

# EDITORIAL

## *HOW TO PROCEED IN THE FUTURE?*

In reaction to unjustified criticism levelled at us by the then management of the company Croatian Forests Ltd, we highlighted the multiple role of this column in Forestry Journal 7-8/2014. Among other things, we stressed that the Editorial Board used this column to communicate “the word of the forestry profession” to the readers. Considering the broad and comprehensive nature of forests and forestry, we also tried to impress on those in politics and forest economy who were willing to listen the obvious fact that Croatian forests represent exceptional wealth and that this wealth should be managed on strictly scientific and professional principles. We went on to remind our readers of some other topics that we discussed, and we made a list of all the volumes where these topics could be found. Every year, Volumes 1-2 of the Forestry Journal bring fourth the Annual Content, in which all those interested can find all the topics discussed in the column.

After browsing through the annual contents of the issues from the last 4-5 years and reading about the different topics, we may well ask ourselves if the word of the profession was adhered to at least in the main segments or if we were just “flogging a dead horse”. It would be best if our readers, and particularly those responsible for the current state of the profession, answered this question themselves; if unwilling to speak out loudly, let them say it to the mirror. Yet, the vast majority keeps silent, while those responsible react furiously to our criticism, but do not provide any counter-arguments. There are but two things we can do now: renew our search for the answers to the questions, or “close down” this column.

For example, in the new Forest Act that is under way, the General Provisions, article 3, paragraph 4, follow the National Forest Strategy and the National Forest Programme. Article 3, paragraph 3 of the proposed Act mentions the “implementation of the principles of sustainable forest management aimed at achieving the present and future fulfilment of the ecological-commercial and social function at the local, national and global level, taking into consideration the socio-economic importance of forests and their contribution to rural development”. In addition to sustainable forest management and the multipurpose role of forests, the text goes on to mention the efficient use of resources, and article 4 lists non-market forest functions. As we can see, it is all stated loud and clear, but do we adhere to these principles or do we disregard these principles in favour of classical profit and cut down on the amount of activities needed to maintain forests in an optimal condition and ensure all of their non-market functions? How is it possible then, that in spite of the repeated statements of the importance of forest functions, we have failed to convince the public that the obligation and duty to finance, at least partially, non-market forest functions does not fall only on forester but on the whole society?

There was an objection to article 65 (1), which states that those with an annual income less than 1,000.000 kuna should be exempt from paying a non-market forest functions fee in the amount of 0.0265 % of the annual income. The Minister then raised this minimum to 3,000.000 kuna, and then reduced the amount of the collected fee designated to science from 5 % to 1%. We only presume that it was done to justify the epithet of Croatia being the Land of Knowledge!

Regarding the efficient use of resources as prescribed by the National Forest Strategy, there are no advances in this respect because we continue to act irrationally, inefficiently and contrary to market laws. Article 16 (7) of the Law binds institutions responsible for the management of state-owned forests to sell wood assortments in public bids, but the same does not apply to the public forest owner (Croatian Forests Ltd). They say, “we have raised the price of wood assortments by 5 % on average”, but then they give the “finalists” a bonus of 25 %. Which finalists, and who will compensate forest administrations for the losses incurred? There are almost no real finalists. The public television praises exports achieved by the wood industry, but only reluctantly do they admit that this export includes mainly raw wood material and semi-finished products with low additional value - we have seen no furniture in the form of cabinets, beds, tables and other pieces, only upholstered pieces and sporadic bus seats that pretend to be the finished goods of the wood industry.

All the above was confirmed recently in a television interview with Mr Kardum, director of “Emmezeta”, who, when asked if there was a possibility to sell Croatian furniture in their shops, answered; “What furniture? There is none!” People would say - “someone is loony here”. Yet, wood assortments - our national treasure - are being mercilessly squandered just so that private pockets can be lined. They say they protect small sawmill owners, and yet no control is made of how many people they employ, what the employee age and educational profile is, and for whom sawmill goods are produced. Definitely not for the sawmill stock market, since it does not exist, just as the once advertised fish stock market does not exist either. Sawmill products are mainly manufactured for the Near East markets, where they achieve minimal added value. As for the production of wood pallets amounting to 1.2 % of world production, something that the Wood Cluster is bragging about, the real question should be: which raw wood material is used for their production and what would happen if the cost of drying the raw material were not compensated for by the acquisition of wood assortments at non-market prices? Regarding the production of parquet, the so-called “processing” product, we have already given our opinion on this issue on several occasions.

Editorial Board