in force since 1 Jan. 2025 (AS **2024** 679; BBl **2021** 1666).

⁶ SR **451**

⁷ SR **922.0**

⁸ Amended by No I 17 of the Federal Act of 18 June 1999 on the Coordination and Simplification of Decision-Making Procedures, in force since 1 Jan. 2000 (AS **1999** 3071; BBl **1998** 2591).

⁹ The designation of the administrative entity was amended according to Art. 16 para. 3 of the Publications Ordinance of 17 Nov. 2004 (AS **2004** 4937).

Art. 7¹⁰ Compensation for deforestation

¹ For all deforestation, compensation in kind must be provided in the same region and with species that are predominantly suited to the location.

² Measures may be implemented for the benefit of nature and landscape conservation instead of compensation in kind:

- a. in areas with increasing forest area;
- b. in other areas by way of exception in order to conserve arable land and areas of ecological or landscape value.

³ Compensation for deforestation may be dispensed with in the case of deforestation:

- a. of areas that have grown in the last 30 years in order to reclaim arable land;
- b. to guarantee flood protection and to rehabilitate waters;
- c. for the preservation and improvement of biotopes in accordance with Articles 18a and 18b paragraph 1 of the Federal Act of 1 July 1966¹¹ on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage.

⁴ If arable land that has been reclaimed in accordance with paragraph 3 letter is given a different use within 30 years, the compensation for deforestation must be provided retrospectively.

Art. 8¹²**Art. 9** Compensation

The cantons shall ensure that considerable benefits arising from deforestation permits that are not covered by Article 5 of the Federal Act on Spatial Planning of 22 June 1979¹³ are adequately compensated for.

Art. 10 Declaration as forest

¹ Any person who can demonstrate a legitimate interest may have the canton declare whether a plot of land is a forest.

² When enacting and revising land-use plans in accordance with the Federal Act of 22 June 1979¹⁴ on Spatial Planning declaration as forest must be ordered in locations:

- a. in which development zones border the forest or will border it in the future;

¹⁰ Amended by No I of the FA of 16 March 2012, in force since 1 July 2013 (AS 2013 1981; BBl 2011 4397, 4425).

¹¹ SR 451

¹² Repealed by No I of the FA of 16 March 2012, with effect from 1 July 2013 (AS 2013 1981; BBl 2011 4397, 4425).

¹³ SR 700

¹⁴ SR 700

- b. outside development zones where the canton wants to prevent an increase in forest.¹⁵

³ If a request for declaration as forest is made in association with an application for deforestation, responsibility is governed by Article 6. The competent federal authority decides at the request of the competent cantonal authority.¹⁶

Section 2 Forest and Spatial Planning

Art. 11 Deforestation and planning permission

¹ The deforestation permit does not exempt its holder from the obligation to obtain planning permission as stipulated in the Spatial Planning Act of 22 June 1979¹⁷.

² Should a construction project require both a deforestation permit and an exceptional permit to build outside the building zone, the latter may only be granted in agreement with the competent authority as stated in Article 6 of this Act.

Art. 12 Inclusion of forest in land-use plans

The allocation of forest to a zone requires a deforestation permit.

Art. 13 Demarcation of forest and land-use zones¹⁸

¹ Forest boundaries declared as such under Article 10 paragraph 2 shall be entered in the land-use plans.¹⁹

² New wooded areas outside these boundaries are not considered forest.

³ Forest boundaries may be reviewed in the forest declaration procedure under Article 10 if the land-use plans are revised and the actual circumstances have changed substantially.²⁰

Section 3 Pedestrian and Vehicular Access to the Forest

Art. 14 Accessibility

¹ The cantons ensure that the forest is accessible to the general public.

¹⁵ Amended by No I of the FA of 16 March 2012, in force since 1 July 2013 (AS **2013** 1981; BBl **2011** 4397, 4425).

¹⁶ Second sentence inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

¹⁷ SR **700**

¹⁸ Amended by No I of the FA of 16 March 2012, in force since 1 July 2013 (AS **2013** 1981; BBl **2011** 4397, 4425).

¹⁹ Amended by No I of the FA of 16 March 2012, in force since 1 July 2013 (AS **2013** 1981; BBl **2011** 4397, 4425).

²⁰ Amended by No I of the FA of 16 March 2012, in force since 1 July 2013 (AS **2013** 1981; BBl **2011** 4397, 4425).

