

NORWAY

REPORT TO UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS, SECOND SESSION IMPLEMENTATION OF IPF/IFF PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

Status

Forest and other wooded land cover a total of 12 million hectares, which amounts to 37 per cent of the area of Norway. The volume of growing stock has more than doubled since 1920, and was 650 million cubic meters in 1999. The net annual increment is 22 million cubic meters, while annual removals are 8-10 million cubic meters. Approximately 80 per cent of the forest area is in private ownership, divided among about 120 000 properties. This means that responsibilities and authority relating to forests are to a considerable extent in the hands of a large number of individuals.

Decision-Making

The Ministry of Agriculture is primarily responsible for the forest sector. Other ministries and institutions actively involved in forest matters are the Ministry of the Environment, county and municipal forest authorities, the State Forest Service, the Norwegian Forest Research Institute, the Norwegian Forestry Society, the Forest Extension Institute and the Norwegian Institute of Land Inventory. Major groups active in forestry include the private sector and non-governmental organizations. A wide range of measures, including legislation, taxation, economic support schemes, extension services and administrative procedures are employed in implementing the forest policy. The Forest and Forest Protection Act (1965, with later amendments) is the main legal framework for forest management. Other laws regulating the forest sector are the Nature Conservation Act (provisions for conservation of forests), the Planning and Building Act and the Open Air Recreation Act.

Norwegian forest policy was revised in 1998 - 1999, and a white paper on this was submitted. The Parliament (Storting) adopted the policy in June 1999. The white paper presented an updated national forest programme in which the UNCED decisions, the proposals for action from the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the results of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe were given special consideration. As a follow-up of the White Paper, the Norwegian government has started a participatory process aiming to revise the Forest and Forest Protection Act. The new Act will reflect the balance between economic, social, cultural and environmental functions of forests. The responsibility of forest owners for managing their own forest resources and taking environmental considerations into account will be emphasised. Provisions regarding post-logging reforestation should be designed to more effectively ensure compliance with reforestation requirements. The form and content of the environmental provisions will more closely reflect today's knowledge and terminology as well as Norway's international obligations.

The development, revision and implementation of the forest programme is a continuous process supported by various inter-ministerial committees to ensure that the programme becomes an integral part of Norway's national sustainable development strategy. Appropriate coordination mechanisms have been established to ensure participation by county and municipal authorities, forest owner organisations, forest industries, NGOs, research and extension institutes and other stakeholders. The Ministry of Agriculture has encouraged development of county forest strategies, and developed guidelines for strategic planning at municipal level.

Norway is in the process of enacting several conservation plans for forests aimed at establishing a network of strictly protected areas of representative and distinctive types of forest. Notable among these plans is the coniferous forest conservation plan adopted by Parliament through a White Paper in 1996. This will be completed in 2002. In addition, in 2001 Norway has started an evaluation of the protection of forests with a view to find whether supplements are needed.

A national environmental action plan, with emphasis on conservation and enhancement of biological diversity, has been followed by an implementation plan for the forest sector.

Programmes and Projects

In 1995, the forest sector (including the forest industry) in collaboration with several NGOs, labour organisations and customer interests and the forest and environmental authorities started a 3-year project called "Living Forests". Information and competence building were important aspects of the project. The main result was the development of a set of criteria, indicators and standards for sustainable forest management, adapted to national conditions, and within the framework of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. These criteria and indicators are important tools for policy development, policy monitoring as well as reporting. The negotiated standards form the basis of a certification system for the forestry sector in Norway.

In 1997 the Ministry of Agriculture initiated an environmental monitoring and assessment project aimed primarily at improving knowledge of forest biodiversity and key biotopes. The main outcome was a scientifically based mapping tool used to identify forest areas of specific ecological value, requiring special management practise

In order to increase the economic viability of the forest sector, the Government in year 2000 launched a 5-year development programme for utilisation and processing of wood. The aim of this programme is to encourage economic development by increasing the degree of domestic processing and utilisation of wood. Focus is on the possibilities that exist in product development, design and architecture, and seek to create conditions that promote wood as an environmental friendly material with a wide range of applications. The programme also aims to improve communication along the value chain from forest to market. Forest owners and forest industry are practical and financial involved in the program in order to ensure successful implementation. Concrete activities and projects are developed and several of these are now in the stage of implementation.

