

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

Lithuania

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

General

The sustainable development of the world's natural resources, the need to protect and sustainably manage it has been continuously emphasized since Rio de Janeiro Conference in 1992 and has been reviewed in the Johannesburg Conference in 2002. The progress and positive results developing and managing natural resources, including forests have been achieved since then; however, the new challenges – such a globalization, climate change, threats to forest biodiversity, economic viability of forestry and etc. have been raised as well. The new challenges and issues related to forest sector are very important for our country as well. Lithuania participates in international processes and activities of international organizations related to forests (MCPFE, UN FAO Committee on Forestry, European Forestry Commission, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme EUFORGEN, Baltic 21 process and etc.) and implements IFF proposals for actions sharing the responsibility for the development and protection of forests in our planet.

Within the last few years remarkable changes took place in Lithuania. The international commitments, forest restitution process, integration to EU and etc. have influenced Lithuanian forest sector. Remarkable progress was made to develop legal and regulatory framework, economic policy, financial instruments and informational means in our forest sector. In this report the most relevant measures and means undertaken in Lithuania as well as lessons learnt during recent years are presented focusing on implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for actions related to the thematic issues described in the guidance for voluntary reporting.

Social and cultural aspects of forests

- **Legal framework**

Forests represent one of the most important Lithuanian natural resources having a fundamental economic, social and ecological significance. At the present time, forests in Lithuania cover about 2 million hectares, or about 31 per cent of the territory of the country. The total timber volume accumulated in the forests of the country reaches 382.6 million m³. Forest area per one inhabitant of the country reaches 0.59 hectare or 110 m³ of timber volume accordingly. The forest resources permanently increased during the last fifty years and, at present time, they are sufficient for ensuring a balanced fulfilment of the public needs.

With the purpose of ensuring a sustainable forestry development, satisfying of the forest-related needs of various groups of the society, and ensuring preservation of forests for further generations, acknowledging a long forest growth duration, and taking into regard the differences of the ownership forms and their relationship, by promoting conditions for proper management of forests with the purpose of economic benefits for the country, a long-term forestry policy has been formed in Lithuania in compliance to the policies of other branches of the economy of the

country, based on the traditions of the country and requirements of the European Union legal norms, international conventions, resolutions, agreements, programmes, and national legal acts.

The Lithuanian Forest Policy and its Implementation Strategy was approved in 2002. This crucial document covers the forest policy formulation principles, guidelines of the forest policy, SWOT analysis and the vision of the forest sector, the mission of the state and strategic forest development objectives. Several important strategic forest development objectives could be mentioned, for instance: involvement of the society in the decision-making process of the major forest 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, increase of forest coverage and etc.

Participation and co-operation of all interested groups of the society is mentioned among the main principles of Lithuanian forestry policy. This principle says that the forestry policy takes into regard the opinion of all interested groups of the society, complies and balances the interests of forest owners, forest governors and users, wood processors, environmental organisations, and other social groups related to forest and forestry-related economy. Following this principle all major forestry policy statements shall be in compliance with separate stakeholders and submitted for public consideration of the society.

Continuation of the forestry traditions is another one relevant principle of Lithuanian forestry policy. This principle says that the Lithuanian forestry has traditions tested through the course of time, which are taken into consideration during the transfer of the experience of foreign countries. Forestry reforms and reorganisations, implementation of novelties on the forestry management and other issues shall be performed consistently, taking into consideration the practical know-how of the specialists, public opinion, and interests of the state.

Talking about social and cultural aspects of forests, traditional forest-related knowledge and scientific forest – related knowledge, the several important guidelines of Lithuanian forestry policy should be mentioned, for instance: participation of the society in the solution of the major forestry issues, information to the society about the forests of the country, their condition and management, development education and research on forestry issues.

The Action Plan, which could be called the National Forest Program, has been designed for the implementation of the strategic forest 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. Several important measures and mean related to social and cultural aspects of forests, which have been designed in the Action Plan could be mentioned: the organisation and analyses of public surveys on forest issues, organization of discussions on forest issues with private forest owners, forest specialists and the public, organisation of the working groups of forest specialists, representatives of all interested parties and stakeholders for dealing with the most important problems in forest sector, organisation and implementation of unified forest information system, setting up the priorities of forest research activities and etc.

