



Finland-Maine-Michigan Forest Bioeconomy Collaboration

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2. UMaine is the state's hub for bringing research to the real world
3. UMaine is fundamental to Maine's economic, workforce and community development.



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BEGINNINGS

In October of 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding between Finland's Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture and Maine's Department of Agriculture Conservation & Forestry was signed at the Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavik, Iceland by Governor Mills and immediate past Prime Minister of Finland, Antti Rinne.

The MOU recognizes the academic research and private sector cooperation and dialogue that has occurred between Finland and the State of Maine. The purpose of the MOU is to recognize, identify, and foster cooperative efforts between the participants in the field of forest bioeconomy development, and to promote certain mechanisms to enhance such exchange and cooperation. Collaborative efforts and exchange will leverage the culture, insights, strengths, and resources of both participants, to strengthen respective forest-based sectors and enhance Finland's and Maine's forest health and sustainability in the face of a changing climate. Foremost, this collaboration helps position the forest-based sector as a cornerstone of Finland's and Maine's bioeconomies.

INITIAL ACTIONS

Since 2019, Maine and Finland have collaborated on joint events including forest bioeconomy webinars, round table discussions, 'fire-side chats', a joint presentation at the prestigious SXSW Festival, and even a unique, virtual trade and study mission in 2020 that facilitated over 50 B2B meetings and discussions in the forest sector.

An outcome of the 2020 trade and study mission was a continued desire to connect experts in our forest industries.

In response, partners to the MOU developed the Finland-Maine Forest Bioeconomy Collaboration Group. This group explores collaboration and innovation exchanges in various sectors of the forest bioeconomy. From Maine, University of Maine, Maine Department of Forestry, Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry, and the Maine North Atlantic Development Office at Maine International Trade Center, Maine Department of Economic & Community Development, and private sector participants are all represented in the working group along with academic, private sector, and economic development counterparts from Finland.

Initial research and discussion themes of mutual interest between Finland and Maine, included:

- Finland as a model of success in circular bioeconomy strategy
- Creating value: exploration of joint research, materials and product development in bioenergy, biofuels, biochemicals, biomaterials, bio-based composites
- Business-driven development of textile fibres from wood for commercial applications
- Joint research towards commercial applications for nanocellulose/microfibrillated pulp
- Finland as a model of success and training partner for "smart forestry" practices
- Promotion of academic and business talent exchanges

FMM COLLABORATION PARTNERS LIST

Finland

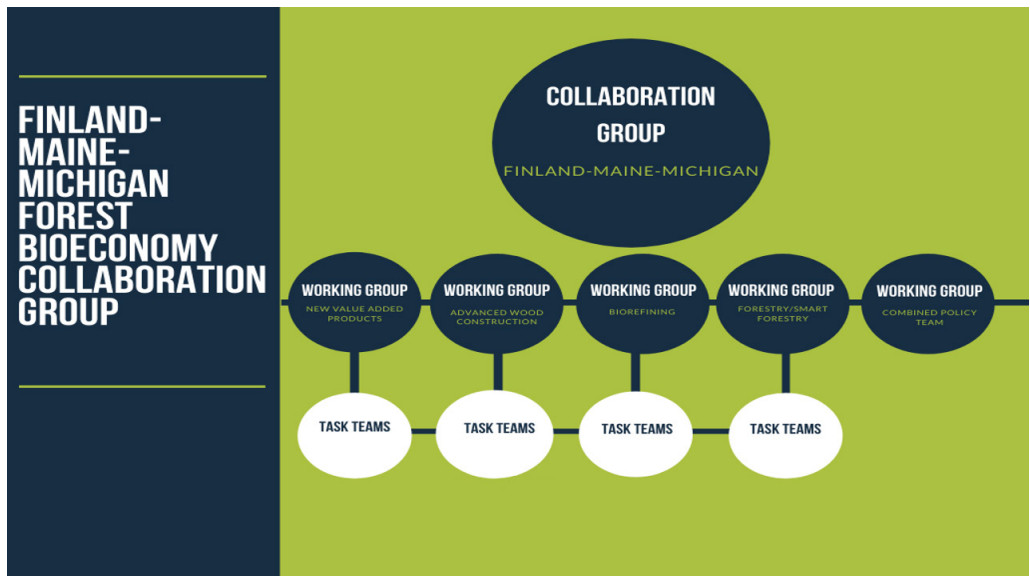
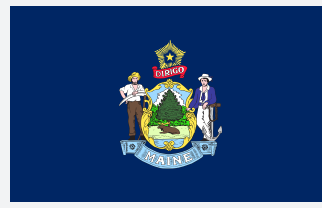
- Aalto University
- Business Finland
- Embassy of Finland in DC
- Finnish Forest Center
- Finnish Forest Industries Federation
- JAMK University of Applied Sciences
- University of Eastern Finland
- Lignutech Oy
- LUKE Natural Resources Institute Finland
- Ministry for the Environment of Finland
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland
- Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment
- Tampere University
- University of Helsinki
- University of Oulu
- VTT (Technical Research Center of Finland)

Maine

- BBC Land, LLC
- Consigli Construction
- FOR/Maine
- Hancock Lumber
- Indufor North America LLC
- JHC Consulting, LLC
- Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
- Maine North Atlantic Development Office
- Professional Logging Contractors of Maine
- Robbins Lumber Inc.
- University of Maine

Michigan

- Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Michigan Forest Biomaterials Institute
- Michigan Forest Products Council
- Michigan State University
- Michigan Technological University
- Michigan Timber and Forest Products Advisory
- MTEC SmartZone



MERGER WITH MICHIGAN

The State of Michigan, operating under a similar MOU and initiative with Finland was working in parallel on similar forest bioeconomy activities. Given the nature of the work, similar regional challenges, and the opportunity for a broader national sustainable circular forest bioeconomy, the three regions joined together in December 2020 to launch a broader Finland-Maine-Michigan Forest Bioeconomy Collaboration to address key sectors of the forest bioeconomy. The new FMM Forest Bioeconomy Collaboration has formed around five working groups containing members across the three regions:

- Advanced Wood Construction
- Forestry/Smart Forestry
- Biorefining
- New Value-Added Products (cellulose materials and other products)
- Combined Policy Team

These new groups have formed Task Teams and have begun to identify innovative projects and joint R&D opportunities, with the Policy Team exploring options to adjust legislative practices which reduce barriers adopting a circular bioeconomy.

Currently, 94 researchers and professionals across the three regions are seated on the FMM Task Teams and Working Groups. The Embassy of Finland in Washington, D.C. hosted a Forest Bioeconomy Collaboration Summit on November 16, 2021, outlining the collaboration between the three regions on advancing sustainable forest bioeconomy development. This summit was led by the Minister of Economic Affairs of Finland Mika Lintilä and Ambassador of Finland to the United States Mikko Hautala discussing the goals for the partnership in 2022.

The overall objective for the Collaboration Group is to have collaborative research and development projects funded and underway by March 31, 2023, with other supporting collaborative activities, including webinars, B2B connections, conferences and other activities occurring over the next 19 months.

For more information on the Finland-Maine-Michigan Collaboration, contact Jake Ward, VP for Innovation and Economic Development (jward@maine.edu) or Shane O'Neill, Forest Industry Business Development Manager (shane.r.oneill@maine.edu).

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