² Where necessary for the conservation of the forest or other public interests, such as the protection of wild flora and fauna, the cantons shall:

- a. restrict accessibility to certain forest areas;
- b. subject the staging of major events in the forest to obtaining a permit.

Art. 15 Motorised vehicular traffic

¹ Forests and forest roads may only be accessed by motorised vehicular traffic for forestry purposes. The Federal Council regulates the exceptions to be made for military and other public tasks.

² The cantons may authorise access to forest roads for other purposes if this does not jeopardise forest conservation or other matters of public interest.

³ The cantons provide traffic signals and signs and the necessary controls. If signals, signs and controls are not sufficient, barriers may be installed.

Section 4 Protection against Other Detrimental Effects

Art. 16 Detrimental uses

¹ Uses that do not constitute deforestation as defined in Article 4, but which endanger or interfere with the functions or management of the forest are unlawful. Rights of use in such cases shall be revoked, if necessary by compulsory purchase. The cantons shall enact the necessary provisions.

² The competent authorities may authorise such uses for important reasons subject to certain conditions and requirements.²¹

Art. 17 Distance from forest edge

¹ Buildings and installations are only admissible in the vicinity of the forest if they do not interfere with its conservation, maintenance and use.

² The cantons shall specify a suitable minimum distance for buildings and installations from the forest edge. They shall take the location and expected stand height into consideration in the specification of this distance.

³ The competent authorities may authorise constructions at less than the minimum distance if important reasons are given and subject to certain conditions and requirements.²²

²¹ Amended by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

²² Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

Art. 18 Environmentally hazardous substances

The use of environmentally hazardous substances in the forest is prohibited. Exemptions from this provision are regulated by the environmental protection legislation.

Chapter 3 Protection against Natural Events**Art. 19²³**

Where necessary for the protection of human life and significant material assets, the cantons shall secure avalanche, landslide, erosion and rockfall areas and carry out stream control works in forests. Measures must be planned in an integrated and risk-based manner and the methods used should be as natural as possible.

Chapter 4 Maintenance and Use of the Forest**Section 1 Forest Management****Art. 20** Forest management principles

¹ The forest shall be managed in such a way that it can fulfil its functions without interruption or restriction (sustainability).

² The cantons shall enact planning and management regulations; in doing this, they shall take into account the requirements of wood supply, close-to-nature silviculture and the protection of nature and cultural heritage.

³ Should the state of the forest and forest conservation allow it, the maintenance and use of the forest may be dispensed with entirely or in part for ecological and landscape reasons.

⁴ The cantons may delimit suitable areas as forest reserves for the conservation of the species diversity of flora and fauna.

⁵ Where required by the protective function of the forest, the cantons ensure a minimum level of maintenance.

Art. 21 Wood harvesting

Any person who wishes to fell trees requires a permit issued by the forestry service. The cantons may provide for exemptions.

²³ Amended by Annex No 5 of the FA of 15 March 2024, in force since 1 Aug. 2025 (AS 2025 430; BBl 2023 858).

Art. 21a²⁴ Worker safety

In order to ensure worker safety, contractors engaging in wood harvesting in the forest must demonstrate that the workers employed have completed a federally recognised course on the dangers of forestry work.

Art. 22 Prohibition of clearcutting

¹ Clearcutting and forms of wood harvesting that have effects similar to clearcutting are prohibited.

² The cantons may authorise exemptions to allow special silvicultural measures to be carried out.

Art. 23 Restocking of forest gaps

¹ Should gaps arise in the forest due to interventions or natural events which endanger the stability or protective function of a forest, their restocking shall be ensured.

² If this does not occur through natural regeneration, the gaps must be planted with tree and shrubs that are suited to the location.

Art. 24 Forest reproductive material

¹ Only reproductive material and plants that are healthy and suited to the location may be used for forest planting.

² The Federal Council issues regulations on the origin, use, trading and safeguarding of forest reproductive material.

Art. 25 Alienation and division

¹ The alienation of forest in the ownership of communes and corporations and the division of forests requires the authorisation of the canton. This may only be granted if the functions of the forest are not impaired as a result.

² If the alienation or division also requires authorisation in accordance with the Federal Act of 4 October 1991²⁵ on Rural Land Rights, the cantons shall ensure that the authorisation processes procedures are combined and concluded by joint decision.