Information

Information on forest issues and forest policy has increased substantially after UNCED. The Ministry of Agriculture makes funding available for forest information annually, and information campaigns are either initiated directly by the Ministry of Agriculture and the county offices or by the Norwegian Forestry Society and the Forest Extension Institute. The Norwegian Forestry Society promotes the understanding of the many important aspects of forests. The Forest Extension Institute disseminates expertise and information about forestry and related topics to forest owners, workers and officers. Additionally, the forest owners' organisations have taken on substantial information tasks and programs (e.g. in connection with multiple values and biological diversity).

Forest resources have been systematically assessed by the National Forest Survey since 1919. The 7th countrywide survey was completed in 1998. The survey has been improved in the light of international commitments and national requirements. A comprehensive nationwide programme recording the effects of forest policy measures, covering harvesting, regeneration, forest road construction and forest planning, has been developed. Together with forest and environmental information gathered through the National Forest Survey, the program is designed to evaluate forest policy measures and provide guidance for improvements.

Research

Forest research has for a long time been an important basis for policy development and developments in the forest sector in general. In 2000 a research programme for the forest sector delivered important reports on several topics related to sustainable forest management. This 5-year programme was a basis for the next generation research programme on sustainable forest management launched in 2000. The programme involves several universities and research institutions and is managed by the Norwegian Research Council. The Ministry of Agriculture is the main financial contributor to the research programme, currently providing approximately NOK 10 mill annually for this purpose.

Co-operation

The Norwegian Government has signed the International Tropical Timber Agreement. Norway is actively involved in the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change, also in the context of the forest sector. Norway has played an active role in the post UNCED forest process. In this context, Norway hosted the international Workshop on Financing Sustainable Forest Management, in support of UNFF, arranged in Oslo 22 – 25 January 2001. The workshop was organised by CIFOR, co-funded by the governments of Norway and

the United Kingdom and jointly sponsored by six governments: Brazil, Denmark, Malaysia, Norway, South Africa and the United Kingdom. Information on the workshop can be accessed via the Internet on the following address: <http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/fsfm/index.htm>

Norway is actively involved in the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE). Norway is one of the four members of the General Co-ordinating Committee of the process. <http://www.minconf-forests.net/>

Most of the development assistance is co-ordinated through the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation, NORAD. Activities include bilateral and multilateral projects. The Norwegian strategy for environment in development co-operation gives increased emphasis to natural resource management, sustainable use of natural resources and development of sustainable production systems.

Gaps and Obstacles

The white paper on national forest policy, adopted in 1999, is the basis for Norway's national forest programme. In addition, county and municipal strategies and plans are integrated elements of the national forest programme. Due to recent developments in national conditions and within international processes, the government has decided to carry out a revision of the national forest programme (initiation in 2002). The revision is also motivated by the necessity to improve the forest programme as an instrument in communicating the forest policy. This is based on a wish to raise the visibility of the forest sector and to enhance awareness and understanding of the multiple values derived from forests. An improved communication tool would also offer more favourable conditions for broad and efficient participation by stakeholders in the implementation process.

The revision of Norway's national forest programme will be guided by ongoing work on national forest programmes within the MCPFE. It will also include thorough considerations of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and on national actions in the context of the outcome of the UNFF. National implementation of international agreements has been a significant element of the Norwegian national forest policy since UNCED. A systematic assessment of the IPF/IFF proposals for action has quite recently been initiated and the results - priorities, targets and timetables for implementation – will make important components of the revised national forest programme.

Management of natural and environmental resources is to be given high priority in Norway's bilateral and multilateral development assistance, and forest measures will be given a central role. In this regard, a challenge will be to harmonise forest-related measures of the development assistance policy with the outcomes of the international forest dialogue.