At a recent 118th regular electoral meeting of the CFA Assembly, we were particularly intrigued by several conclusions from the report by CFA's former president Petar Jurjević, MSc, by some principles of planned programme trends outlined by the new president Oliver Vlajnić, BSc in forestry, and especially by the factual state contained in the expert topic of EU funds in forestry reported by Goran Gregurović, MSc.

Why should we wonder at the present state in forestry? Everything becomes clear if we answer the following question: do we have a forest policy and if so, who is responsible for it? Every country, and especially a mountainous one, has such a policy, which is based on a set of specific circumstances with tradition and interest being the most important. If the State had a forest policy, then the politicians would listen to the profession. Forest resources and forest areas as a part of general infrastructure would be put to optimal use. There would be no question of abolishing the non-market forest functions, which are otherwise invested in the ecosystem conservation. The needs of the local communities would be recognized, especially through the employment policy, and wood raw material would be utilized fully and directed into production that yields the highest additional value. If forestry was valued as an important economic branch, then there would be sufficient justification to invest into it. It is a well known fact that, in terms of investing only into simple forest reproduction, the interest on forests amounts to just 2 %, unlike the interest on bank savings or other investments. If we demand from the company Hrvatske Šume maximum rentability and not the "optimal benefit", do we not force it to cut down on investments in extended forest reproduction, forest accessibility and other issues? If only maximum rentability is required, the State should adhere to a consistent forestry policy which we not be determined by a company which is entrusted only with caring for state forests, but by the State as the owner. The State should adhere to a consistent forestry policy which we regretfully, along with many other things, do not have.

Mr Vlajnić, the new CFA President, addressed the assembly by citing the late Professor Emeritus Branimir Prpić, who warned in 1979 that "we have severed contacts with the public and isolated ourselves, we do not relate to socio-political workers and we do not introduce them to our specialist problem issues. ... Other professions fight more strongly and assert themselves. ... The entire profession should not wait for others to decide on and solve our problem matter. ... We should disclose to the public how things stand, what is best and what the profession is fighting for". Comparing the present situation with the one he cited, our colleague Vlajnić concluded that "our future requires that we continue to improve the state of the profession" .... In doing so, we should optimally use all the resources provided by the forest, primarily of the forest ecosystem itself, the state, the local community, all those employed in forestry and the wood industry, and the citizens of the Republic of Croatia".

Why should we wonder at the present state in forestry? Everything becomes clear if we answer the following question: do we have a forest policy and if so, who is responsible for it? Every country, and especially a mountainous one, has such a policy, which is based on a set of specific circumstances with tradition and interest being the most important. If the State had a forest policy, then the politicians would listen to the profession. Forest resources and forest areas as a part of general infrastructure would be put to optimal use. There would be no question of abolishing the means for non-market forest functions, which are otherwise invested in the ecosystem conservation. The needs of the local communities would be recognized, especially through the employment policy, and wood raw material would be utilized fully and directed into production that yields the highest additional value. If forestry was valued as an important economic branch, then there would be sufficient justification to invest into it. It is a well known fact that, in terms of investing only into simple forest reproduction, the interest on forests amounts to just 2 %, unlike the interest on bank savings or other investments. If we demand from the company Hrvatske Šume maximum rentability and not the "optimal benefit", do we not force it to cut down on investments in extended forest reproduction, forest accessibility and other issues? If only maximum rentability is required, and optimal benefits provided by forests and forestry are not valued (non-market forest functions, biomass as a renewable energy source, tourist facilities, broadening the activities to include horticulture, recreation, contribution to the local community through employment and preservation of rural areas, etc.), then we should not wonder at the reported surplus labour in forestry.

However, the manner in which forests are managed should not be determined by a company which is entrusted only with caring for state forests, but by the State as the owner. The State should adhere to a consistent forestry policy which we regretfully, along with many other things, do not have.

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