

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

**POLAND**

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## **II. Progress and issues related to implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action**

### **General**

The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for forest policy in Poland. There is a continuous process of development of many innovative solutions within the forestry sector. The range of issues that have been dealt with has been the widest since the UNCED Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It is a result of a new legislation, which was adopted between 1992 and 1999, i.e., the National Forestry Policy (1997), Regulations on development of Promotional Forest Complexes of 1994, 1999 and 2002, Regulations by the General Director of State Forests: No 11 of 1995 and No 11a of 1999 on ecological basis of forest management; the Instruction for preparation of the Nature Protection Programme as an integrated part of the Forest Management Plan for each forest district (1996), the Instruction of Forest Management (1994). Due to the recent developments in legislation, Poland has become one of the leading countries in the formulation of sustainable forest management in Europe. Polish forestry legislation respects all documents defining a global forestry policy framework, which include: Forestry Principles adopted in Rio de Janeiro (1992), Agenda 21 (1992), the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, the Strasbourg Resolutions S1-6, the Helsinki Resolutions H 1-4 and the Resolutions L 1-2 adopted at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Conference in Lisbon (1998). In 1996, amendments of several technical-economic documents, such as: Principles of Forest Management; Principles of Sylviculture and Instruction of Forest Protection, have been started. Numerous groups of experts representing scientific institutions, not only from the forestry but also other sectors, have been taking part in this process, aimed at improving documents mentioned above. The work should result in elaboration of Forest Code, which will include general principles and directions of forest development and conditions of sustainable forest management.

The main goal of the Polish forest policy is the harmonization of sustainable forestry management with the economic development in general, and adjustment to the new institutional and organizational changes that Poland faces recently. The Proposals for Action, agreed at the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of IPF seem to be a very important instrument for forest policy development in Poland. The issues included in the IPF documents make foundation for further development of the forest policy. Several documents based on the IPF agreements have been already elaborated. They are: the Concept of criteria and indicators of Sustainable Forest Management, the Forest Biodiversity Protection Strategy, the Research Programme concerning the basis of Sustainable Forest Management in Promotional Forest Complexes, The National Programme of Augmentation of Forest Cover, as well as, introduction of new ecological elements (soil, biodiversity) into biological forest monitoring.

The market demand caused mainly by foreign customers has initiated the implementation of the FSC forest certification scheme in Poland. Furthermore, establishment of a new forest certification scheme based on the Pan-European Forest Certification agreements is planned soon.

The National Environmental Monitoring Network, with financial support of the Chief Inspectorate for Environmental Protection and the Department of Forestry in the Ministry of the Environment, implements the new initiatives concerning the forest monitoring.

The Forest policy in Poland ensures compensation system for forest owners providing non-market environmental benefits from their forests. This instrument consists of tax relief for forests of the age of 40 years old and above registered in the register of heritage sites, subsidies for afforestation, budgetary support for actions aimed at the reduction of the negative effects of pests and diseases.

The contemporary Polish forest policy is in line with the goals set out in the Agenda 21 and Forest Principles. In this regard the process of elaboration of the National Forest Programme (NFP) in Poland has just been launched by issuing, in 2002, of the Regulation No 65 by the General Director of the State Forests. The Regulation gives the framework guidelines on preparation of so called “Regional Operational Programmes of the Forestry Policy as a base for elaboration of the National Forest Programme”, defines the main actors of the process and points out the regional forest authorities responsible for providing the platform for the work to this end. It should be mentioned here that the present structure of the State Forest administration can be seen as an advantage in promoting and facilitating the bottom-up approach in this regard. The bottom-up approach shall enable the broad participation of stakeholders and aim at cross-sectoral harmonization of forest economy with other sectors, in particular with agriculture, energy, transport, industry, the environmental protection, national spatial policy and programming of rural areas development. The NFP will define the role of forest in the climate change, as well as, principles of using of forest resources. It will also establish links to the main Governmental programmes and strategies launched recently, such as, the National Programme for the Augmentation of Forest Cover (1995), revised in 2002, the National Programme for the Forest Gene Resources Protection and Selection Growing of Forest Trees 1991 – 2010 (1993), the Programme for Nature and Culture Heritage Protection in Forest Areas (1996), the Complex Policy of Forest Resources Protection (1994).

