

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

CYPRUS

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I. Key Contacts

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

General

1. *Please provide additional or new information on initiatives taken or lessons learned since 1997 further to the information on forests included in your national reports¹ to UNFF 2 and UNFF 3, the Commission on Sustainable Development, and other international instruments and organizations on the following points:*

- *assessment (including of the relevance, priority, status of implementation, planned actions) of the IPF/IFF proposals for action in the national context*

The forests of Cyprus are an important national resource and the forest sector is subject to pressures coming from many directions to which it has to respond. Forests –private and state- cover an area of 172,535ha (18,65% of the total area of the island) and Other Wooded Land -private and state- an area of 213,859 ha or 23,12%, including maquis and garrigue formations. Forests provide timber and non-wood products; more importantly they contribute significantly to the beauty of the landscape, preservation of national heritage, protection of water supplies, rural life, village communities and the general well-being of Cypriot citizens; they attract visitors from abroad on whom the national economy is heavily dependent. The future prosperity of the country is bound up with its forests and what happens to them. With effective conservation and sound management the forest resources offer multidimensional opportunities for socioeconomic development, especially in rural areas.

In Cyprus the need to manage forest resources for multiple purposes has been clearly set out, right from the first official forest policy declaration in 1950. Until recently, however, the emphasis has been given to timber production and meeting domestic demand for wood products. Today, the concept of sustainability includes not only the economic functions but also the ecological and social functions. And for this purpose, the Forest Policy was reformulated in 2000 and a National Forest Programme was adopted, taking into consideration the broader sustainability concept.

Most of considerations implied by the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action have directly or indirectly been incorporated in the context of the new forest policy and the NFP. However, a thorough procedure of detailed assessment of the relevance and compatibility of these Proposals with NFP and Forest Policy has just started, aiming to identify weaknesses, gaps, overlappings and clashes.

- *development and implementation of your national forest programme or similar national policy framework for forests, and*

The National Forest Programme adopted in 2002 covers the 10-year period 2002 – 2011.

The main objectives of the Programme are: the forest development, the forest management on a sustainable basis and the rational and prudent multiple use of the forests.

The Programme consists of three parts:

- the strategy
- the projects and activities, and
- the New National Forest Policy Statement

The Strategy, known as the Rural Betterment Strategy, seeks to protect and improve the natural environment of Cyprus for the benefit of all citizens and visitors from abroad. The Strategy is based on multiple use of the forest resources. It is directed at improving the condition of the forests, conservation of soils and watersheds, protection of the flora, fauna, biodiversity and heritage sites, the promotion of ecotourism and sustainable production of wood and non-wood products up to the limits of the capacity of the forests to supply them. The Strategy is designed to meet society's changing needs and the fact that Cyprus will join the European Union in 2004.

The second part of this Programme includes the projects and activities, which are grouped into the following six sub-programmes:

- Afforestation and silviculture
- Production of timber and non-wood products
- Conservation of ecosystems, flora, fauna and heritage
- Water
- Local plans and village development
- Institutional reform, modernization and capacity building

The Forest Policy Statement sets out the framework for the strategic objectives and provides guidance for their achievement. It includes the general conditions (imperatives) that must be observed and the detailed policy objectives that will be followed when implementing the National Forest Programme. It identifies the constraints or impediments to development that must be overcome, the criteria by which success will be judged, and the indicators used to measure progress.

There is also a Rural Development Plan, covering the three-year period 2004-2006. This Plan is co-financed by the European Union and the following forestry measures included in it were based on the National Forest Programme:

- Afforestation of agricultural land
- Protection of forests against fires and other natural disasters and reforestation of burnt areas
- Afforestation of non agricultural land and investments for the conservation and improvement of the economical, ecological and social functions of forests
- Investments to improve the harvesting, processing and marketing of forestry products

- *mechanisms or initiatives to facilitate stakeholder participation, including indigenous and local communities, in forest sector planning, decision-making and/or forest management.*

The Forest Policy gives the opportunity to all interested parties (inhabitants of communities, forest owners and environmental NGO's) to express their opinion and make comments on each future management projects. Their comments and opinions are taken into consideration in the planning and later in decision-making. The multi-stakeholder participation in the procedure of National Forest Programme formulation has been proven of vital importance, and it can be considered as an excellent example of broad social dialogue for matters relevant to the forest sector.

Implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to thematic issues of UNFF 4

Please provide information on: activities undertaken since 1997, progress made, constraints encountered, lessons learned, and issues that have emerged, as well as relevant information related to means of implementation (financing, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, and capacity-building) to support the following actions:

social and cultural aspects of forests

2. *promoting the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of forest genetic resources and addressing the issue of intellectual property rights, including the identification of the origins of forest genetic resources, taking into account work undertaken by the Convention on Biological Diversity and other international agreements*

Forests in Cyprus are mainly natural and the regeneration is based on natural seeding. Only small-scale afforestations / reforestations are applied where only autochthonous species are used. There is no need of using improved genetic material since in all above cases, the genetic material used is well adapted to the local conditions, ensuring thus the adaptation of forest to the particular climatic/ edaphic conditions and the resistance to various pests and diseases. Protection of the biodiversity is achieved as well.

The production and marketing of forest reproductive material is regulated under a law that it is in line with the Council Directive 1999/105/EC. The enforcement of this law ensures the protection of forest genetic resources and biodiversity as well.

3. *strengthening the role of women in sustainable forest management, including through capacity building and greater participation in community-based forest management*

In Cyprus, legislation and constitution give the same opportunities to men and women either in rural or urban areas. However, the presence of women in the forestry sector is negligible, as the topic has been socially considered, even until now, as a “male” sector, at least in certain forest works.

4. *Integrating local and indigenous communities in sustainable forest management programmes, particularly as regards:*

a) recognition and respect of customary and traditional rights and privileges of indigenous and local communities

The Cyprus forest law offers privileges and rights to inhabitants of certain village close to forests.

The inhabitants may, after a licence issued by a Forest Officer and without the payment of any fee or charge, and for their own domestic needs and not for sale, within the state forest or part of it prescribed in a Minister's Order Published in the official Gazette of the Republic and every one of such village,

- gather dead and dry fuel but not charred of same and
- cut the part above the ground of any kind of growing bush prescribed in the Minister's Order

b) Participation in decision-making regarding the management of forests.

Realizing the importance of the participation of the local communities in sustainable forest management, the Department of Forests takes into account the view of forest communities and Non-Governmental Organizations regarding the issues related to the forest management.

c) the attainment of secure land tenure arrangements

The long history of Cyprus and the numerous conquerors of the island, account for the existence of the various land ownership categories.

The main land tenure types encountered today in Cyprus are the following:

Private land, joint holders land, company land, co-operatives land, state land, community land, church land and other land.

Communal land covers the communal grazing land and the communal forests. The communal forests, which belong to village communities or town municipalities, were established mainly for the provision of fuel wood to their inhabitants. Today these needs ceased to exist and therefore the communal forests have been mostly converted to parks or recreation grounds.

The only land tenure problem, which is encountered in Cyprus, is the small size of holdings.

d) capacity building and technology transfer for sustainable forest management directed at indigenous and local communities.

The Department of Forests, understanding the vital role of local communities for sustainable forest management, gives lectures, offers advice and vocational training to these communities in order to let them become aware and trained on the different Forestry subjects. All these activities will be further strengthened with the Rural Development Plan covering the period 2004-2006.

traditional forest-related knowledge

5. *inventorying, cataloguing, and applying traditional forest related knowledge for sustainable forest management and promoting research on TFRK with the involvement of the knowledge holders*

not applicable (it refers to indigenous people)

6. *supporting the application of intellectual property rights and/or other protection regimes for traditional forest related knowledge, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of traditional forest related knowledge, innovations and practices*

- not applicable (it refers to indigenous people)

scientific forest-related knowledge

7. *disseminating scientific knowledge to all interested parties, including through new and innovative ways, and strengthening capacity and mobilizing funding for national and regional research institutions and networks*

The scientific knowledge, which is obtained through various research activities, is disseminated to all interesting parties through official publications, seminars, scientific meetings, etc.

