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The State Forests National Forest Holding

Country Report

Preservation of forests, continuity and balanced utilization of all their resources constitute an overall aim of the State Forests National Forest Holding. Polish foresters, following the provisions of the Act on forests of 28th September, 1991, manage the entrusted property according to general rule of forests protection, keeping their durability and constant, balanced use of forest functions and increase of forest resources. Such defined sustainable and multifunctional forest management is performed by the States Forests basing on forest management plans drawn up for each forest district.

The following report presents a selection of the most important achievements and economic activities of the State Forests during the last year.

National programme for the augmentation in forest cover

Increasing the country's forest cover is one of the most important elements of the State Forest Policy. Consequent implementation of this policy shall ensure an increase of forest area to 33% in 2020 and to 33% after year 2050. There is a significant increase of environmental and social aspects in afforestation planning, due to increasing social expectations concerning nature protection and landscape carving, as well as increase of biological diversity, among others by establishing coherent forest complexes in ecological corridors and watersheds. The presently executed III stage of this programme assumes in the years 2006-2010 afforestation of 40 000 ha on the State Treasury grounds, i.e. 8000 ha/year, and 140 000 ha on privately owned land. Since the program was initiated in 1995, 242 000 ha has been afforested in Poland.

Conservation of biological diversity and forest stand reconstruction

In sustainable and multifunctional forest management, reconstruction of forest stands (distorted or destroyed due to human activity) constitutes a trial to recover lost natural national heritage. In the forests administrated by the State Forests, each year, 10 500 ha of forest stands are reconstructed within recovery of natural habitats and introduction of the second storey. The area of reconstructed forest stand shall be increasing up to year 2010 and later.

Conservation of biological diversity and improvement of water protective functions of forests through development of small retention programmes

Retention features of forests have a deep influence on national water resources and on limitation of droughts and floods. The State Forests have undertaken activities to develop a complex program of small retention in forests. The concepts for two projects covering lowlands and highlands have been elaborated:

1. Increasing retention possibilities in forest ecosystems and counteraction to droughts and floods causes in forest ecosystems on lowlands.
2. Combating water erosion in highlands caused by precipitation water outflow, preservation of infrastructure and torrent control.

The above projects are listed among the key projects in the EU related Operational Program "Infrastructure and Environment" for the financing period 2007-2013. They are potentially the biggest programmes of small forest retention to be implemented in Europe. The total value of planned activities exceeds PLN 300 mln.

Within the frames of the project being implemented in lowlands, during 2008 – 2016 about 4100 small retention installations are to be constructed. The total retention capacity will amount to 45 mln m³ of water (without ground retention). As regards the highlands, construction of 130 retention reservoirs is planned.

Biological inventory in The State Forests – NATURA 2000

The State Forests have made a nature inventory in their properties during years 2006 – 2007. The inventory includes species and sites protected within Natura 2000. The decision to perform this general nature inventory has been made due to several factors. Most of the existing and proposed areas for Natura 2000 are within the State Forests administration. Already during the process of consultation of the proposed Natura 200 sites borders it has become obvious that there is a need to supplement knowledge of local administrators about species and sites to be protected. This task has been considered as urgent due to future protection plans for these areas.

Within the inventory there were 16 types of forest sites, 29 types of non forest sites, 8 species of forest plants, 16 species of non forest plants, 35 species of forest animals and 16 species of non forest animals, mentioned in the 'Habitat Directive' Moreover, there was an additional inventory of 6 birds species : **black stork, white-tailed eagle, lesser spotted eagle, eagle-owl, black grouse, and crane.**

The inventory has been conducted by the State Forests staff, scientists, local state administration personnel, members of non government organizations, staff of the Forest Management and Geodesy Office, National Parks personnel, hunting associations members, and amateurs. The national inventory covered 45 protected sites, 45 species of protected animals, 27 species of protected plants mentioned in Habitat and Bird Directives.

Actions on the improvement in forest management on ecological bases

Due to extension of activities closely related to the reasonable use and protection of forests ecosystems, Polish state forests pay special attention to:

- maintaining wood production at the level that ensures stable increase of national forest resources,
- searching for economical wood use and for alternative energy sources,
- application of the most close-to-nature methods of forest management (natural regeneration, reconstruction of forest stands) and leaving the untouched groups of trees as well as deadwood,
- introducing multifunctional machineries into silvicultural practices which, due to the constant technology development, are friendly for the environment and do not create negative changes in the forest ecosystems.

Public education in forestry

The State Forests are introducing activities oriented towards the increase of social perception of forests and ecological knowledge. It is mainly done by the constant updating and improvement of all forest education schemes carried out by the State Forests (lectures in the field, meetings with foresters in schools, seminars, education meetings with foresters out of schools, competitions in forestry, educational events, education exhibitions, etc.).

Marketing

The State Forests have decided to modify significantly their system of wood selling and marketing due to: the constant trends that have been influencing the wood market for the last years, the development of wood industry in Poland as well as the negative attitude of the wood industry sector to the previous arrangements of the marketing system. The development of the new wood marketing system has been preceded with many consultations with wood industry representatives. The current system of wood marketing is in line with the law of competition and consumers protection and ensures a level playing field for all customers.

The main element of the new system, so called Forest–Wood Portal, allows the customers to make orders for timber in the current calendar year. The main and prevailing way to purchase timber is through internet negotiations. However, it is not the only and obligatory way. There is an alternative way to purchase the timber which does not require registration of the buying company in the Forest–Wood Portal. This alternative is an application called e-Drewno. The Internet negotiations determine purchasing of timber through typical auctions in which the only criterion is price. The entire service of customers is performed by the Forest-Wood Portal, which constitutes a separated database of State Forests computing system and allows the clients to communicate with the base. The customer registers in the base via the portal, declares changes in the company coordinates, takes part in the procedure of contracting timber delivery promises issued by the State Forests and finally signs annual sale agreements.

Apart from the main system, the timber can still be purchased through the auction and submission system. In this case, the price is strongly related to the quality of the material. The auction is a typical bid with potential buyers gathered together in one place. The submission constitutes a typical competition of offers and the only criteria is the price.

The new marketing system has enabled the State Forests to gain access to the market data, which were previously missing, incomplete or outdated. Thanks to this it will be possible to build a sufficient supply system for the wood industry in the future.