²⁴ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

²⁵ SR 211.412.11

Section 2 Prevention and Remediation of Forest Damage

Art. 26²⁶ Federal measures

¹ The Federal Council shall enact regulations on measures for the prevention and remediation of damage that arises as a result of natural disaster or harmful organisms and that could pose a threat to the function of the forest;

² In order to protect against harmful organisms, it may ban or limit certain organisms, plants or products, or introduce requirements to authorise, report, register or document them.

³ The Confederation shall establish measures at the national borders and ensure that the cantons set and coordinate trans-cantonal measures within the country's borders.

⁴ It maintains a federal plant protection service whose forest section is subordinate to the federal office.

Art. 27 Cantonal measures

¹ Subject to Article 26, the cantons shall take any measures necessary to prevent the causes and consequences of damage that could compromise the functions of the forest. In particular, they monitor their area for harmful organisms.²⁷

² They shall regulate wild animal populations in such a way that forest conservation, in particular natural regeneration with tree species suited to the location, is guaranteed without protective measures. Where this is not possible, they undertake measures to prevent damage caused by wild animals.

Art. 27a²⁸ Prevention of harmful organisms

¹ Persons handling plants must observe the principles of plant protection.

² The Confederation, in cooperation with the cantons concerned, shall establish strategies and guidelines on measures to be taken against harmful organisms that may considerably compromise forest functions. The measures ensure that:

- a. newly identified harmful organisms are destroyed in a timely manner;
- b. established harmful organisms are contained if the expected benefits outweigh the costs of control;
- c. harmful organisms found outside of the forest area are also monitored, destroyed or contained in order to protect the forest.

³ Owners of trees, shrubs, other plants, cultures, plant material, means of production and objects that are infested or could be infested with harmful organisms, or are them-

²⁶ Amended by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

²⁷ Amended by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

²⁸ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

selves harmful organisms, must carry out or allow monitoring, isolation, treatment or destruction thereof in conjunction with the relevant authorities.

Art. 28 Extraordinary measures in the event of forest disasters

In the event of forest disasters, the Federal Assembly may undertake measures, by means of a general federal decree not subject to a referendum, that specifically serve the preservation of the forestry and timber sector.

Art. 28a²⁹ Action against climate change

The Confederation and cantons shall take measures to provide sustainable support to the forest in its functions, even under changed climatic conditions.

Chapter 5 Promotional Measures

Section 1 Training, Advice, Research and Data Acquisition

Art. 29 Duties of the Confederation in matters of education and training

¹ The Confederation shall coordinate and promote forestry education and training.³⁰

² In conjunction with the cantons, it shall provide theoretical and practical training and continuing education in forestry at tertiary level.³¹

³ ...³²

⁴ The legislation on vocational and professional education and training applies to the training of forestry personnel. The Federal Council shall specify the forestry education and training areas, in which the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications implements this legislation.³³

Art. 30 Duties of the cantons in the areas of training and advice

The cantons shall ensure the training of forestry workers and the provision of advice to forest owners.

²⁹ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

³⁰ Amended by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

³¹ Amended by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

³² Repealed by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, with effect from 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

³³ Amended by Annex No II 6 of the Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act of 13 Dec. 2002, in force since 1 Jan. 2004 (AS 2003 4557; BBl 2000 5686).

Art. 31 Research and development

¹ The Confederation may commission or provide financial assistance for the following purposes:

- a. research on the forest;
- b. research and development of measures for the protection of the forest against harmful effects;
- c. research and development of measures aimed at protecting human life and significant material assets against natural events;
- d. research and development of measures to boost the market for wood and the use of wood.

² It may establish and operate research institutes.

Art. 32 Transfer of responsibilities to associations

¹ The Confederation may entrust national organisations with duties relating to forest conservation and provide financial assistance to them for this purpose.

² It may also entrust to cantonal or regional associations duties of particular significance for certain regions, in particular in the mountain areas.

Art. 33 Surveys

¹ The Confederation shall ensure that periodic surveys of the locations, functions and state of the forest, of the production and use of wood and of the structures and economic situation of the forestry sector are carried out. The forest owners and the management bodies of forestry and timber enterprises must provide the authorities with the information required and, if necessary, acquiesce in the conduct of enquiries.

² All of those responsible for carrying out or evaluating surveys are bound by official secrecy.

