

ANNUAL REPORT

# **Trees For Me**



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### Sammanfattning

Under 2021 beviljades medel för utveckling av Trees For Me, ett nytt, nationellt kompetenscentrum med fokus på snabbväxande lövträd för hållbart skogsbruk, material och energi i Sverige.

Trees For Me:s vision är att bli en internationellt ledande, tvärvetenskaplig och vetenskapsbaserad plattform. Centrumet ska möjliggöra framtida och hållbara skogsbaserade värdekedjor för utveckling och produktion av högvärdiga material och energiprodukter från snabbväxande lövträd, samt säkra kunskapsförsörjningen inom området.

Det övergripande målet med Trees For Me är att säkerställa hållbar biomassaproduktion från snabbväxande lövträd med säkerhet och flexibilitet vad gäller utbud och kvalitet. Centrumet ska även säkerställa effektiva och hållbara värdekedjor för bioraffinaderier för träbaserade råvaror och bränslesortiment, samt arbeta för att minska målkonflikter inom området.

För att uppnå detta ska Trees For Me

- fungera som ett kunskapsnav för vetenskapliga och tekniska lösningar för biomassa och bioenergi från snabbväxande lövträd, samtidigt som relaterade samhälls- och miljöfrågor beaktas
- främja samarbete över discipliner och sektorer
- uppmuntra tvärsektoriell och strategisk kapacitetsuppbyggnad inom forskningen
- utbilda sektorn och samhället

vilket sammantaget är nödvändigt för att nå Sveriges klimatmål till år 2045.

Under 2022 fokuserade centrumet på att fastställa organisationen inklusive dess styrande organ samt att rekrytera de doktorander som ska bidra till kunskapsförsörjningen inom området. Forskningsprojekten har påbörjat sitt arbete och aktiviteter för att utveckla och underhålla det omfattande partnernätverket har initierats.

Trees For Me finansieras av Energimyndigheten och nästan 50 andra aktörer, från akademin och företag till intresseorganisationer.

Centrumet koordineras från Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet (SLU) i Alnarp, Skåne.

### First year and moving forward

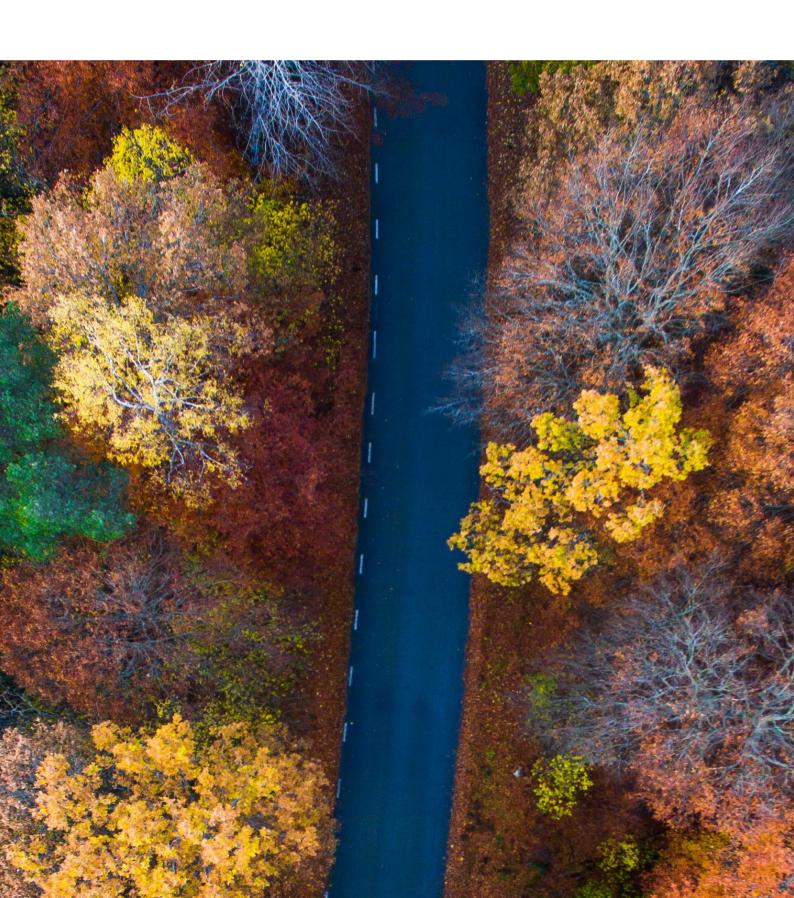
It has been a very eventful first year starting up Trees For Me, the new centre of excellence focused on fast-growing broadleaf trees for sustainable forestry, materials and energy in Sweden.

The year has been focused on implementing the organisational structure, setting up roles and responsibilities of the governing bodies, recruiting staff and PhD students and developing communication channels to the many partners and stakeholders. The research work packages have been formed, experiments are being set up and the PhD students have initiated their doctoral studies.

The centre has received media attention during the establishment and there has been a continuously high interest from the partners and other stakeholders in the centre activities. We look forward to developing this great interest in our coming activities to achieve the centre's long-term goal of more fast-growing broadleaf trees in Sweden.

