

Distr.
GENERAL

TIM/EFC/WP.1/SEM.54/2002/R.25 (Summary)
23 July 2002

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
Timber Committee

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
European Forestry Commission

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION



JOINT FAO/ECE/ILO COMMITTEE ON FOREST TECHNOLOGY, MANAGEMENT AND TRAINING

Seminar on
AFFORESTATION IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

in conjunction with the 24th session of the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on
Forest Technology, Management and Training

Ennis, Co. Clare, Ireland, 15-19 September 2002

Farm forestry in the Westfjords

Basic paper by Mr. Arnlín Óladóttir and Mr. Sæmundur Þorvaldsson

Summary

The Woodlands for Shelter project is currently one of five regional state funded afforestation projects in Iceland. It was originally founded in 1996 as a non-profit organization by local farmers and land owners. The first two years were used for a detailed study of how forestry can be intertwined with traditional animal husbandry and how to design woodlands and shelterbelts that can thrive in the harsh climate of the Westfjords while improving the conditions for living and farming in the area. Planting started in 1998.

The problems concern both natural conditions and social aspects include the following.

- Small farms on the limit of sustainable existence.
- Low summer temperatures resulting in low primary production.
- Rugged landscape, with deep fjords, narrow valleys and high, steep mountains, increases the occurrence of land and sea breeze and leads to strong funnelling winds.
- 56% of the land area, excluding mountains, have been classified as having '*substantial*' to '*very much*' active soil erosion.

- Despite 1,000+ mm annual precipitation, summer drought can be a problem. A great deal of the precipitation falls in the wintertime as snow and often in high winds, leading to heavy snow accumulation around buildings and roads.

The aim of the project is to develop land management systems where soil reclamation, increased grazing capacity and protection forestry are coupled with traditional shelterbelt regimes and multi-purpose woodlands for farm use.

By growing irregular, mixed forest in the narrow valleys in order to increasing surface resistance, we are hoping to decrease the impact of funnelling winds. Wind and landscape models are being developed to aid the design of these woodlands and forests.

Native birch woodlands and scrub covers around 4% of the lowland in the area, by far the highest percentage in Iceland. Preserving the diversity of these remnants of native woodlands increases the responsibility of all landuse decisions made in the area. Research of this natural resource will be a constant factor in the project.
