

EDITORIAL

WE EXPECT PROFESSIONAL UPGRADING IN FORESTRY

These days we have finally witnessed a long-expected change at the helm of the company Croatian Forests Ltd. The Croatian Forestry Association has on several occasions decidedly expressed its opinion and criticism of the work of the past Management, especially in this column, and has sought answers to various expert issues; however, there has never been any answer, let alone a professional debate. All we received was arrogant disregard and retaliation that went as far as to take the form of the cancellation of the subscription to this journal.

For every new beginning it is necessary to establish the factual state of affairs as a basis for a new working programme/plan. For this reason we would advise the new Management to facilitate its insight into the facts by consulting the answers to our questions, criticisms and suggestions (given particularly in the two texts in the column Challenges and Confrontations in No. 11-12/2016 and in the text by the MB of the Croatian Forestry Association entitled "How does the Croatian Forestry Association perceive Croatian forestry" in No. 11-12/2015). Our well-meaning criticism and suggestions were intended to warn the public against inexpert operations in the forest and even more against what has regrettably not been done but should have been done, mostly because this would have conflicted with profit, the only goal of the Management regardless of the adverse consequences for the forest. We have also highlighted the need for a more rational use of all the benefits of forests and forestry, which was also sadly missing. We have advocated and will continue to advocate a decentralised form of management of forest wealth. We also expect managers of forest administrations, forest offices and even forest districts, who are experts in forest resources and their sustainable management, to be given much more power. A decentralized form of management will ensure general benefits for the owner/state, but also for the local community, which is something that has obviously been forgotten. Our attitudes towards the situation in forestry have never been of a declarative nature, but have always been based on facts. By advocating decentralized management, we rely on the data from the article "Forests and Forestry" by Academy members Slavko Matic and Igor Anic, contained in the brochure "**Croatian National Treasure**" published by the Croatian Academy of Science and Art.

The complex nature of forest management in certain parts of Croatia, one of the most forested countries of Europe (half a hectare per person) and the employment of high quality forestry experts is reflected primarily in the forest vegetation composed of 102 forest communities with no less than about 260 woody species and 94 tree species. By endorsing treatments that are necessary to ensure sustain-

able forest management and an improved quality and value of Croatian forests, we again present data from the mentioned article, in which 5 % of the forests are of very good quality, 22 % are of good quality, 43 % are of medium quality and 29 % are of poor quality. Forty-five percent of the best quality lowland forests were estimated as very good. Investing in the improvement of the mentioned structure would result not only in a greater raw material base, something that was exclusively supported by the former Management, but also in other benefits of the forest and in particular in its non-market functions.

When we raise questions related to delayed silvicultural treatments or even their omission and to the adverse effects of this on the future of stands, e.g. with regard to pedunculate oak, the most valuable Croatian tree species, and sessile oak (according to the above brochure, pedunculate oak accounts for 14.83 % and sessile oak for 8.35 % of the area), we like to remind ourselves of what we learned about these tree species at the Faculty, but forget to apply this knowledge. Based on the texts from the monograph "Pedunculate oak in Croatia", we list the following silvicultural stages: seedling stage, sapling stage (young and old), young forest (younger and older), young, middle-aged and mature stand. Thus, for example, the older sapling stage (15 - 20 years of age) experiences the culmination of height increment and maximal crown increment in the width. This is where future trees are singled out, which results in tree differentiation and selection into stories in the young stand. From a commercial standpoint there are: prop stage, pole stage, pile stage and finally sawmill roundwood stage, where thinning operations are applied in the pole stage and differentiation into height, diameter and value classes takes place. In a middle-aged stand, when the stand structure is already formed, the biological potential related to a response to stand tending (50 - 70 years of age) gradually decreases. The concluding question is: what kind of experts are we and how have we optimally made use of certain potentials of a forest habitat? This is what we have repeatedly stressed, because every developmental stage, not only the ones mentioned above, requires timely interventions. True, they come at a certain cost, but on the other hand they provide immeasurable benefits, especially for the future.

This concludes the current double issue. In the next issue we will focus on other topics of interest and we will accompany them with data. These topics include the forest as an infrastructural category, non-market forest functions, relations with wood processing, attitudes of the society and politics towards the forest and forestry, and similar.

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