Welcome to join the journey!

/Trees For Me



## Follow up of impact goals

The aims of Trees For Me are:

- 1. Serve as a knowledge hub for scientific and technical solutions for fast-growing broadleaf biomass and bioenergy, also considering key societal and environmental issues.
- 2. Foster collaboration across disciplines and sectors.
- 3. Encourage cross sectoral and strategic research capacity building.
- 4. Educate the sector and society.

The organisational structure of Trees For Me has been chosen in order to fulfil the aims above. The five work packages and 17 research projects will cover a broad spectrum of questions around growing fast-growing broadleaf trees, the use of raw material from fast-growing broadleaves and societal and environmental issues. In addition, the organisation will foster collaboration across disciplines within academia but maybe more importantly between academia and the forest sector.

Trees For Me involves more than 20 senior researchers and 13 PhD students. This research capacity will be instrumental for future capacity building for growing and using fast-growing broadleaf trees. Trees For Me has also set up an extensive programme for communication with stakeholders which will have measurable impact on improved knowledge of these questions in the forest sector.

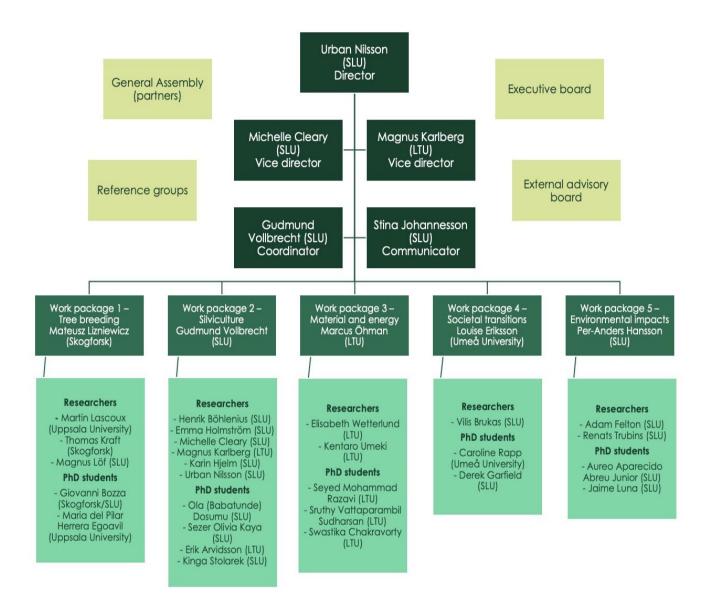


# Organisation

During the first part of 2022, the work with preparing for the centre agreement, to be signed by all centre partners, was prioritised and required an extensive amount of work due to the many included partners. However, to be efficient, the agreement was formulated in close cooperation with the major stakeholders. The centre agreement was then signed by all stakeholders by the end of the summer.

In parallel with the work on the agreement, programme plans were formulated for 17 research projects. The programme plans were iteratively reviewed by the Executive Board (see appendix 1) until agreements were achieved. The executive board gave several constructive comments on the plans which really helped improving them and we now have programme plans co-developed by everyone in the centre and not just by individual researchers. All programme plans are shared in a common Teams group. The programme plans and attached budgets for each project were formally approved by the Executive Board in June, 2022.

Trees For Me is organised according to the chart below.



Already in the application, it was stated that Trees For Me should be organised in five work packages:

- 1. Tree breeding
- 2. Silviculture
- 3. Material and energy
- 4. Societal transitions
- 5. Environmental impacts

Each work package is led by a work package leader. The Silviculture work package is the largest with seven projects and Societal transition is the smallest with two projects. Each project is led by a project leader who in most cases also is the main supervisor of a PhD student.

Early in this process, two management groups were formed tasked to have the overall responsibility of all center activities. The Executive Management Team consists of the director (Urban Nilsson), two vice directors (Michelle Cleary and Magnus Karlsson), the coordinator (Gudmund Vollbrecht) and the communicator (Stina Johannesson). The Executive Management Team meets every week but has also had several additional meetings focused on strategic development.

The other management group with overall responsibility, the Operative Management Group (see appendix 1) has had biweekly meetings during the whole year. The group consists of all work package leaders and the members of the Executive Management Team. During the Operative Management Group meetings, all major centre decisions are discussed, and the Operative Management Group is also the bridge between the centre management and all individual projects.

The Executive Board (see appendix 1) acts as the governing board of the centre and consists of representatives from the whole forest sector in Sweden, ranging from academia to authorities and the industry. The Executive Board meets four times a year, in both physical and online meetings.

In the application, it was also stated that the centre should form an External Advisory Board with international researchers from the different research fields in Trees For Me. The External Advisory Board (see appendix 1) was formed in the spring and had its first meeting in December 2022, together with the Operative Management Group. During that meeting, the advisory board members were mapped to specific work packages and/or projects connected to their expertise but also volunteered for additional projects that they were especially interested in. Since the first External Advisory Board meeting, individual meetings have been held with work packages and/or individual projects and members of the External Advisory Board. These smaller meetings will be held continuously during the coming years.