Art. 34 Information

The Confederation and cantons shall ensure that the authorities and public are informed about the significance and state of the forest and about the forestry and timber sector.

Section 1a³⁴ Timber Production**Art. 34a** Marketing and use of timber

The Confederation shall promote the marketing and use of sustainably produced timber, in particular by supporting innovative projects.

³⁴ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

Art. 34^b Federal buildings and installations

¹ The Confederation shall encourage the use of sustainably produced timber where appropriate in the planning, construction and operation of its own buildings and installations.

² When purchasing wood products, it shall take account of factors such as sustainable and close-to-nature forest management and the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Section 2 Financing**Art. 35³⁵** Principles

¹ Subsidies paid in accordance with this Act is granted within the scope of the authorised credits under the condition that:

- a. the measures are cost effective and carried out professionally;
- b. the measures are assessed in conjunction with those of other Federal Acts both collectively and according to their actions in combination;
- c. the beneficiary makes a contribution that is proportionate to its economic performance, the other sources of finance and reasonable self-financing measures;
- d. third parties, who are beneficiaries or originators of damage, are called on for co-financing;
- e. a permanent resolution of conflicts that is beneficial to forest conservation is reached.

² The Federal Council may require that subsidies are only paid to beneficiaries who participate in self-financing measures by the forestry and timber sector.

Art. 36³⁶ Protection against natural events

¹ Based on programme agreements, the Confederation shall make global compensatory payments to the cantons for compiling data and for measures required in spatial planning, organisational, biological and technical terms to provide protection against natural events.

² It shall make compensatory payments for:

- a. the compilation of data such as event analyses, registers, hazard assessments, risk maps and overall plans;

³⁵ Amended by No II 30 of the Federal Act of 6 Oct. 2006 on the New System of Financial Equalisation and Division of Tasks between the Confederation and the Cantons (NFE), in force since 1 Jan. 2008 (AS 2007 5779; BBl 2005 6029).

³⁶ Amended by Annex No 5 of the FA of 15 March 2024, in force since 1 Aug. 2025 (AS 2025 430; BBl 2023 858).

- b. spatial planning measures such as risk mitigation assessments and moving buildings and installations at risk to safe locations;
- c. organisational measures such as warning systems, operational planning and technical precautions for emergency response operations;
- d. biological measures such as creating forest with special protective functions and related young forest maintenance;
- e. technical measures such as the maintenance, repair, reinforcement, replacement and construction of protective structures and installations;
- f. measures such as repairing damage to buffer zones caused by events.

³ By way of exception, it may make compensatory payments by means of a ruling for projects that require an individual assessment by the Confederation.

⁴ The amount of the compensatory payments made is determined by the risk posed by natural events and the cost and effectiveness of the measures.

Art. 37³⁷ Protective forest

¹ The Confederation shall make global compensatory payments to the cantons on the basis of programme agreements for measures necessary for the fulfilment of function of the protective forest, in particular for:

- a. the maintenance of the protective forest, including the prevention and remediation of forest damage that endangers the protective forest;
- b. the guaranteeing of the infrastructure for the maintenance of the protective forest insofar as it takes the forest as a natural community into account.

^{1bis} By way of exception, it may make compensatory payments by means of a ruling for projects that originate as the result of an extraordinary natural event.³⁸

² The amount of the compensatory payments made is determined by the protective forest area to be maintained, the risk to be hindered and the impact of the measures.

Art. 37a³⁹ Measures against forest damage outside the protective forest

¹ The Confederation shall make global compensatory payments to the cantons on the basis of programme agreements for measures to prevent and mitigate forest damage outside the protective forest which is caused by natural events or harmful organisms.

² By way of exception, it may make compensatory payments by means of a ruling for individual projects that require an assessment by the Confederation.

³⁷ Amended by No II 30 of the Federal Act of 6 Oct. 2006 on the New System of Financial Equalisation and Division of Tasks between the Confederation and the Cantons (NFE), in force since 1 Jan. 2008 (AS **2007** 5779; BBl **2005** 6029).

³⁸ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

³⁹ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

³ The amount of the compensatory payments made is determined by the hazard to be prevented and the impact of the measures.

Art. 37^{b40} Reimbursement of costs

¹ Those required to take measures against harmful organisms in accordance with Article 27a paragraph 3 may be suitably reimbursed for any costs of prevention, control and re-establishment that are not borne under Article 48a.