It has to be noticed that the IPP / IFF proposals for actions and the spirit of other international commitments were the main driving forces preparing Lithuanian Forest Policy and its Implementation Strategy and the corresponding Action Plan. Foresters, researchers, forest governors, managers, NGO's, other interested parties and the public have been involved in the preparation process of such documents. Before approval, the Lithuanian Forest Policy and its Implementation Strategy was presented for discussions and comments to the public. The comments and remarks of NGO's, the public and other interested parties have been considered in this document.

The Ministry of Environment is responsible for implementation of Lithuanian Forest Policy and its Implementation Strategy and the corresponding Action Plan. Definite actions and means for the development of separate strategic objectives with the concrete date of implementation and responsible institutions are defined in the Action Plan.

Besides the Lithuanian Forest Policy and its Implementation Strategy, the Program on Increase of Forest Coverage was approved in 2002 as well. The Program sets up the main principles, measures and procedures for increase of forest coverage in Lithuania through afforestation of former agricultural land. This program foresees the actions aimed to increase the forest coverage by 3 % till the year 2020.

- **Cross - sectoral co-operation**

The cooperation among different sectors which are related to forest sector is being strengthened in Lithuania. Preparing strategies and policies, other important legal acts or implementing different measures the cooperation among forest, agriculture, economy, education and other sectors have being performed. For instance, the measures related to forest sector have been discussed with interesting actors and have been included in the Rural Development Plan, Strategy on Biodiversity Protection and other documents. The Strategy on Sustainable Development has been approved in 2003 where the sustainable forestry development has been set among the other priority areas.

It should be mentioned that defining the principles and guidelines of Lithuanian Forest Policy and its Implementation Strategy, setting the actions for implementation of forest policy, the consultations and cooperation with other ministries responsible for agriculture, education, economy and other relevant sectors have been performed.

- **Forest certification**

Seeking to ensure the sustainable forest management, appreciable progress in forest certification has been made. First two state forest enterprises got the FSC certificates of "Forest management" (totally 66 000 ha of state forests) in 2001. UK Company "SGS Forestry" which certifies according OUALIFOR programme and is accredited by FSC carried out the certification.

Since the end of 2001 the General Directorate of State Forests coordinates the certification process of state forests. 374 460 ha (22 % of all forests) of state forests have been certified by

Danish company NEPCon (Nature, Ecology and People Consult) accredited by FSC and authorized representative of Smart Wood Program up to the year 2003. In addition, it is planned to certify 245 000 ha of state forests in the year 2004. Hereby, the certified state forests according to FSC scheme will reach up to 685 460 ha in the year 2004 (34 % of all forests). The certification of other state forests will be completed after the year 2004.

Since 1999 representatives from Lithuania as observes participate in the PEFC process. Forest owner organizations show the initiatives to certify private forests according to PEFC scheme. In addition, some forest owner organizations are planning to perform pilot certification in private forests according to FSC scheme.

It should be mentioned that performing forest certification in Lithuania the relation and cooperation among state institutions and organizations, NGO's, the public and other interesting stakeholders have been strengthened. Social surveys, questionnaires, awareness campaigns, extension services, media mean have been used in order to meet public needs and inform private forest owners and the public about sustainable forest management, biodiversity protection and other activities related to forest sector. Following the recommendation of forest certification companies and experts and seeking to strengthen cooperation with the public, private forest owners and etc., the Rules on Preparation of Forest Management Plans have been updated where the obligation to include the summary of forest management plan, social cultural aspects of forest management, environmental objectives in concrete forest area in forest management plan have been set up.

- **Private forest sector**

Talking about Lithuanian forest sector the restitution process and the development of private forest sector, which more and more influences the forest policy in Lithuania, should be mentioned. The restitution process is still going on in Lithuania. Private forests occupy about 30% of total forest area up to date. In one way the development of private forest sector is still a big challenge, in another way - the strengthening of private forest sector through extension services, creation of legal and economic preconditions and other measures is the priority goal of Lithuanian forest policy.

In order to meet the needs of private forest owners and consider their problems, the extension services through establishment of Consultation and Information Centre for private forest owners have been strengthened. In addition, the Perspective Program on Extension and Consultation of Private Forest Owners has been prepared. The international cooperation is important tool for development of extension services for private forest owners as well. For instance, Lithuanian – Swedish project: “Training of forestry extension personnel and establishment of demonstration areas for extension of sustainable forest management in private forests in Lithuania” has been performed in Lithuania in 2002-2003. One of the main objective of this project was - development the knowledge of extension methodology and skills among the selected staff of the organization by means of a target-oriented training and course program for forest extension agents.

