

# EDITORIAL

## *CURRENT ISSUES IN CROATIAN FORESTRY*

Preparations are under way to formulate the new Forest Law, which will, hopefully, eliminate the continual decrease in the fee for non-market forest functions. At the time at which Nature responds with cataclysmic consequences to our indifference towards it and major global polluters refuse to protect it, the branch on which not only foresters but all of us are sitting is again being cut off. There are increased requests to exclude the coastal region from the current management policy, but at the same time no clear compensational financial bases are provided. Not even the record number of fires and the need to recover the damage in these very areas have brought us to our senses.

From the aspect of the Croatian Forestry Association, which unifies the Croatian forestry science, education and practice, we can only ascertain with regret that the relevant minister has not yet found time to discuss these hot issues with its representatives. Whether we like it nor not, it should be said that this is, among other things, one more indicator of the status of forestry within the relevant ministry. We had eagerly awaited positive changes after an almost five-year period of a misguided attitude to the forestry profession and the negligence towards the principles of sustainable management of forest resources, which we have already discussed in our Journal. Definitely, the Croatian government should decide, among other things, whether it expects classical „profit“ for the state budget from forestry or whether it supports forest management according to the principles of sustainable management. In the latter, profit is not measured by banknotes but by optimal regeneration, maximal increment, desirable biodiversity, naturalness and stability, all of which ensures the preservation of the forest ecosystem and of its multiple benefits. We have not seen any changes in the attitude towards non-market economy, either; on the contrary, some continue to demand the acquisition of wood assortments through guaranteed contracts rather than through market competition.

We do not know if anything is being done regarding the proclaimed restructuring and decentralisation of the company Croatian Forests Ltd. What we do see is that no invitation to a debate on the subject has had any effect, such as the text of the former minister Tarnaj, published in *Forestry Journal* 1-4/2017. In order to develop a new system it is necessary to start from the relatively neglected forest districts and district rangers, the most direct and responsible factors in forest management, rather than at the top management, which is constantly expanding in numbers. This requires a broader professional and social debate at the state level with the participation of independent experts/professionals and not representatives of different interest groups and insufficiently educated politicians. However, such a debate is missing, even though this issue concerns almost half of the land area of Croatia and the forest which the Constitution describes as a resource of particular interest for the Republic of Croatia. There are problems on a daily basis, including the recovery of the damage from ice break in Gorski Kotar, ash dieback, damage from the oak lace bug, bark beetles, reforestation of burnt areas, private forests, damage caused by climate change, employment of the young, personnel policy and political nepotism. We are capable of solving all these problems successfully because we have professional and infrastructural potential that very few professions can boast, but we should primarily eliminate the cadres who have reduced the profession to a current unenviable situation and who have protected themselves with contracts well in advance. Unfortunately, forestry is a profession in which mistakes in the management come to light only after several years, when it is too late to „cry over spilt milk“. This is the reason that many erroneously believe that forestry is currently in a good shape.

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