

EDITORIAL

IT IS TIME TO FINALLY FORMULATE A CONSISTENT FORESTRY POLICY AND FORESTRY STRATEGY

“Formulating the Croatian agricultural strategy is one of my priorities, which will on no account neglect the aspects of rural development, environment, products of protected designation of origin, rural tourism and renewable energy sources.” This is what the new Minister of Agriculture stressed in an extensive interview given to *Večernji List* (Evening Paper) on 16 March 2016. The Minister went on to say that the deadline for drawing up the strategy of agriculture and food industry, forestry and wood processing was the end of 2016. He pointed out that the Rural Development Programme was currently being redefined.

In the Forestry Journal No. 5-6 we already wrote about the non-existence of state strategies for almost all economic sectors, including forestry and wood processing, and about general expectations that they would finally be formulated. Since this was at the time of new parliamentary elections, the strategies were expected to be drawn up by the new Government. As we can see, the entire mandate of the old Government had elapsed without anything being done in this respect, which in a way legitimized disorganized work. Lack of strategies and poor control in the competent ministry responsible for the forestry policy and strategy, and particularly the fact that the company Hrvatske Šume Ltd and its incompetent management were allowed to implement their own forestry policy and their own strategy, despite being, conditionally said, “concessionaires”, resulted in evident and great damage for forests and forestry. In view of how incompetently the company is managed and how its primary goal is “profit” at any cost, we must demand the answers to some questions that will reveal the factual state. These answers will, we hope, finally lay the foundations for a consistent forestry policy and strategy. It is not possible to raise all controversial issues here, so we leave additional issues to the readers. Here are several of these questions: should one annual cut be skipped because we have nipped into the growing stock; has the mixture ratio been disturbed by cutting more valuable tree species; has the stand diameter structure been disturbed; have the silvicultural operations of tending and cleaning, which determine the future stand, been delayed and by how much; which stands should be regenerated prematurely owing to inexpert management which brought them into a state in which they cannot make optimal use of forest site potentials; what about natural stand regeneration; how much raw wood material remains in the forest and why; what about the forest order; what quantity of damaged trees is caused by skidding the assortments and why; why are there too many accidentally cut trees; how do we process assortments so as to avoid damage to forest soil; have forest skidding lines turned into gullies and why; is it true that only a small portion of the money collected from forest road

use is spent on their maintenance, leading to their extremely poor condition; do we continue to pay very low amounts for skidding to private entrepreneurs, so that they restock their vehicle fleet by purchasing old tractors that pollute the environment; why is the price of some sawlog classes lower than the price of fuelwood; what about afforesting burnt areas, which are a potential hazard for soil erosion; who has been entrusted with the management (in addition to raw material) of other economic forest potentials and why; and finally, how much will forests and forestry suffer because of blind servitude to monetary profit only, dictated by greedy bureaucracy?

In unofficial conversations, our colleagues, including some colleagues who are currently in the managing structure of the company Hrvatske Šume Ltd, express disapproval and wonder at some directives that are not based on the principles of the forestry profession and on the expertise acquired at the Faculty of Forestry. Multiple experiments conducted by the strictly centralized management, or better said, by one man, have led forestry almost to the very brink of survival. Among other things, we already wrote about abandoning one of the principles contained in the 10 sentences on forests by distinguished Academician Dušan Klepac. This principle relates precisely to the organisational form of forestry, from centralist to decentralist, which “allows the use of all direct and indirect benefits of a forest in the same space and in the same organisational unit”. We have already pointed out that at present this form is strictly centralist, according to which approval of the centre must be obtained for any little thing, and in which forest administration managers have no jurisdiction over anything. Naturally, this hampers their inventiveness and limits the application of forestry knowledge and experience, as well as undermines them before other employees and the local community. Moreover, forest rangers and engineers are increasingly turning into office clerks, while the benefits of a forest are exclusively limited to the raw material base. In fact, all this is aimed at nullifying and undermining the multifunctional role of a forest and downgrading forestry experts to the level of uninventive labourers. It is surprising that, with the exception of the management of the Croatian Forestry Association, which has repeatedly warned of the factual state in this column, many believe that things will work out by themselves, or even worse, do not feel responsible for any of the above. We have tackled these issues, as well as issues of wood processing and energy strategies, on several occasions in this column and in some other texts - all we need to do is browse through Forestry Journal and start protecting the profession more actively; otherwise, we have no right to complain.

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