### **Economic aspects of forests, including trade**

Poland maintains 8.9 million ha forests that are 28.4% of the country’s total area (2001). Poland’s forestry generates 0.4% of gross value added. The forest sector is dominated by the National Forest Holding State Forests, which manages 75% of the country’s forests, 89% of it’s growing stock and 94% of the total roundwood production.

Woodworking industries (including manufacture of pulp and paper and manufacture of furniture) produce over 2% of the total gross value added, 8.5% of total sold production of industry over 10% of the output generated by the processing industry (manufacturing). Poland’s wood harvest in 2001 amounted to 26.7 million m<sup>3</sup>, 25 million of which was roundwood. About 72% of the roundwood was coniferous wood. In 2001, Poland produced approximately 3.6 million m<sup>3</sup> of sawnwood, including 80% of coniferous sawnwood. A total of 4.6 million m<sup>3</sup> of panels, were produced by the wood-based panels industry. The country generated a total of 3 million m<sup>3</sup> of particle board, 15% of which were oriented strand boards (OSB). The production of the veneer sheets amounted to 49 000 m<sup>3</sup>, while the production of plywood 256 000 m<sup>3</sup> and the production of fibreboard – 1 351 000 m<sup>3</sup>, mainly in the MDF. The 2001 production of wood pulp amounted to 937 000 tonnes and the production of paper and paperboard climbed to 1 950 000 tonnes.

In 2001, Poland exported 310 000 m<sup>3</sup> of roundwood having the combined value of US\$ 21 million. 11,5% of that amount belong to fuelwood. Roundwood imports reached 882 200 m<sup>3</sup> (US\$ 41 million). Fuelwood imports were relatively meagre as they amounted only up to 2000 m<sup>3</sup>. The leading product in the exports of industrial roundwood was softwood (74%).

A total of 3.9 million ha or 55% of the total forest area in Poland is currently undergoing certification procedures. 9, out of the total number of 17, State Forest Regional Directorates have obtained FSC certificates. Some 100 companies throughout Poland hold now another document: the “Chain of Custody” certificate of product origin. Six such certificates were either revoked or voided last year.

## Forest health and productivity

The present condition of Poland's forests is influenced mainly by the forestry methods applied in the past and by action of anthropogenic source.

The most sensitive part of forests in Poland are areas that underwent afforestation after the Second World War, planted on former agricultural lands, mainly in the northern and eastern parts of the country. Large areas of monocultures, characterised by uniform age structure, require intensive care and are constantly endangered by violation of ecosystem balance.

Non-biotic threats are related to geographical location of Poland in the points of contact between the oceanic and continental climates. Such conditions favour the kinds of weather anomalies, manifested in marked variations in precipitation totals (from water tables to excessive drying of soil). Apart from direct impact exerted on stands, such conditions also reduce their natural, biologically conferred immunity to biotic threats. Major damages can also be done by gales and heavy snowfalls. Sudden declines in temperature may also cause a dieback of sensitive species of trees, especially when they are still young.

Forests remain under constant influence of air pollution, emitted both at home and brought by western winds to Poland from the western countries.

Most forest soils are sandy, which markedly affects the health of stands. Particularly unfavourable soil conditions occur in the former agricultural areas subject to afforestation (about 1.5 million ha). Transformation of these soils is a long-term process, requiring at least one or more generations of stands.

Forests in Poland are also strongly endangered by fires, especially in the southern and western parts of the country. Fire hazard is created due to combination of several phenomena, such as frequent periods without precipitation, air pollution, illegal meadow burning, and intensive vehicle and tourist traffic.

Non-biotic threats predispose forests to the threats posed by biotic factors, especially insects, which may threaten the survival of coniferous stands during mass outbreaks. Large-area mass outbreaks of insects occurred particularly frequently in 60-ties and 80-ties. Since 1997 the level of activity of pest insects has been limited. The trends with regard to threats posed by fungi are shaped similarly.

A continued threat is posed to new plantations and young stands by game whose excessive number affects forests in various regions.

The health condition of forest is assessed on the basis of negative impact on the assimilatory surface (i.e. defoliation), as compared with the state of trees defined as healthy in the given habitat and climatic conditions. The spatial distribution of degree of damage of forests in Poland does not show major change in comparison to the past, although a slight improvement has been noticed in the condition of stands in the last few years. Nevertheless, the level of damage of forests in Poland remains among the highest in Europe.

