

**National Report to the Third Session of the  
United Nations Forum on Forests**

**LITHUANIA**

**30-12-2002**

## **I. Key Contacts**

### **Head of Forestry in Lithuania:**

Name: Mr. Arunas Kundrotas  
Title: Minister of Environment

Contact information:

Address: Jakstas st. 4/9, LT-2600 Vilnius  
Phone: +370 5 2663480  
Fax: +370 5 2663663  
E-mail: [a.kundrotas@aplinkuma.lt](mailto:a.kundrotas@aplinkuma.lt)

### **UNFF national focal point for Lithuania**

Name: Mr. Valdas Vaiciunas  
Title: Director of the Department of Forests Ministry of Environment

Contact information:

Address: Juozapavicius st. 9, LT-2005 Vilnius  
Phone: +370 5 2725868  
Fax: +370 5 2722029  
E-mail: [valdas.v@gamta.lt](mailto:valdas.v@gamta.lt)

### **Person to contact concerning the national report, if other than the UNFF national focal point:**

Name: Mr. Gerimantas Gaigalas  
Title: Chief specialist, Forestry Development Division (Department of Forests, Ministry of Environment)

Contact information:

Address: Juozapavicius st. 9, LT-2005 Vilnius  
Phone: +370 5 2728275  
Fax: +370 5 2722029  
E-mail: [forest@gamta.lt](mailto:forest@gamta.lt)

## **GENERAL**

- **Decision-Making (Coordinating Bodies):**

Forestry is under the Ministry of Environment in Lithuania. The Ministry is responsible for formulation of forestry policy and forestry development programmes, preparation of forestry related legal acts and performs other functions described in the Forest Law. State Environmental Protection Inspection which has territorial forest control divisions performs supervision of Forest Law and other forestry related legal acts and carries out forest control and forestry extension functions. The General State Forest Enterprise has responsibility for state forest management and commercial activities of 42 State Forest Enterprises.

- **Decision-Making (Strategies, Policies and Plans):**

Lithuania has signed Resolutions of Strasbourg (1990), Helsinki (1993) and Lisbon (1998) Ministerial Conferences on Protection of Forests in Europe. Therefore, Lithuanian forest policy is based on the principles of sustainable forest management integrating forest multiple use, protection of biodiversity, increasing of forest area via afforestation of former agricultural land, development of forestry research, education, extension etc.

The Lithuanian Forestry Policy and its Implementation Strategy was approved in 2002. IFF proposals for action have been taken into consideration while preparing this document. The non-governmental organisations, various forestry related institutions and organisations have been involved in the process of preparation of this document. The Lithuanian Forestry Policy and its Implementation Strategy covers the forestry policy formulation principles, guidelines of the forestry policy, SWOT analysis and the vision of the forestry sector, the mission of the state and strategic forestry development objectives. Several important strategic forestry development objectives could be mentioned, for instance: involvement of the society in the decision-making process of the major forestry issues, rational, sustainable and continuous use of the forest resources and increase of the forest productivity, ensuring the stability of forest ecosystems, preservation of the biodiversity and improvement of forest healthiness, meeting the general forest-related society needs and etc. The Action Plan has been designed for the implementation of the strategic forestry development objectives, which include definite actions and means for the development of separate strategic objectives setting up the period for the implementation of these means and defining responsible institutions. The Action Plan was approved in 2002.

- **Decision-Making (Legislation and Regulations):**

Within the last few years, remarkable progress was made to develop legal and regulatory framework, economic policy, financial instruments and informational means in the forestry sector. The new Forest Law was passed by the Parliament on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2001. The principles of sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation were introduced in a broader scale. The Forest Law covers all main forestry issues: trends of forestry policy, forest ownership, forest management and supervision, economic regulation of forestry, forest use, regeneration, growing and felling, forest protection etc.

The Program on Increase of Forest Coverage was approved in 2002. The Program sets up the main principles, measures and procedures for increase of forest coverage in Lithuania through afforestation of former agricultural land. The forest coverage in Lithuania is 31,2 % (data of 01-01-2002). It is planned to increase the forest coverage in Lithuania by 3% till the year 2020.

The Program on Forest Sanitary Protection was approved in 2002. The aim of this program is to ensure the forest healthiness and sustainable functioning of forest ecosystems in all forests of the country. The program defines the main principles and measures for improvement of forest condition.

The Program on Forest Fire Protection was approved in 2002 as well. The aim of this program is to create and maintain the unified system of forest protection against fires. This program sets up goals, measures and actions for forest protection against fires.

The implementation phase of general issues of forestry policy on a regional level was started through improving forest management planning methods and corresponding forest management activities. Several corresponding regulations and rules ensuring and enhancing sustainable forest management were updated (Regulations on Management and Use of Private Forests, Regulations on Forest Management Planning and etc.).

Seeking for EU membership Lithuania performs the harmonisation of national legislation with the EU legal framework. The harmonisation of national legislation with requirements of EU legal acts will be completed up to the year 2004.

