

# EDITORIAL

## EVALUATION OF FORESTS IN THE LIMATE POLICY AND THE CASCADE USE OF FORESTS

These were the main topics of the press conference held at the Westin Hotel at the end of September. The speakers who introduced the topics to those present were Ms Marijana Petir, the Croatian representative in the European Parliament, and Marijan Kavran, Director of the Croatian Wood Cluster.

A new legislative package in the field of the European policy of climate change mitigation, which was adopted in July, was presented at an extraordinary session of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety in Strasbourg in September. The package was also supported by the Croatian MEP, who commended the continued responsible application of the EU energy and climate policy. However, she objected that the proposals of the regulations lacked a more palpable evaluation of the long-term forest potential as a carbon sink. We fully agree with this objection, stressing that this is just one, but highly important, of the fifteen-or-so non-market forest roles listed in the Forest Act. We constantly refer to these roles whenever we argue against those who perceive the forest as a raw material resource only.

As for carbon sinks, we would like to remind the readers that in the year 2000, a group of forestry experts appointed by the then Ministry of Environment Protection and Spatial Planning, made an analysis within the Academy of Forestry Sciences for the Forestry Sector (one of six sectors) and issued a Report on the Role of Forests and Forestry in Carbon Sequestration. The report was a contribution to the national report on climate change for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Here are some important insights, data and calculations from the Report:

Forests have a significant effect on climate, depending on the age of forest stands, and positively mitigate the negative effect of „glasshouse gases“. Of 720 milliard tons of CO<sub>2</sub> 120 milliard tons are sequestered in the process of photosynthesis, 60 milliard tons are sequestered permanently, while the largest part is stored in forests. According to Burschel, by capturing CO<sub>2</sub> forests have an immense importance in carbon dioxide reduction. In forests, carbon is sequestered in trees, ground vegetation, soil and dead wood (wood products). The following mitigating measures were listed: reducing the degree of devastation, increasing areas under forests (e.g. about 331,000 ha of productive bare soil may be used to establish energy forests), and increasing carbon stocks in the existing forests through tending by thinning, which will result in greater wood mass, higher quality and biological diversity. Other measures of increasing carbon stocks would be to apply progressive management and raise the quality of private forests. The analysis also discusses the possibility of replacing fossil fuels with forest biomass as yet another contribution to climate change mitigation. However, this is another issue. The Forest Management Plan of the area for the period 1996 – 2005 and a method by Burschel, Kuersten and Larson were used to calculate the quantity of sequestered

carbon in trees (large wood, branches and roots) by tree species for the continental part of Croatia and the Mediterranean. The same was done for ground vegetation, forest soil and dead wood. Overall, the amount is 418,191,492 tons (374, 281, 359 tons of coniferous and 43, 910, 103 tons of deciduous trees).

This Report and the calculations are presented here in brief form, just to show that they exist, because we are not sure that those in the ministries are aware of their existence or that they use them. We do not know whether Ms Petir, the Croatian MEP, is aware of these data either. We would also like to know whether calculations were made for the period 2006 -2015, but we doubt it very much, considering that MEP Petir, when praising the Croatian forestry experts and their know-how, claimed that *our state institutions have failed yet again*, so that the strategic document such as the Forest Management Plan of the Republic of Croatia for the period 2016 – 2025, which is the basis for the new calculation, is late. According to the aforementioned package, in terms of the share of land use and forestry, the Committee will apply the „principle of non-indebtedness“ as of 2021 – no quantities of emissions are allowed beyond those that nature can absorb. As Ms Petir says, the Croatian representatives constantly stress the advantages of the Republic of Croatia in terms of preserved forests compared to those in other countries. To this we would add the advantages related to carbon sequestration, which could be lost by the repeatedly irresponsible behaviour.

The new study of the European Commission, entitled „The Cascade Use of Wood“, and the mutual interaction of forestry, wood processing and the sector of wood for energy production, and particularly an increase in the newly-added value in the final production are topics that we are already familiar with. We mentioned these issues in our column on several occasions, for example in No 3-4/2011 „Something about the Classical-Commercial Value of Forests“, No 5-6/2011 „The Strategy (Strategies) of Development“, No 5-6/2012 „The Relationship between Forestry and Wood Processing“, and No 1-2/2016: „The Problem of Formulating a Consistent Forestry and Wood Processing Policy in Croatia“. We also dealt with the problem of forest biomass and the use of real wood waste for energy production instead of standard assortments (fuel wood). The main problem is that forest assortments are evaluated by non-market prices; as a result, wood chips and pellets, and even parquet, are produced from highly expensive raw wood material. The company Croatian Forests Ltd (daughter company „Biomass“) should primarily concentrate on the ways of obtaining wood waste from forests rather than selling biomass obtained from regular production of assortments (fuel wood). In this case, we might not have so many problems with bark beetles today, a favourite topic of discussion among non-experts mostly; however, this is another story and another topic.

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