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COUNTRY REPORT ROMANIA

In the period elapsed from the last session of the Mix Committee, the following significant events have happened in Romania:

1.MANAGEMENT-

The Governmental Decision 173/2001, has reorganized the National Forest Administration, and concerning the territorial structure (Forest Directorates), the number of directorates has increased from twenty-five to thirty six. The Forest Research and Management Planning Institute (ICAS) still continue to be under the authority of the National Forest Administration, this fact representing a unique situation at national level.

After Romanian Parliament passed Law no.1/2000, concerning the restitution of the agricultural lands and forests to the former owners or to their heirs, the implementation of the law has effectively started at the beginning of 2001.

At the beginning of September 2002, around one million hectares have been restituted to the former owners (communities, towns, villages, church, educational institutes, physical persons).

It is estimated that at the end of year 2003 around 2,5 million hectares of forests will be in private ownership (40%), after all restitution claims will be analyzed and processed.

In the same period, the Parliament and the Government have adopted laws and decisions to guarantee the sustainable management of the forests, irrespective of ownership type.

2. TECHNOLOGY

The annual harvested volume of wood has been below the maximum limits (annual allowable cut) approved by the Government by ownership type (state forest, villages, towns, individual owners,

etc), and lower than the annual possibility of the forest, calculated in accordance with the approved forest management plans. In the last years the annual allowable cut approved by the Government varied between 15 and 17 million cubic meters.

Specialized logging companies undertake the harvesting, and a national accreditation committee licenses their operational and technological capacity. The licenses are valid for two years, and after this period the company is re-assessed. Presently there are more than 1500 registered companies performing wood harvesting (although it is estimated that only about 400 are operational), with a total capacity of 16-17 million cubic meters.

The technologies used for harvesting are the common ones and the prevailing harvesting method is the longwood system. The felling and pre-bunching is done by chain-saw, and extraction is done by skidders, tractors fitted with a double drum winch and rarely by fixed skyline units.

For the small dimension wood, the extraction is done by animals (horses, oxen) ensuring this way a better protection of the soil and the remaining standing trees.

Trucks equipped with cranes are the most common machines used for wood transport.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Foods and Forest have established silvicultural regulations and norms for forest logging. These regulations have the objective to protect the natural and artificial regeneration as well as the remaining trees, to avoid the erosion, to minimize the loss in the harvesting process and to allow a better capitalization of the wood. The companies which are not following the regulations, will receive are fined in concordance with the legislation. In certain situations the license is withdrawn.

The tending operations are regulated by technical norms issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Foods and Forests. Depending on the age and the development stage of the forest these operations are differentiated in: spacing/clearing, cleanings, thinning. Their objective is to realize or to encourage optimal structures of the forest from genetically and ecological point of view, and in concordance with the structural and function laws of the forest ecosystems.

For each stand (compartment), the operations that must be performed are specified in the management plan of each working unit (forest district), even if not economically efficient, as in many cases the benefits will come latter.

The principle to be followed is to reduce the number of trees, with considering certain criteria: eliminating the sick trees, the undesired species and promoting the best trees, well developed, with superior morphological and genetically characteristics. The tending operations

are performed manually, using simple devices (scissors, axes, chain-saws).

The forestry policy is paying a great importance to the augmentation of forest area, especially by afforesting the degraded agricultural lands and by forest restoration. The main target is the plain, where the forest covers only 7 % of the area.

For the period 2001-2004, Romania has a program to afforest/reafforest 100 000 hectares of state lands as well as private lands (small owners, communities). To achieve this target, the Romanian Government has adopted some decisions, which encourage the establishment of the new forests, including state finance. Each year more than 20 000 hectares are regenerated.

Romania signed the "United Nations Convention for Climate Changes"(1992) and has ratified the "Kyoto Protocol" (1997), using now the new instruments against the climate changes and their effects. The necessity to afforest large areas of agricultural degraded lands, and the opportunities of the Kyoto Protocol conducted to a Project Idea Note, initiated last year by National Forest Administration and agreed by Prototype Carbon Fund (World Bank), for the afforestation of 7 000 hectares of degraded agricultural lands in the period 2002-2005 and the transaction of the resulted emission reduction units. According to the calculations made in the Baseline Study, the project will sequestered more than one million tones of CO₂.

The validation procedures (area afforested, growing rate, the quantity of sequestrated carbon) will be done by the Romanian foresters, verified by an independent evaluator every five years. In the preparation of this project a big importance has been given to the social and biodiversity aspects, which proved the beneficial impact of the project.

3. PROFESSIONAL FORMATION&TRAINING

Continued professional formation has been a priority for the managers of the Romanian forestry sector. This activity has been developed in different forms: post-university upgrading courses, specialized courses for technicians and foresters, scientific sessions, seminars.

More than 2 500 people (20% of the total personnel) have participated in the period 2000 - 2002 at these forms of professional formation. A big importance was given to the upgrading courses in

management for the decision-level staff of the National Forest Administration.

A distinct component is the preoccupation of the Ministry of Agriculture, Foods and Forests for the professional formation of the new forest owners, in the new ownership conditions. We can mention here the SAPARD Program, which will become operational in Romania beginning with the last quarter of this year, and includes special components related to the private owners.

Another mean used by the National Forest Administration is the awareness campaign for the general public, especially for the young generation, explaining the role and the importance of preserving and sustainable management of the environmental resources, with the aid of publications and exhibitions:

- “Forest Universe” – NFA publication/ four issues/year.
- “Info bulletin of NFA”- 12 issues/year.
- Exhibitions in the frame of the “Month of the Forest”- (15 March / 15 April)

The assurance of proper work conditions for all employees, in accordance with modern standards, is another priority for the managers of the National Forest Administration. In the last years a significant budget was allocated for new technologies and equipments.