The Republic of Cyprus has signed (1998) and ratified (2003) the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) of UNECE and is now a Party to the Convention. Furthermore, it is noted that Cyprus is fully harmonized with the relevant EU Aquis (Directives 90/313/EEC and 2003/4/EC).

The capacity of national and regional research institutions has been strengthened, especially the last years, through various projects and co-operations on national and regional level. Funding is ensured either through the national budget or other international sources. The accession to European Union creates a better environment for improved financing of research activities and institutions in Cyprus.

8. *enhancing interaction between scientific research and policy processes, including priority setting of research, addressing of knowledge gaps and using scientific knowledge to support decision-making*

Scientific research and knowledge has been the backbone of most policy-related decisions and actions. For instance, the development of the National Forest Programme and the formulation of the new Forest Policy were based on such knowledge. Similarly, the adoption of forestry measures in the Rural Development Plan and the procedure for formulation of the Cyprus Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management has also taken into consideration the scientific research and knowledge. Consecutively, this approach contributes the maximum to the priority setting of research, policy and decision-making.

monitoring, assessment and reporting, concepts, terminology and definitions

9. *improving information on national forest resources, making the information widely available, and assisting other countries in their related efforts*

improving information on national forest resources

During the last years, there has been a noticeable improvement on the quality, the quantity and accuracy of information recorded in the several databases of the Department of Forests, concerning the national forest resources. Collecting mechanisms have been readjusted or reset to comply with modern trends and needs whereas some totally new ones like GPS, etc, have been adopted. The personnel in charge for the collection of data is well trained on the use of instruments and methodologies for proper and effective measurements. Furthermore, advanced systems, like GIS, are now in use.

The recent process of introducing Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management has given the chance to identify gaps and re-examine the compatibility of relevant information and mechanisms. This procedure will assist in the collection, verification, synthesis and interpretation of information on progress in sustainable forest management.

making the information widely available

Improvement has also been made in the dissemination of this information. The Department of Forests makes this information available, on request or through publications, to interested groups. In addition, all this information on forest resources is submitted on a constant basis, to the various international bodies and organizations (FAOSTAT, EUROSTAT etc) through several questionnaires, like Joint (UNECE, FAO, Eurostat, and ITTO) Forest Sector Questionnaire, TBFRA questionnaires, MCPFE, etc.

assisting other countries in their related efforts:

The Department of Forests has many times shared its experiences and other relevant information with other countries through the participation in regional and international meetings, seminars and workshops, as well as exchange of experts' visits. In addition, the Government of Cyprus through the Cyprus Forestry College offers a number of scholarships on forestry related courses to students from developing countries.

It is also worth to mention the bilateral Programme of Co-operation between Cyprus and Greece, in the Agricultural Sector. This co-operation aims at the mutual exchange of technical assistance through experts visits and programmes.

Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management

10. *developing and using criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management (at national level and/or subnational level and for policy, planning, management and/or monitoring purposes), and participating in regional and/or international C&I processes*

The Department of Forests has proceeded with the preparation of national-level criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, based on the Pan-European process, as a framework for promoting best forest practices in Cyprus.

The application of these Criteria and Indicators will ensure that the forest resources will continue to be managed in a sustainable way, strengthened with further scientific and technical examination, including field testing, and will provide valuable experience to assist forest development.

The formulation and implementation of the Cyprus Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Management, which actually consists a significant part of the National Forest Programme, will be completed in 2004.

The Department of Forests participated in various international and regional activities on Criteria and Indicators, like the:

- MCPFE workshops on the improvement of Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management
- FAO workshop on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management
- International Conference on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, Guatemala City, 2003.

There is also an active participation in the regional process for preparation of Criteria and Indicators in the Near East Region (FAO-UNEP).

III. Preparation of the Report

11. *Describe the process of preparing this report, including which government agencies and stakeholder groups were involved, and the extent to which they contributed. Provide information on successes, challenges and lessons learned in the preparation of this report.*

This report has been prepared by the Department of Forests of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment. Based on the topic, each chapter of the report has been distributed to the Departmental Sectors with the relevant authority and responsibility in order to deal with and answer it. All answers were gathered by the Planning and European Union Section and were compiled into the final form. For the answers, all available data and information were utilized.