

Distr.
GENERAL

TIM/EFC/WP.1/SEM.54/2002/R.8 (Summary)
19 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

Afforestation Possibilities on Vacant Agricultural Land in Latvia

Basic paper by Mr. Teodors Blija and Mr. Guntis Sefers

Summary

Forest land in Latvia has increased from 25% in 1935 to its current level of 44% of the total land area. Approximately 2.8 million hectares is classified as productive forest, and comprises pine (41%), spruce (18%), birch (28%), aspen and alder (11%), and oak and ash (2%). The forest ownership structure has radically changed as a result of land reform. State forests account for 49.9% of the total forest area, while private and agriculture enterprise forests account for 50.1%.

There are currently approximately 280,000 hectares of land in Latvia classified as being unprofitable for agricultural purposes. However, a total of 580,000 hectares is no longer cultivated. This trend of disuse of agricultural land is likely to persist for the foreseeable future, with such areas likely to increase.

Forest-covered areas in Latvia are extending due to the natural colonization and overgrowth of uncultivated land, with large areas now transformed into poor quality, economically unattractive forests. Scientifically grounded afforestation measures are now required to improve these forests ecologically,

and to enhance their economic value. Two important elements of this task are: the artificial afforestation of land, and the proactive facilitation of natural self-afforestation.

Artificial afforestation of land using tree species that correspond to certain conditions and economic criteria (pine, spruce, birch, alder, aspen, oak and ash) is expensive. The proactive facilitation of natural self-afforestation is economically and ecologically more advantageous, as well as being simpler, from a technological perspective, to carry out.