² The amount to be reimbursed is set by the competent authority in a procedure that is as simple as possible and free of charge to the person who has incurred costs.

Art. 38⁴¹ Biological diversity of the forest

¹ The Confederation shall provide financial assistance for measures that contribute to the conservation and improvement of biological diversity in the forest, in particular for:⁴²

- a. the protection and maintenance of forest reserves and other ecologically valuable forest habitats;
- b.⁴³ the fostering of biodiversity and genetic diversity of the forest;
- c. the connectivity of forest habitats;
- d. the conservation of traditional forms of forest management;
- e.⁴⁴ ...

² ...⁴⁵

³ The level of the financial assistance is based on the significance of the measures in relation to biological diversity and the effectiveness of the measures.

⁴⁰ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

⁴¹ Amended by No II 30 of the Federal Act of 6 Oct. 2006 on the New System of Financial Equalisation and Division of Tasks between the Confederation and the Cantons (NFE), in force since 1 Jan. 2008 (AS 2007 5779; BBl 2005 6029).

⁴² Amended by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

⁴³ Amended by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

⁴⁴ Repealed by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, with effect from 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

⁴⁵ Repealed by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, with effect from 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

Art. 38a⁴⁶ Forest management⁴⁷

¹ The Confederation provides financial assistance for measures that improve the profitability of sustainable forest management, in particular for:⁴⁸

- a. inter-operational planning bases;
- b. measures to improve the management conditions of the forestry operations;
- c. temporary joint measures by the forestry and timber sector for advertising and marketing promotion in the case of exceptional wood supply;
- d. the storage of wood in the case of exceptional wood supply;
- e.⁴⁹ promoting the training of forestry workers and the practical training of forestry experts at university level;
- f.⁵⁰ measures that support the forest in being able to fulfil its functions even under changed climatic conditions, in particular for the management of young forest and propagation of plant material;
- g.⁵¹ adaptation or reconstitution of public infrastructure facilities, insofar as these are necessary as part of an overall forest management concept and take account of the forest as a close-to-nature habitat, and overdevelopment is avoided.

² It provides financial assistance:

- a.⁵² for measures under paragraph 1 letters a, b and d–g: as global subsidies on the basis of programme agreements concluded with the cantons;
- b. for measures under paragraph 1 letter c: by a ruling of the Federal Office.

³ The level of the financial assistance is based on the effectiveness of the measures.

⁴⁶ Inserted by No II 30 of the Federal Act of 6 Oct. 2006 on the New System of Financial Equalisation and Division of Tasks between the Confederation and the Cantons (NFE), in force since 1 Jan. 2008 (AS **2007** 5779; BBl **2005** 6029).

⁴⁷ Amended by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

⁴⁸ Amended by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

⁴⁹ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

⁵⁰ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

⁵¹ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

⁵² Amended by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

Art. 39 Education and training

¹ The Confederation provides subsidies for the education and training of forestry personnel according to Articles 52–59 of the Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act of 13 December 2002^{53,54}

² In derogation from paragraph 1 it assumes up to 50 percent of the occupation-specific costs, in particular for the on-site practical training of forestry personnel and creation of teaching material for forestry personnel.⁵⁵

³...⁵⁶

Art. 40 Investment credits

¹ The Confederation may grant interest-free or low-interest repayable credits:

- a. as building loans;
- b.⁵⁷ for the financing of the residual costs of measures eligible for subsidy under Articles 36, 37 and 38a paragraph 1 letter b;
- c. for the acquisition of forestry vehicles, machines and equipment and for the creation of forestry installations.

² The loans are limited in term.

³ Loans are only granted on the application of the canton. If a debtor does not meet his repayment obligation, the relevant canton shall assume responsibility for the repayment in his place.

⁴ Repayments shall be used to fund new investment credits.

Art. 41⁵⁸ Provision of subsidies

¹ The Federal Assembly shall approve by simple federal degree a temporary four-year guarantee credit⁵⁹ for the provision of subsidies and credits.

² Subsidies for the response to extraordinary natural events are limited in time according to the duration of the corresponding measures.

⁵³ SR **412.10**

⁵⁴ Amended by Annex No II 6 of the Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act of 13 December 2002, in force since 1 Jan. 2004 (AS **2003** 4557; BBl **2000** 5686).

