

EDITORIAL

TWO FORESTRY ANNIVERSARIES

This year the Croatian forestry profession marks two important anniversaries – the 175th anniversary of the Croatian Forestry Association and the 145th anniversary of its scientific-specialist and professional periodical – the Forestry Journal. The goals of the Croatian Forestry Association as one of the oldest professional associations in Europe have been achieved in full. It is owing to this association that the forestry education in Croatia started in 1860 with the establishment of the Agricultural Forestry School in Križevci, while higher education began in 1898 when the Forestry Academy was established as the fourth institution of higher education at the University of Zagreb. The second goal, the launching of a scientific-specialist and professional magazine, was achieved in 1877 when the Forestry Journal was published. The Forestry Journal has been coming out continuously, even during war time, so that this edition is the first double issue of the 145th volume. The reason behind the establishment of the Forestry Academy (today the Faculty of Forestry) was the realisation by the then authorities that the management of forestry required not secondary but higher education. It was understood early enough that the forest as the most complex ecosystem needed to be managed by highly qualified personnel according to the principle of sustainable management. Accordingly, the dictates of the profession were meticulously followed, resulting in the current well-preserved state of Croatian forests. The Croatian Forestry Association has given its contribution to this directly but also through the pages of the Forestry Journal, as evidenced by the articles in this double issue, particularly in the column Current Affairs.

What is the status of the forestry profession today? Sadly, very poor: it is not respected – everybody, regardless of their professional qualifications “knows all there is to know about forests”, while politics does not find time to organize professional debates about the issue. Moreover, it turns a blind eye to non-market management of forest resources and supports those wood processing companies which mostly deal with primary wood processing with low additional value, and only a very small number of them engages in final wood processing. In doing so, not only do we export wood raw material, but we also “export” work places, something

that those concerned obviously cannot see. By primary processing of raw wood material, we annul the work of an average of three generations of forestry experts, who have applied silvicultural treatments to ensure its present high quality and sustainability.

Despite the fact that forests as a resource of special interests for the Republic of Croatia cover almost 50 per cent of Croatian land area, they have not even “deserved” to be mentioned in the name of the relevant Ministry in the mandates of the last three governments. When forests are treated in the media at all, then the articles mostly echo scientifically groundless but sensationalist and negative criticisms of some environmental associations. Of course, the media cannot be blamed, because they do not possess even the minimal education about forests.

Some time ago, aware of the need for the media to be educated in order to have an expert background for what they write or talk about, Lidija Firšt, the then editor of the Croatian Radio Television, initiated the establishment of the Association of Environmental Journalists at the Croatian Journalist Association with expert support of the Croatian Forestry Association. Her work was partly continued by Tanja Devčić, editor of the Croatian Radio Second Channel, whose morning show “Environmental Minute” we all remember. From this we conclude that, in order to communicate directly with the public, the forestry profession should have a public forum. Every Sunday we watch TV shows Fruits of the Earth and The Sea: why not Forests, even if it be once a month. There would certainly be a wealth of topics to discuss, such as the sale and processing of wood assortments, non-market forest functions, private forests or the issue of succession, to name but a few. For example, about 30 years ago the forest cover of Gorski Kotar amounted to 70 per cent, whereas presently it is estimated at 82 per cent. The problem of forests colonizing pastures and approaching gardens can be solved by the Green Transition. Not to repeat ourselves, let us browse through the articles already published in this column and find highly interesting topics for discussion.

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