EDITORIAL

SHOULD THE NATIONAL FORESTRY POLICY AND STRATEGY BE MODERNIZED?

At its session on July 17, 2003, the Government of the Republic of Croatia passed the National Forestry Policy and Strategy. In view of the increasingly pronounced climate change, which requires a new approach to nature and the environment, of the deficiencies of the current National Forestry Policy and Forestry Strategy, as well as, in our opinion, of the inadequate inclusion of forestry in the national economy, has the time come to introduce some changes in the valid National Forestry Policy and Strategy? Do we have any models? A review of forestry policies in relevant countries in which forestry is an important branch of economy clearly shows that they cannot be literally copied. In his brochure "Forestry Policy" Sabadi (1992) analyzed forestry policies in Germany and Switzerland and concluded that "every country has its own form of forestry policy which is in line with its economic and political system, philosophy and the influence of individuals and groups on the state government". It is, however, indisputable that every forestry policy is an integral part of the national economy. The most important stage in the creation of a national forestry policy is its inclusion into and integration with other national economies into one interactive unit. The same author goes on to say that in order to develop forestry policy, "its goals should first be determined, followed by means and measures of achieving the set goals. Particular attention should be paid to small private forest estates (about 25 % of the forested area)". This is very difficult in our country because privately owned forests are small and private forest owners are not willing to merge their estates, which is the only way in which success can be achieved. An aggravating circumstance lies in the fact that investments in forests are of long-term nature and are not sufficiently profitable for investors, chiefly because they do not perceive forestry as an integral and highly influential factor in the national economy. Forests are mainly viewed as a source of raw material for processing, while the non-market forest role, which requires a broader support by the national economy, is overlooked. If the real value of forests is not understood by private forest owners and entrepreneurs in general, whose primary goal is the current value of raw material, then it is the State which should understand it, especially when the State is the major owner as in Croatia. Collective interest should be above all other interests. The State should also make sure that private forest owners adhere to the regulations of the Forest Act, the instrument of the National Forestry Policy and Strategy which is binding for all forest owners.

In our analysis of whether we apply the regulations set down in the valid National Forestry Policy and Strategy and what additional items should be incorporated, we should ask questions and answer them ourselves, since we would consider answers by other parties as mostly unjustified criticism. These questions involve the following: do we sell wood assortments according to market principles; do we really believe that with contracts on the delivery of raw material we contribute to the development of final wood processing and increased employment of engineers and qualified workers in the first place, or do we fill the pockets of private exporters of primary processing products; if raw wood material is not directed towards optimal final production, does not this mean that we squander the national wealth in which a hundred-year-long effort has been invested; at the same time we find that the Rosewood Competence Centre for Eastern Europe provides examples of good practice and innovations to be implemented into wise and sustainable use of valuable wood material; do we control felling in private forest estates in practice or only declaratively, particularly in forests which have been returned to their original owners; which instruments do we use and how successfully to accomplish this; do we ensure benefits which forestry should provide for the local community and the population of rural areas, which is one of the main principles of the EU Forestry Policy and Strategy, which we support in principle; do we stimulate and to what extent modern energy use of wood material; do we think about how to solve the question of succession - rural areas are increasingly being abandoned and forests are spreading as far as the people's gardens - pastures and grassland areas within forest, which were until recently mowed or grazed by wildlife, are disappearing; is it true that wood processors do not want to ensure stocks of wood material, and when it suits them "dictate" the extraction of wood assortments even when weather conditions are unfavourable (wet terrain), thus inflicting vast damage on forest soil; why did we allow workers' resort centres, especially those at the seaside, to be taken over by concessionaires for petty cash (these resorts were built with the money which workers allocated from their salaries for exactly this purpose); in relation to other countries, did we allocate too large areas to Natura 2000; did we restructure the company "Croatian Forests Ltd"? Sabadi says: " Rational organisation presupposes that all jobs are accomplished in a forest office, and only those jobs which cannot be performed in a forest office or their solution is not rational should be performed at a higher level. Forest monitoring services and services aimed at assisting small forest owners should be set up in the Ministry". Have we covered all the relevant questions? No, we have not, but we urge the readers to ask questions and give the answers themselves. The first question to be answered is the one mentioned in the headline.

Hoping that these thoughts will not spoil the upcoming holidays, we wish Merry Christmas and a Very Successful New Year 2020 to all members of the Croatian Forestry Association and readers of the Forestry Journal.

Editorial Board