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Our technical expertise supporting European forests

Managing, restoring and increasing the forest coverage, this is what Sylva Nova is all about. Our services, our approach, our team and all our stakeholders have been contributing to this mission since 1994.

- > 30 years of experience
- 4,000 ha of forest management & consulting / year
- 550 ha restored / year
- 13 countries covered

1. Sylva Nova

Our purpose

Forests fulfil many functions at the same time: wood production, CO_2 capture, water filtration, soil protection, climate regulation, shelter for 80% of land animal species, reservoirs of biodiversity, heat waves reduction, mental health and wellbeing… No technology can do as much and none of these functions should be overlooked. Yet forests are under threat.



Climate Action

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Our ambition is to monitor nature, complementing and accelerating its work with our operational expertise, in order to conserve, restore and build the European forests of the future:

- Forest management
- Certification
- Reforestation and restoration of forest landscapes
- Engineering and consultancy

Our approach

Sylva Nova advocates for long-term silviculture (CCF), based on naturalness and diversity. We practise non-invasive silviculture, avoiding both brutal clear-cutting and record planting, favouring continuous cover and irregular growth, supporting and enriching natural regeneration, and focusing on the diversity of species and their adaptation to the site.

Our stakeholders

Our work is a team contribution, combining the expertise and commitment of a wide range of stakeholders.

Owners

We work in forests owned by private, public or institutional owners. Our role is to help them with their silvicultural projects and guide them towards more sustainable management. Certain forestry projects can benefit from the financial contribution and support of our customers and partners.

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Clients and partners

We work for committed clients, to whom we propose projects to support and with whom we are keen to share our experience in the field. Our benchmark partners include: Reforest'Action, Jane Goodall Institute Belgium, Go Forest, International Tree Foundation, Trees for All, Dieteren and more.

Technical service providers

We work with a network of experienced local contacts and service providers, with whom we design, document, implement and monitor projects. These include forest-management firms, nurseries, forestry contractors, silviculturists and more.
The projects undertaken by Sylva Nova are managed locally. All are carried out with respect for indigenous species and local practices and regulations.

Scientists and research programmes

We regularly participate in research programmes dedicated to the forestry sector, its challenges and solutions. Whether individually or in consortia with research centres, universities, scientists, governmental and non-governmental organisations and international bodies, we are keen to contribute our field expertise to studies that are concerned with the future of our forests (LIFE, EFI…).

Groups and associations

We ensure that we are informed, trained and involved in bodies whose mission or interests include forests. These include groups and think tanks such as: UNECE (United Nations Forestry and Timber Section), FAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation), Solar Impulse Foundation, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC®), ELO/Wildlife Estates Label, ULiège Gembloux, Agro-Paris Tech, UCLouvain, European Forest Institute (EFI), Groupe d'Histoire des Forêts Françaises (GHFF), The Shift (the meeting point for the sustainable movement in Belgium), Libramont Cooperalia, and more.

Our team

Sylva Nova was founded in 1994 by Pierre Hermans. Its operational team is made up exclusively of experts with advanced forestry training and project managers. Together, they speak French, English, Italian or Portuguese and share the same values: rigour, dynamism, curiosity and passion. They are especially focused on working within a professional ecosystem that is driven by the same mindset and that shares the same best practices.

- Pierre Hermans (Founder and managing director, technical supervision)
- Mélanie Noan (Forest management & certifications)
- Federica Tartaglia (Forest landscape restoration – Lead Europe)
- Gilles Tilman (Impacts & certifications)
- Clémence Tharin (Forest landscape restoration - Europe)
- Véronique Joassart (Partnerships & Relations)
- Thomas Piron (Technical forester - Belgium)

Our strategic committee

Convinced that tomorrow's forests will not be able to continue providing all their services without the joint contribution of owners, technical experts, scientists, and committed companies, Sylva Nova has set up a strategic committee bringing together all these stakeholders.

This committee acts as a think tank to

- Initiating practices aimed at strengthening forest resilience
- Creating or selecting reliable systems for measuring and verifying impacts
- Mobilizing committed companies to integrate forests into their sustainable and regenerative strategies

To fulfil this mission, the strategic committee is composed of permanent members and occasional guests depending on the topics addressed.

- Pierre Hermans – Sylva Nova, CEO and Technical Director
- Veronique Joassart – Sylva Nova, Relations and Partnerships
- Catherine Vandepopeliere – Dieteren, ESG and Communication
- Didier t'Serstevens – Landowner and former Brand Director, Dieteren
- Ramon Reyntiens – Landowner and former SRFB Administrator
- Maxence Arnould – Research Engineer, Agro Paris Tech
- Prof. Bart Muys – Professor of Forest Ecology, KU Leuven
- Prof. Jean-François Bastin – Professor, Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech, ULiège
- Prof. Xavier Fettweis – Prof. of Climatology and Vice-dean of research (Sciences) ULiège

2. Forest management

Sylva Nova manages forests in Belgium and France on behalf of private and public owners. The forests entrusted to Sylva Nova, on a permanent or ad-hoc basis, for the long or medium term, are managed in full compliance with local regulations and the strictest sustainability standards (FSC®, PEFC).