⁵⁵ Amended by Annex No II 6 of the Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act of 13 December 2002, in force since 1 Jan. 2004 (AS **2003** 4557; BBl **2000** 5686).

⁵⁶ Repealed by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, with effect from 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

⁵⁷ Amended by No II 30 of the Federal Act of 6 Oct. 2006 on the New System of Financial Equalisation and Division of Tasks between the Confederation and the Cantons (NFE), in force since 1 Jan. 2008 (AS **2007** 5779; BBl **2005** 6029).

⁵⁸ Amended by No II 30 of the Federal Act of 6 Oct. 2006 on the New System of Financial Equalisation and Division of Tasks between the Confederation and the Cantons (NFE), in force since 1 Jan. 2008 (AS **2007** 5779; BBl **2005** 6029).

⁵⁹ Term in accordance with Annex No 9 of the FA of 19 March 2021, in force since 1 Jan. 2022 (AS **2021** 662; BBl **2020** 349). This amendment has been made in the provisions specified in the AS.

Section 3⁶⁰ Further Measures

Art. 41a Declaration of origin⁶¹

¹ The Federal Council may issue regulations on the voluntary declaration of origin of forest products and their processed products in order to promote quality and sales.

² Registration, protection of labels, procedures and legal protection are governed by the Agriculture Act of 29 April 1998^{62,63}

³ The Federal Council may transfer responsibility for the above to third parties.⁶⁴

Art. 41b⁶⁵ Recommended prices for raw timber

¹ The forest owners' organisations may at national or regional level issue recommended prices for raw timber that suppliers and their customers have agreed on.

² The recommended prices shall differ according to tree species, product range and quality grades.

³ There shall be no obligation to comply with the recommended prices.

⁴ No recommended prices shall be stipulated for consumers.

Chapter 6 Criminal Provisions

Art. 42 Misdemeanours

¹ Any person who wilfully:⁶⁶

- a. clears forest without authorisation;
- b. obtains a payment for himself or others, to which he is not entitled by providing untrue or incomplete information;
- c. fails to comply with or hinders the prescribed generation of forest

shall be liable to a custodial sentence not exceeding one year or to a monetary penalty.

² If the offender acts negligently, he or she shall be liable to a monetary penalty not exceeding 40,000 Swiss francs.

⁶⁰ Inserted by Annex No 8 of the FA of 21 June 2013, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2015** 3631; BBl **2009** 8533).

⁶¹ Inserted by No I of the FA of 27 Sept. 2024, in force since 1 Aug. 2025 (AS **2025** 403; BBl **2024** 971, 1126).

⁶² SR **910.1**

⁶³ Amended by Annex No 2 of the FA of 16 June 2023, in force since 1 Jan. 2025 (AS **2024** 623; BBl **2020** 3955).

⁶⁴ Inserted by Annex No 2 of the FA of 16 June 2023, in force since 1 Jan. 2025 (AS **2024** 623; BBl **2020** 3955).

⁶⁵ Inserted by No I of the FA of 27 Sept. 2024, in force since 1 Aug. 2025 (AS **2025** 403; BBl **2024** 971, 1126).

⁶⁶ Amended by Art. 333 of the Criminal Code (SR **311.0**) in its version according to the Federal Act of 13 Dec. 2002, in force since 1 Jan. 2007 (AS **2006** 3459; BBl **1999** 1979).

Art. 43 Contraventions

¹ Any person who wilfully and without authorisation⁶⁷:

- a. misuses forestry buildings and installations;
- b. restricts the accessibility of the forest;
- c. fails to comply with accessibility restrictions according to Article 14;
- d. drives in the forest or on forest roads with motor vehicles;
- e. fells trees in the forest;
- f. hinders investigations or provides untrue or incomplete information or refuses to provide information in breach of the obligation to provide information;
- g. fails to comply within or outside of the forest with the regulations on measures for the prevention and remediation of forest damage and measures against diseases and pests that may threaten the forest internally; Article 233 of the Criminal Code⁶⁸ is reserved;
- h. fails to comply with the regulations on the origin, use, trade in and safeguarding of forest reproductive material. If an offence is at the same time an offence against the customs legislation, it is prosecuted and judged under the Customs Act of 1 October 1925⁶⁹;

shall be liable to a monetary penalty not exceeding 20,000 Swiss francs.