In general, the main threat to the forests are anthropogenic changes in the environment, including: (1) air pollution with gasses and particulates, (2) lowering of the level of ground water, (3) excessive fragmentation of forest areas, (4) intensified penetration of forests by people, pollution and cluttering of forest areas, (5) schematic forest management, oriented exclusively at obtaining raw materials, (6) fires.

The present stage of country forestage is very much a result of the policy of reconstruction of the Polish forests, damaged in particularly during the last two World wars, which has been implemented consistently for 50 years. This is a reason why comparing of changes within the last ten years is hindered and why the comparable data reaches the year 1945. The area of forests in Poland at that time was equal to almost 6.5 million ha (about 20.8% of the country area). Since that time the forest resources increased from 845 million m<sup>3</sup> to 1571.9 million m<sup>3</sup>, and the grooving volume increased from 135 m<sup>3</sup>/ha to 183 m<sup>3</sup>/ha of large timber (in State Forests – 197 m<sup>3</sup>/ha). The forest area in the period 1945 – 1997 increased by 35%, and the area of valuable, more than 80 years old stands, by as much as 61%.

Thanks to the State Budget subsidies and a loan from the European Investment Bank the State Forests have been able to increase afforestation since 1994 in comparison to the previous years. In years 1990 – 1993 about 4 thousand ha of land was a subject to afforestation annually, in years 1996 – 2001, more than

10 thousand ha were afforested annually. Within the last five years, the afforestation of private lands became more than two times higher than previously. The National Programme for Augmentation of the Forest Cover, updated in 2002, provides a number of 680 thousand ha for afforestation during the period 2000 – 2020. Further plans estimates afforestation of the total area of 1.5 million ha of land until 2050. That shall increase the percentage of the forest cover in Poland up to 33%.

A systematic change is going on in the species composition of stands in favour of deciduous species. Since 1945, the share of deciduous species has increased from 13% to 25%, and this is a positive trend since it is according to habitats' potentials, and moreover, it significantly improves the biological diversity of forests.

Logging has been increasing systematically since 1990. This is associated with the increasing resources of standing volume, demand for wood and financial independence of the National Forest Holding State Forests.

The decrease of the level of air pollution within forest areas, implementation of the afforestation programmes and programmes for increase of forest biological diversity, and increase of the area of protected forest areas, create realistic basis for gradual improvement of forests' condition, also in the future. In case of deciduous forests, improvement is most noticeable in birch and beech stands, and least noticeable in oak woods. In the nearest future, further improvement of health of the Polish forests can be expected.

### **Maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs**

The National Forest Holding State Forests is a company that manages forests on behalf of the State. Only the forest areas of national parks, and of communal and private ownership are excluded from under its management. As statutory operations, the State Forests manage forests and other lands and properties associated with forestry. They maintain records of forest resources and determine their value. The State Forests are financially independent and supervised by the Minister of the Environment.

There is a strong legal basis in Poland for preventing deforestation, reflected by actions to preserve forest continuity and increase of its area, as well as carrying for biological diversity.

The most important acts include:

1. The Forest Act of September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1991, specifies i.e. the directions of ecologically based forest management. The Act refers to the principle of sustainable and balanced forest management and protection of biological diversity. It introduces the obligation to create nature protection programmes for forest management plans. The Forest Act also regulates indirectly or directly some issues regarding biological diversity, related to: (1) preservation and protection of natural marshlands and peatlands, (2) protection of nature by creation and maintaining of Promotional Forest Complexes, (3) specification of protective forests, (4) prohibition of any action that poses a threat to forest biological diversity.
2. The Act on Protection of Agricultural and Forest Lands of February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1995. According to that Act, the protection of forest lands is based, i.e., upon (...) limiting their assignment for non-forest or non-agricultural purposes, (...) prevention of processes of degradation or devastation of forest lands due to non-forest activity, (...) restoring of value of lands that were used for non-forest purposes and (...) improvement of their stability.
3. The Nature Conservation Act of September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1991. Management of natural resources and components of nature is aimed at preservation of wild-living animals and plants and maintaining their optimum numbers, while preserving, as much as possible, their genetic diversity. Introducing in free nature and relocation of animals, and plants that are of foreign origin to domestic flora and fauna, without the consent of the Minister of the Environment, is prohibited.
4. The Environmental Protection Law Act of April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The Act, which regulates practically all issues related to environmental protection, demands i.e. preservation of valuable ecosystems,

biological diversity and natural balance (...), prevention and limitation of negative impacts that may influence negatively the state of plants and animals, protection of forests and stands against pollution and fire (...) and afforestation, when required due to natural needs.