A reference group is connected to each work package. The reference groups (see appendix 1) consist of members from the stakeholders with special interest in the research carried out within the work packages. Introductory reference group meetings have been carried out in some of the work packages during 2022 and the rest are planned for during the beginning of 2023.

The last (and biggest) group is the General Assembly (see appendix 1). All partners of the centre are members of the General assembly and at least two General assembly meetings will be held per year. During 2022, the centre held an online meeting early in the spring when the plans for setting up Trees For Me were presented. In October, we had a physical meeting in Umeå with half-day indoor presentations and a half-day excursion at Skogforsk in Sävar.

#### PhD students

In September, the programme plans and budget were approved by the rector of SLU and the centre could go ahead and employ PhD students. Advertisements for the positions were already published in May and the selection of students was in most cases already done when the rector approved plans and budgets. Therefore, the first students were in place by the end of September, and the centre has since then had a constant inflow of PhD students during the whole autumn. To date, 12 out of the 13 students have arrived and started working on their projects. Hopefully the last student will arrive soon, but we are still waiting for the Swedish Migration Agency to approve the residence permit for the PhD student still waiting.

Of the 13 PhD students, one comes from Sweden. The other 12 come from different parts of the world; five from Europe, three from America, three from Asia and one from Africa. The centre sees this as a great opportunity for building up a team of PhD students with many different backgrounds. The first PhD meeting was totally used for team building and for the PhDs to get to know each other, which will be an important activity continuously during their studies. Formal and informal PhD meetings are held at least once a month focusing on the professional and personal development of the PhDs.

It is more than likely that many of the PhDs will stay in Sweden after defending their thesis thus adding competence to the forest sector. To facilitate this, the centre will encourage students to learn the Swedish language and will also aim to implement a mentoring programme together with stakeholders, for the PhD students to get practical experience from the sector.

The gender balance is almost 50:50 in the PhD group with six female and seven male PhD students. Each supervisor was of course the main responsible for selecting PhD student from the many candidates, but several meetings were held by the centre stressing the importance of gender balance in the PhD student group.

#### Communication

Already in May, a communicator was hired who is currently working 80% for Trees For Me, since communication activities plays an essential part in the centre development and in achieving the centre goals. It's a challenge to reach and engage in a meaningful way with the many stakeholders (46 listed, including the affiliated universities and Skogforsk, and many more connected by association).

Initially, a communication strategy (see appendix 5) was developed covering both external and internal communication. This plan has then been launched and now serves as the guide for the centre communication activities.

A logotype and graphic profile was developed, in collaboration with an external agency, which will contribute to the visual branding of the centre. Profile materials, such as roll ups and flyers, have been produced to spread information about the centre in a visually cohesive way.

The Tree For Me website was up and running after the summer holidays (https://treesforme.se/). The website has received positive response from the involved stakeholders. External events are announced on the website and all projects are described, including a short presentation of all PhD students. Several web articles have been published describing research results and we will continue to communicate research results in an accessible way on the website and in other relevant communication channels.

We started a webinar series, with a popular scientific focus, during the autumn 2022. The first presenter was PhD student Ola Babatunde Dosumu who presented his master thesis about management of mixed Norway spruce/birch forest stands. The plan is to hold one webinar per month continuously.

Trees For Me has received quite a lot of attention from the media during 2022 (see appendix 6). The centre of excellence has been described in several articles in forest magazines and was also described in Swedish public radio's Vetenskapsradion in January 2022.

The centre has sent its first newsletter and will continuously send this four times a year to all stakeholders and other interested parties. Updates from the centre has been shared via the Southern Swedish Forest Research Centre at SLU's social media accounts, which the centre is administrated by, until own social media channels are potentially established.

The centre will work actively to continuously spread the activities and results in all relevant media and communication channels.

#### Centre of excellence

During 2022, the centre initiated a strategic discussion about the benefits of, and how to form, a centre of excellence. This discussion has been ongoing on various levels (including in the Executive Board) and also during a recent kick-off meeting with all researchers and PhD students. We aim to unify our junior and senior researchers into 'One Centre' which is an approach that can drive success and impactful outcomes. One major aim is to involve all stakeholders in this journey but we also want the PhD students to develop into future leaders in the forest and energy sector. Therefore, great efforts will be put into various activities aimed at personal and professional skills development for the students.

The One Centre concept was described in the application and e.g. includes all parties' awareness of the centre vision, for what purpose the centre is conducting its activities etc. This awareness will contribute to the focus on relevant activities and to the overarching goal of the centre. Trees For Me is also a good opportunity and forum for the PhD students and researchers interdisciplinary research, which is an important ingredient in a centre of excellence and will be encouraged and facilitated by the centre management.

Trees For Me is a centre of excellence focused on fast-growing broadleaf trees for sustainable forestry, materials and energy in Sweden.

The centre is financed by the Swedish Energy Agency and almost 50 other private and public actors.