Scientific forest-related knowledge

- **Forest genetic resources**

In 1994, Lithuanian Forest Research Institute in co-operation with Lithuanian agricultural research institutes and universities have started research program "Plant genetic resources", Lithuania joined to the EUFORGEN program, Nordic gene Bank has started the program for support of conservation of genetic resources in Baltic states, in 1998, the long term state research program GENOFUND have been launched. These programs have promoted the re-activating and initiating of new activities regarding forest gene conservation and tree breeding in Lithuania. Participation in activities of three EUFORGEN networks has helped to increase the understanding of new approaches in forest gene conservation and to adjust to new concepts in the preparation of new national strategies, programs and recommendations. As outlined below, there has been much recent progress in forest gene conservation and tree breeding during last years in Lithuania, for instance: the Program for Conservation of Forest Genetic Resources and Tree Breeding was adopted for the 10 year period (2004-2014) in 2003, based on EUFORGEN strategies and guidelines for conservation forest genetic resources in Europe, the Program for Conservation of Genetic Resources and Breeding of Broadleaved Tree Species was prepared in 2002, the Law on National Plant Genetic Resources was adopted in 2001, the Lithuanian Plant Gene Bank was established in 2002 and etc.

It should be stressed that preparing the strategies and other legal acts mentioned above the cooperation among state institutions, scientists, NGO's and other interested stakeholders has been reinforced.

- **Research activities**

Main role in forest research development in Lithuania has Lithuanian Forest Research Institute and Lithuanian Agricultural University. The Institute and University provides a broad methodical support to practical forest management, helps to implement scientific innovations in the field. The Institute and University are centres of preparation of scientific forestry literature.

Research priorities were approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania: 1) study on biodiversity and sustainability of forest ecosystems; 2) forest productivity, protection and economy problems; 3) analysis of forest genetic resources, their conservation, enrichment, and utilization. In addition, the Lithuanian Agricultural University is conducting forest research in the fields of silviculture, forest management and applied ecology. Various research projects are being implemented within areas of mentioned research priorities and fields by the staff of the Forest Research Institute, Lithuanian Agricultural University and by researchers from other scientific and educational organisations.

Forest Research Institute and Lithuanian Agricultural University are involved in international projects and actively participate in various international programs and processes, for instance: ICP Forest, EUFORGEN, activities of European Forest Research Institute and etc.

Ministry of Environment every year organizes the tenders for applied research projects. In order to consider the current problems in forest sector and develop cooperation in forest research the Ministry of Environment periodically collects proposals and suggestions for research activities and projects from other state institutions and organizations, scientific organizational bodies, various institutes, NGO's and etc.

In order to consider the current problems of forest sector and to strengthen cooperation with scientists, NGO's and other interesting institutions and organizations the Ministry of Environment periodically organizes the discussions and meetings with scientists, representatives from various NGO's, institutes, leaders of research projects and etc.

- **Monitoring, assessment and reporting**

The State Forest Survey Service subordinated to the Ministry of Environment is directly responsible for coordination of all forest monitoring activities in Lithuania. The State Forest Survey Service performs forest monitoring (Level I). Forest Research Institute carries out forests monitoring (Level II). Other activities of the State Forest Survey Service are: carrying out standwise inventories, managing databases, compiling, collecting forestry statistics and cadastre, estimating annual allowable cut and etc.

The State Forest Survey Service participates in international programs and processes related to forest monitoring and assessment. The State Forest Survey Service participates in Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessments TBFRA program and performs forest assessment according to FAO methodology. In addition, the State Forest Survey Service is involved in the activities of European National Forest Inventory Network ENFIN, Nordic Forest Statistics Group BNFSG and ICP Forests (International Co-operative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests) program. The State Forest Survey Service provides data and all relevant information about Lithuanian forests to international organisations mentioned above.

In order to facilitate the access to information and data about our forests to the public and all interesting persons, the State Forest Survey Service is performing the actualisation and modernisation of databases and forest information system, statistics on timber market, preparing Statistical Yearbook of Forestry, developing the webpage and etc.

- **Criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management**

Lithuania has not developed special own criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. The criteria and indicators have derived directly from the Pan-European system and have being used on national level as well. Lithuania participates in Pan-European process and in the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) expert level meetings. In addition, Lithuania participates in regional international process such as Baltic 21 process, where the criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management are among the main subjects for promotion of regional cooperation. Lithuania periodically provides data on criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management to various international institutions and organizations, for instance: Liaison Unite (the coordinating body of the MCPFE process), Baltic 21 secretariat and etc.