

3. THE EC FOREST PRODUCTS SECTORS

3.1 EC Forestry Sector

Woodland covers less than a quarter of the European Community, i.e., almost 54 million ha. A fifth of this area is, however, occupied by brushwood, stunted trees, shelter belts and other forest too sparse to be suitable for timber production.

The largest total wooded areas are to be found in France, with 14.7 million ha, and Spain, with 12.5 million, between them accounting for half of the total wooded area of the EC. Together with Germany, Greece and Italy, the total rises to 87 per cent. The seven other members of the EC share the remainder.

More than half (58 per cent) of European forests are privately owned (by individuals, companies, institutions, etc.). Only 27 per cent of the surface area is state-owned and the remainder (15 per cent) belongs to other public bodies.

In 1985, timber production stood at 105 million m³, or only 3 per cent of world production. (For a breakdown by EC country, see Table 2.) The EC exports 10 million m³ of rough timber to third countries, but has to import 15 million m³. Taking account of requirements for timber and wood-based products such as sawn wood, panelling, pulp, paper and board, the EC's forest products sector deficit is very substantial, and is second only to the EC deficit in petroleum products.

3.2 Timber Industries in the EC

The timber industry in the EC includes sawing and basic processing of wood for the furniture sector, and woodworking. According to the study by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) *European Timber Trends and Prospects to the Year 2000 and Beyond*, demand for wood products will increase in coming years.

TABLE 2

1985 EC Timber Production

Belgium/Lux.	2.9%
Denmark	2.2
Germany	27.6
Greece	2.5
Spain	13.0
France	28.6
Ireland	1.0
Italy	8.7
Netherlands	1.0
Portugal	8.8
U.K.	3.7
EC	100.0%

Source: European Commission, *Europe in Figures*.