

Conclusions of the Conference on „The status of non-state forestry in South East Europe”

30.06 – 02.07.2008 in Skopje, Macedonia

Representatives of forest owner associations and state responsables from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro as well as forestry experts from the Confederation (CEPF), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Netherlands Development Agency (SNV), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) participated in the conference and discussed a broad range of issues related to the management and administration of non-state forests in South-East Europe.

On the base of conference outcomes participants conclude the followings:

The private forestry sector, with its production of timber, non-wood forest products and other marketable services as well as its provision of public services, has potential to contribute more extensively to sustainable development in South-East Europe. Economic incomes, employment opportunities and environmental values from private forest management are of common interest of the state administration and private forest owners.

Although the conference recognised different approaches on how to reach an improved contribution from the private forestry sector to sustainable development in the target countries, particularly with regard to the extent of required state regulations.

A trustworthy, transparent and regular dialogue between state administration and legitimated private forest owners representatives are an essential prerequisite for the implementation of the economic, social and environmental potential from private forestry. The conference recognised associations of private forest owners as important partners for achieving national forest policy goals and targets. National forest programmes are recognised as useful framework for implementing related strategies.

With regard to the management of non-state forests, participants recommend to:

- Build capacities on and apply coherent silviculture approaches and a comprehensive management of the natural resources in non-state forests;
- Aim for a sustainability of natural resources in non-state forests and their benefits for the society ;
- Diversify production and services with a strict allocation of incomes to corresponding costs and provide public forest services on the base adequate public financing;
- Organize cooperation of private forest owners through associations or other joint activities;
- Participate actively and regularly in policy decision making processes;

With regard to the legal and financial framework of non-state forests, participants recommend to:

- Include the various natural resources of forests (wood, game, mushrooms etc) comprehensively in private property rights in order to avoid any conflict of management interests;
- Limit restrictions of the property rights of private forests owners to the extent possible and focus limitations on subjects where use of private property rights goes in conflict with public interests in forest development; (e.g. protection measures, public access to forests etc.);
- Setup adequate mechanism for the financing of public forest services (e.g. “Green” income tax);
- Support private forestry through capacity building to private forest owner associations;
- Compensate economic losses caused by legal constraints of property rights through appropriate tools and procedures (e.g. tax exceptions, specific subsidies);
- Provide adequate tools for the implementation of private forest property rights (e.g. cadastre, forest inventories);
- Build capacities on the public understanding and individual acceptance of the legal definition of property rights in forests;
- Provide legal measures for land consolidation, e.g. through support to private forest owner associations, incentives for trading forest land etc.;
- Separate organizationally the controlling function of the state from the state forest management;
- Follow up and speed up the restitution process, according to national regulations;
- Involve private owners adequately into forest policy decision making, particularly to assist state institutions to recognize and consider specific issues of small-scale forestry.

Country participants express their intentions to take these conclusions as an input to their national forest policy processes and to lobby development within the country specific policy framework as best as possible.