On behalf of owners

- Drafting sustainable management documents
- Organisation of silvicultural itineraries
- Planning and marking cuttings
- Sale of timber
- Restoration of stands (planting and/or assisted natural regeneration)
- FSC® and PEFC certification

Own forestry laboratory

Sylva Nova has chosen to build up a portfolio of its own forests in order to put its traditional and forward-thinking silvicultural methods into practice. Sylva Nova has its own forest observation and monitoring laboratory in Belgium and France, in various silvicultural regions.

3. Certifications

3.1 Forest Stewardship Council®

FSC® certification is the strictest standard for sustainable and balanced forest management. The guarantee it provides to timber buyers also facilitates access to the most exacting local and international markets.

FSC® Forest Management group Certification

Sylva Nova is currently:

- The first and only private bi-national FSC® certification group, recognised in Belgium and France (IMO/FM-COC Licence 170214)
- A member of the Board of Directors of FSC® Belgium
- A member of the Northern Economic Chamber of FSC® International

Group certification allows several forest owners to join under a single certificate. This enables them to pool certification costs and streamline administrative management.

This FSC® group is open both to owners whose forest is regularly managed by Sylva Nova and to external owners who simply wish to acquire certification for their forest(s). In addition to certification, this group brings together owners who are passionate about forestry and provides many opportunities to exchange ideas and share experiences.

Sylva Nova handles the complete certification process:

- Analysis or preliminary drafting of the forest-management plan
- Verification of compliance with FSC® standards
- Handling of administrative procedures
- Admission to the groups
- Annual forest audit and compliance monitoring
- Recommendations for sustainable management

FSC® Ecosystem Services certification

The FSC® Ecosystem Services certification is an additional certification to the FSC® Forest-Management one. It focuses on seven ecosystem services provided by the forest:

- Protecting biodiversity
- Carbon sequestration
- Water resources
- Soil conservation
- Recreational services
- Values and cultural practices
- Air quality

By objectivising, quantifying and recognising the services provided to the community, the FSC® Ecosystem Services certification enables forest owners to consider the financial value of the efforts made in their management.

Sylva Nova handles the complete certification process:

- Selection of the ecosystem services specific to each project (two or three)
- Definition of objectives based on the stakeholders involved
- Establishment of indicators describing the state of the services at T0 and their future development
- Adaptation of the management plan and definition of a work schedule

3.2 The Global Biodiversity Standard (TGBS)

The Global Biodiversity Standard is a worldwide standard that recognizes and encourages the protection, restoration, and enhancement of biodiversity through long-term solutions based on best practices, combining considerations of biodiversity, local communities, and carbon sequestration by providing recognition, incentives, and knowledge sharing.

- 2 assessors: Federica Tartaglia and Gilles Tilman
- 1 pilot European pilot project: La Loma / Spain

4. Reforestation, restoration and conservation of forest landscapes

The need to conserve, plant and replant trees is well established. The UN has made this issue one of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
Sylva Nova is contributing to this in Europe and elsewhere through a wide range of carefully selected and managed projects.



Europe and beyond

Sylva Nova is dedicating all its forestry expertise to work on numerous reforestation and forest-conservation projects in Europe and beyond. The plantations supported by Sylva Nova are managed locally. They are all designed to encourage the use of indigenous species, local practices and biodiversity



Our work

The projects that we support are tailor-made for our clients. They may be of several kinds:

- Afforestation and reforestation
- Conversion of poor stands
- Conservation and preservation of forest heritage
- Creation of ecological corridors (hedges, hedgerows, borders, etc.)

- Promoting natural regeneration
- Fire-prevention measures
- Protecting wetlands
- …

The projects we support

We only choose projects with added environmental value and belonging to committed owners who share our implementation conditions. We select them from a portfolio of existing projects or seek them out according to the specific requirements of our customers.

Good reasons for (re)planting trees include:

- Increasing forest cover
- Restoring areas devastated by abiotic or biotic disturbances such as forest wildfires, windstorms, barkbeetle, Ash dieback…
- Conserving endangered species
- Converting mono-specific forests into more resilient, diversified forests
- Implementing appropriate practices to prevent fires or floods
- …

Our projects mainly concern **forestry**, but they also have applications in **viti -and agro-forestry**, where crops and **livestock** are combined with additional planting of trees and/or hedges.

Our methodology

- Identification and description of sites in accordance with our specifications
- Management of the commitment and financing, directly or with our partners
- Technical services (preparation work, planting, protection, etc.) with our service providers
- Regular monitoring and follow-up

5. Expertise, consultancy and research

Sylva Nova is sharing its operational expertise and ongoing learning through various consultancy assignments and studies related to forestry issues:

- Preparation of **environmental offsetting** dossiers for infrastructure developments
- Expert in technical **working groups** and think tanks
- Participation in **international scientific consortium projects**
- Forest **impact studies**
- Assistance with **environmental and forestry communication**
- Organisation of **information/training** sessions
- **…**



Contributions to the work of the United Nations

Within the UNECE section (Forestry and Timber Section – Geneva): permanent member of the 'Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management' expert group. Research and work contributing to the assessment of forest resources in temperate zones and the sustainability of their management. Within the FAO department (Food and Agriculture Organisation – Rome): expert for the Forest Communicators Network.