² Attempts and complicity are also offences.

³ If the offender acts negligently, the penalty is a fine.

⁴ The cantons may sanction offences against cantonal law as contraventions.

Art. 44 Misdemeanours and contraventions in businesses

If the offence or contravention is committed in the course of business of a legal entity, a partnership or a sole proprietorship or in the course of business of a public law corporation or institution, Articles 6 and 7 of the Federal Act of 22 March 1974⁷⁰ on Administrative Criminal Law apply.

Art. 45 Prosecution

The cantons are responsible for prosecution.

⁶⁷ Amended by Art. 333 of the Criminal Code (SR **311.0**) in its Version according to the FA of 13 Dec. 2002, in force since 1 Jan. 2007 (AS **2006** 3459; BBl **1999** 1979).

⁶⁸ SR **311.0**

⁶⁹ [BS 6 465; AS **1956** 587; **1959** 1343 Art. 11 No III; **1973** 644; **1974** 1857 Annex No 7; **1980** 1793 No I 1; **1992** 1670 No III; **1994** 1634 No I 3; **1995** 1816; **1996** 3371 Annex 2 No 2; **1997** 2465 Annex No 13; **2000** 1300 Art. 92, 1891 No VI 6; **2002** 248 No I 1 Art. 41; **2004** 4763 Annex No II 1; **2006** 2197 Annex No 50. AS **2007** 1411 Art. 131 para. 1]. See now: the Customs Act of 18 March 2005 (SR **631.0**).

⁷⁰ SR **313.0**

Chapter 7 Procedures and Enforcement

Section 1 Procedures

Art. 46 Appeals

¹ Appeal proceedings are governed by the general provisions on the administration of federal justice.⁷¹

^{1bis} and ^{1ter} ...⁷²

² The Federal Office⁷³ has the right of appeal under federal and cantonal law against rulings by the cantonal authorities made on the basis of this Act and its implementing provisions.

³ The right of appeal of the cantons, communes and organisations concerned with the protection of nature and cultural heritage is based on Articles 12–12g of the Federal Act of 1 July 1966⁷⁴ on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage.⁷⁵ It is also accorded against rulings made on the basis of Articles 5, 7, 8, 10, 12 and 13 of this Act.

⁴ The Federal Council may provide for appeal proceedings against first instance rulings in the implementing legislation.⁷⁶

Art. 47 Effectiveness of authorisations and orders

Authorisations and orders in terms of this Act only become effective when they come into force. This is subject to Article 12e of the Federal Act of 1 July 1966⁷⁷ on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage.⁷⁸

Art. 48 Compulsory purchase

¹ If required by forest conservation measures or the erection of structures and installations for protection against natural hazards, the cantons may acquire the necessary landed property and any associated easements through compulsory purchase.

⁷¹ Amended by No 127 of the Administrative Procedure Act of 17 June 2005, in force since 1 Jan. 2007 (AS **2006** 2197 1069; BBl **2001** 4202).

⁷² Inserted by Annex No 9 of the Gene Technology Act of 21 March 2003 (AS **2003** 4803; BBl **2000** 2391). Repealed by Annex No 127 of the Administrative Procedure Act of 17 June 2005, with effect from 1. Jan. 2007 (AS **2002** 2197 1069; BBl **2001** 4202).

⁷³ Term in accordance with No I 17 of the Federal Act of 18 June 1999 on the Coordination and Simplification of Decision-Making Procedures, in force since 1. Jan. 2000 (AS **1999** 3071; BBl **1998** 2591).

⁷⁴ SR **451**

⁷⁵ Amended by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

⁷⁶ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

⁷⁷ SR **451**

⁷⁸ Second sentence inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS **2016** 3207; BBl **2014** 4909).

² The cantons may declare the Compulsory Purchase Act of 20 June 1930⁷⁹ to be applicable in their implementing provisions whereby the cantonal government shall rule on any objections that remain in dispute. If the object of the compulsory purchase extends over the territory of more than one canton, the Compulsory Purchase Act applies.

Art. 48a⁸⁰ Costs borne by originator

The costs of measures that the authorities introduce or order to prevent immediate threat or detriment to the forest and to ascertain and mitigate such threat or detriment shall be transferred to the culpable originator.

Section 2 Enforcement

Art. 49⁸¹ Confederation

¹ The Confederation supervises the enforcement of this Act and implements the duties directly assigned to it by this Act.