5. The Hunting Law Act of September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1995, lists among objectives of hunting protection, maintaining diversity and management of game populations in accordance with the rules of protection of nature.
6. The Act on Forest Reproductive Material of June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, which implements the resolutions of the European Union Directive on trade of reproductive material in the Polish legislation.

Counteracting deforestation in Poland has been described as one of the primary objectives of the National Policy on Forests, drawn up at the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry in November 1996 and adopted by the Government in 1997. It is intended that this objective would be attained by ensuring the persistence of forests, together with their multifunctionality, in particular through: (1) augmentation of the country's forest resources, (2) improvement in the state of forest resources and their comprehensive protection, (3) leaving the model of raw materials in forestry and consequent reorientation of forest management towards the introduction of a pro-environmental, sustainable model multifunctional forest management, meeting the criteria formulated for Europe by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe.

Regardless of work related to protection of the existing forest ecosystems, actions are taken to increase forest area. The concept of increase of forest and tree cover, with a preference being afforded to the environment-creating role of forests, is a basic tenet of the National Programme for the Augmentation of Forest Cover, adopted by the Council of Ministers in 1995. The Programme provides for an increase in forest cover from the present 28.4% to 30% in year 2020 and 33% in year 2050, anticipating mobilisation of economic mechanisms that will stimulate forest based use of land of marginal significance to agriculture, along with defining the spatial priorities reflecting the role of forests in shaping of the environment.

The Ministry of the Environment, implementing the resolutions of Agenda 21, the Helsinki Conference on forest protection in 1993 and the Convention on biological diversity, initiated the programme of modernisation of forestry, oriented at its ecologisation and more balanced use of biological resources of forests. Directions for this modernisation were set out by the Polish Policy of Sustainable Forestry Management, which came into force by way of Regulation of May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1999 from the Director General of the State Forests. The principles of forestry, which are to safeguard more efficiently the biodiversity of forest ecosystems, are being implemented first of all in the 13 so-called Promotional Forest Complexes.

The forestry practices pursued in Poland are in line with global trend, set out in the Forestry Principles, adopted by 170 countries during the UN Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED). In its report on the bilateral review of law within the Agriculture chapter of accession negotiations, the European Commission expressed the opinion that Polish legislation, regarding forestry, is also congruent with EU policy on forests.

### **Other information and emerging issues**

The Act on Forests, approved in year 1991, before Rio de Janeiro and Helsinki conferences, changed the social and economic value of forests by giving the social functions and the task of environmental creation an equal position with production functions. The development of forestry in accordance with its regulations is a warranty of preservation of extensive biodiversity of forest areas. Full compliance with resolutions of the Act is undoubtedly a great challenge for the forestry sector, since it assumes:

- preservation of forests and their favourable influence on the environment,
- protection of forests, in particular forests that are natural fragments of nature,
- protection of soils and land facing particular threats,
- production of wood and other products of forest use.

The preservation of persistence of forests, referred to above, is maintained particularly through:

- diagnosing of conditions of forests,
- monitoring of ongoing changes and threats posed by biotic, non-biotic and anthropogenic factors,
- devising and implementation of far reaching forestry programmes (including forest management plans for programmes of seed production, stand reconstruction and conservation of nature),
- designation and protection of forests and mid-forests ecosystems of particular value due to their biodiversity,
- pursuit of stand reconstruction in line with the principle in line with the principle of adjusting the species composition of stands to habitat conditions,
- implementation of the programme for small-scale retention of water in forests (limiting in deterioration in water relations, recognised as one of the factors determining the persistence of forests),
- combating of the threat of fire. The State Forests have recently installed a new system for the early detection, and have reached a high level of organisational efficiency and technical outfitting of the fire prevention services, equipped with modern ground and air fire-fighting equipment,
- propagation in society of the idea of forest protection, i.e. through organisation of forest education centres, publication of informational and promotional materials, co-operation with schools and local authorities, etc,

development of foreign co-operation, including co-operation agreements, participation in regional (European) and global conferences, participation in works of international forestry organisations, such as FAO Timber Committee, IUFRO, European Forest Institute and the European Forester's Union.

### **III. Preparation of the Report**

The report was prepared in the Department of Forestry, Ministry of the Environment, in collaboration and on a basis of information provided by the Forest Research Institute in Warsaw, the Institute of Wood Technology in Poznan, and the National Forest Holding State Forests.