The EU is giving high priority to the establishment of a network of protected sites under the NATURA 2000 network underpinned by the “Habitats Directive” and “Birds Directive”. In Lithuania, a legal analysis has been carried out, and a number of legal amendments have been proposed. The list of areas proposed for NATURA 2000 network is under preparation. In order to establish protected sites under the NATURA 2000 network and considering the need to expand the existing protected areas network (especially in private forest land), the implementation of compensation mechanism for forest management restriction in private forests is essential.

- **Decision-Making (Major Groups involvement):**

Considering the IFF proposals for action, the non-governmental organisations have been involved in the process of preparation of the Lithuanian Forestry Policy and its Implementation Strategy and other legal acts on forestry issues. Lithuanian Forest Owners Association, Lithuanian Fund for Nature, Lithuanian Green Movement, Lithuanian Society of Ornithologists, Union of Lithuanian Foresters and other non-governmental organisations have been involved in the process of preparation of legal acts on forestry issues.

- **Financing**

The forestry in Lithuania is considered as the profitable economical activity. The basic forest management unit responsible for the implementation of forest management plans in state forests is the state forest enterprise. The state forest enterprise acts on the self-financing base and as the state company seeks profit and pays taxes defined in legal acts. State forest enterprises as others state companies pay proportion of its income to the state in the form of taxes (property, value added, social and etc) and addition of fixed payment (5 % from incomes) to the State Budget. According to the Forest Law, all forestry activities related to regeneration, tending and protection of forests, forest utilisation, construction and rehabilitation of production facilities and building, road construction and maintenance of land drainage systems and recreation are financed from the incomes of state forest enterprises. Private forest owners pay 10 % income tax to the State Budget. Only the part of expenditures related to forest protection against fires, forest inventory, liquidation of natural calamity damages or pest outbreaks both on state owned and private forest land is financed from the State Budget.

During the period 2000-2006 the financial assistance from the European Communities to the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe are provided through three instruments: the Phare programme, ISPA and SAPARD. Because of its nature the significance of ISPA for the forestry sector is limited, but SAPARD has potential to provide support to forestry sector development (especially for afforestation of former agricultural land). However, private forest owners do not show a big interest to use SAPARD as the proportion of financial assistance is 50–50 and private forest owners do not want to invest to afforestation.

After EU enlargement the pre-accession measures will be gradually replaced with regulations applied to Member States. Funding to forestry-related activities is provided as part of rural development support under the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF). The scheme provides support to afforestation, various measures to improve ecological and environmental stability of forests, silvicultural and infrastructural improvements, development of forest management associations, etc. Lithuania plans to use the EU structural funds for forestry issues mentioned above and prepares the legal and institutional framework.

- **Status:**

According to the data of January 1, 2002 the forest land covers 31.2 % of the country's territory. The structure of forest ownership has been considerably changed after the restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1991. According to the data of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2002 the ownership rights were restored to 177.9 thousands forest owners and the share of private forests has reached 27.9 % of total forest area. The average area of private forest holding is 4.5 hectares. However, the process of restitution is still going on and after the completion of land reform, it is estimated that private forests will occupy about 40 % of the total forest area. According to the tree species composition, pine (36.8 %), spruce (23.1 %) and birch (20.0 %) forest stands prevail in Lithuania. Growing stock in the country's forests totals 378.1 million m<sup>3</sup>. The forest area and growing stock per capita is 0.57 ha and 109 m<sup>3</sup> respectively. The Lithuanian policy of forest use is based on the principles of sustainable forest

management and conservation of biodiversity. In rather big part of forests (28,8 %) due to environmental requirements (protection of biodiversity, protective functions of forests, etc.) restrictions to the forest management are applied. Commercial forests make up 71,2 %. In these forests management activities have comparably small restrictions, however, general silvicultural and ecological requirements should be followed. Totally 5,7 million m<sup>3</sup> were cut in 2001 while the annual increment was 11.6 mill.m<sup>3</sup>. Forestry and forest industry play significant role in Lithuania's economy. Forestry and forest industry sector contributed 3.6 % of gross domestic product in Lithuania in 2001.

- **Cooperation:**

Country has always participated in major international initiatives aimed at enhancing forest and forestry development. Lithuania has signed Resolutions of Strasbourg (1990), Helsinki (1993) and Lisbon (1998) Ministerial Conferences on Protection of Forests in Europe, the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and Kyoto protocol to Convention on Climate Change. Lithuania participates in regional initiative, called the Baltic 21 process. This process has a cross-border dimension and is enforced by interagency cooperation and information exchange. Since 1988 Lithuania has been participating in the international ICP-Forests programme and is a member of EUFORGEN since 1995. The country also took part in the IFF process. The relevance of some IFF proposals for action in Lithuania has been assessed and incorporated in Lithuanian Forestry Policy and its Implementation Strategy and Action Plan. Lithuania provides information on forestry issues to international organisations (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE), United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Forestry Commission and etc.) and participates in their activities. Besides the mentioned international initiatives projects of technical assistance and bilateral cooperation is being implemented in Lithuania, which is very important for transfer of information and exchange of know-how. Several successful international projects could be mentioned, for instance:

- Lithuanian - Swedish project "Wood Fuel Development in Lithuania". The aim of this project is to research possibilities for forest fuel development in Lithuania, as a support for increasing the usage of renewable resources in Lithuania energy balance. Project was started in the year 2000, completed at the end of 2002. The project was carried out by the Ministry of Environment and Swedish National Board of Forestry, financed by Swedish Energy Agency.
- In 2001 Lithuanian-Swedish project "Pilot Woodland Key Habitat Inventory in Lithuania" was launched. The project is still going on. 740 000 ha (34 % of total forest land) have been inventoried in state and private forests so far. It is planned to complete inventory of key habitats in all Lithuanian forests till the year 2005.
- Lithuanian-Swedish project "Development of Advisory Service Aimed at Sustainable Management of Private Forests as a Renewable Natural Resource in the Lithuanian Forestry Sector 2002." This project started in 2002 and will end up in 2003. The aim of this project is to support the development of an extension

structure within the forest authority, develop the knowledge of extension methodology and skills among the consultants of private forest owners, provide the deliver mechanisms for the extension service and establish 10 demonstration areas for sustainable forest management evenly distributed over Lithuania.

- **Information:**

Regularly up-dated information about the Lithuanian Forestry is available at the Web-Sites of the Ministry of Environment, Department of Forests (<http://www.am.lt> and <http://miskai.gamta.lt/md>). Research and educational institutes specialised in forestry are good sources of data and information: Lithuanian Forest Research Institute (<http://www.mi.lt/>), the Faculty of Forests at Lithuanian University of Agriculture (<http://www.lzua.lt/fakult/miskai/forestry.html>). Information for private forest owners can be accessed at Web-Site of Forest Owners Association of Lithuania (<http://www.forest.lt/>). Detailed forestry and forest industry statistics annually are presented in the Lithuanian Statistics Yearbook of Forestry. Future perspectives of Lithuanian forestry could be found in the book "Lithuanian Forest Resources in the XXI century", etc.

## **ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF FORESTS**

- **Certification:**

Seeking to ensure the sustainable forest management, appreciable progress in forest certification has been made. On 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2001 Birzai and Panevezys state forest enterprises got the FSC certificates of "Forest management" (totally 70 000 ha of state forests) and Birzai timber processing unit - FSC certificate of "Chain-of-custody". UK Company "SGS Forestry" which certifies according OUALIFOR programme and is accredited by FSC carried out the certification.

General state forest enterprise has initiated further certification of state forest enterprises. At the end of 2002 the General state forest enterprise signed the contract with certification company "SmartWood" accredited by FSC for forest certification of 16 state forest enterprises (totally 374 460 ha of state forests). It is planned to complete forest certification of these 16 state forest enterprises at the end of 2003.

Besides, four Lithuanian forest industry companies have FSC certificates, issued by certification company "SmartWood".

Since 1999 representatives from Lithuania as observes participate in the PEFC process. The Lithuanian Forest Owners' Association shows the initiatives to certify private forests according to PEFC scheme. The documentation of national PEFC forest certification system has been prepared.

It must be noted that the traditional planning and control system in Lithuania fulfils most of the mandate of forest certification in general and all mandates in sustainable forest management in particular. Therefore, forest certification in Lithuania is not related with essential reorganization of the country's forest sector. Rather, it could improve public understanding of sustainable forestry.

## **FOREST HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY**

Forest monitoring is a constituent part of environmental monitoring in Lithuania. The Law on Environmental Monitoring of 1997 regulates the organisation and implementation of forest monitoring. Forest monitoring since 1987 is being carried out in the accordance to the International Co-operative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests (ICP Forest). It was decided by the signed Resolutions of the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe.

In 1991, the Pan European Forest monitoring Level I (ICP Forests) network of 74 permanent observation plots (a 16 km × 16 km grid) was set up from the national level forest monitoring network (a 4 km × 4 km grid). The Republic of Lithuania joined the European Programme for the Intensive Monitoring of Forest Ecosystems (ICP Forests monitoring Level II) in 1995. 9 intensive monitoring plots are established in Lithuania. Forest monitoring is carried out in accordance with the methodological recommendations, which are common to the whole Europe (UN/ECE, 1994, 1998).

The Ministry of Environment co-ordinates forest monitoring in Lithuania, and the Lithuanian Forest Research Institute and Forest Monitoring Laboratory at the Lithuanian University of Agriculture were responsible for carrying out thereof.

## **MAINTAINING FOREST COVER TO MEET PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS**

Forest coverage is very important both from national and international point of view. According to data of 01-01-2002 forest coverage in Lithuania is 31,2%. During last 8 years forest coverage in Lithuania increased by 1,1%. It was due to natural and artificial afforestation both in state owned and private land. In order to reach ecologically optimal forest coverage forest area could be increased by 3% in Lithuania. At the moment in Lithuania there are about 500 000 hectares of abandoned agricultural land, which could be used for afforestation. In order to increase the forest coverage and to use the existing potential (abandoned agricultural land) the Program on Increase of Forest Coverage in Lithuania was approved in 2002. This program foresees the principles, measures and actions aimed to increase the forest coverage by 3 % till 2020.