^{1bis} It coordinates its enforcement measures with those of the cantons.⁸²

² Before a federal authority issues a ruling on the basis of the Forest Act based on another Federal Act or an international agreement, it shall consult the cantons concerned. The Federal Office and the other federal agencies concerned cooperate in accordance with Articles 62a and 62b of the Government and Administration Organisation Act of 21 March 1997⁸³ in relation to enforcement.

³ The Federal Council enacts the implementing provisions. It may delegate the issuing of provisions of a primarily technical or administrative nature to the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communication or its agencies and to subordinated federal offices.⁸⁴

Art. 50 Cantons

¹ The cantons enforce this Act and enact the necessary regulations; Article 49 is reserved.

⁷⁹ SR 711

⁸⁰ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

⁸¹ Amended by No I 17 of the Federal Act of 18 June 1999 on the Coordination and Simplification of Decision-Making Procedures, in force since 1 Jan. 2000 (AS 1999 3071; BBl 1998 2591).

⁸² Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

⁸³ SR 172.010

⁸⁴ Second sentence inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

² The cantonal authorities shall undertake immediately the measures necessary to redress unlawful situations. They are authorised to collect security deposits and impose substitutive execution.

Art. 50a⁸⁵ Delegation of enforcement tasks

The enforcement authorities may commission and remunerate public or private agencies to conduct controls and other enforcement measures.

Art. 51 Forest organisation

¹ The cantons ensure the appropriate organisation of the forestry service.

² They divide their territory into forest districts and forest areas. These are managed by forestry experts with tertiary-level education and practical experience.⁸⁶

Art. 52 Reservation of the right to grant authorisation

The cantonal implementing provisions on Articles 16 paragraph 1, 17 paragraph 2 and 20 paragraph 2 require the approval of the Confederation to be valid.

Art. 53 Duties to provide information

¹ All cantonal implementing provisions must be made known to the Federal Office prior to their entry into force.

² The Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications stipulates which cantonal provisions and decisions must be made known to the Federal Office.

Chapter 8 Final Provisions

Art. 54 Repeal of current legislation

The following are repealed:

- a. the Federal Act of 11 October 1902⁸⁷ on the Supervision of the Forest Police by the Confederation;
- b. the Federal Act of 21 March 1969⁸⁸ on Investment Credits for the Forestry Sector in the Mountain Region;

⁸⁵ Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

⁸⁶ Amended by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

⁸⁷ [BS 9 521; AS 1954 559 No I 5, 1956 1215, 1965 321 Art. 60, 1969 500, 1971 1190, 1977 2249 No I 11.11, 1985 660 No I 23, 1988 1696 Art. 7]

⁸⁸ [AS 1970 761]

- c. the Federal Decree of 21 December 1956⁸⁹ on the Contribution of the Confederation to the Rehabilitation of Forests Infested with Chestnut Blight;
- d. the Federal Decree of 23 June 1988⁹⁰ on Extraordinary Measures for the Conservation of the Forest.

Art. 55 Amendment of current legislation

...⁹¹

Art. 56 Transitional provisions

¹ The new law applies to proceedings pending on the commencement of this Act. The competent authority according to the old law shall complete the pending proceedings.

² Unlimited deforestation authorisations lapse two years after the commencement of this Act. In individual cases, the competent authority may prolong the deadline on application if the conditions for deforestation are fulfilled. The application must be made before the expiry date. The adaptation of rulings to the new law is reserved.

³ Contractors harvesting wood in the forest are exempt up to five years after the commencement of this Act from the duty imposed by Article 21a, whereby they must demonstrate that the workers employed have completed a federally recognised course raising awareness of the dangers of forestry work.⁹²

Art. 57 Referendum and commencement

¹ This Act is subject to an optional referendum.

² The Federal Council determines the commencement date.

Commencement date:⁹³ 1 January 1993

Art. 40 and 54 let. b: 1 January 1994

⁸⁹ [AS 1957 317; 1977 2249 No I 11.12]

⁹⁰ [AS 1988 1696]

⁹¹ The amendments may be consulted under AS 1992 2521.

⁹² Inserted by No I of the FA of 18 March 2016, in force since 1 Jan. 2017 (AS 2016 3207; BBl 2014 4909).

⁹³ FCD of 30 Nov. 1992.