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**Romanian and Bulgarian responsible timber trade opportunity for the region**

Session IV

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**ABSTRACT**

Forests in Romania and Bulgaria are some of the most biologically important temperate forests in the world. As an example, Carpathian forests belong to one of 200 most important ecoregions defined by WWF in the world.

Through the establishment of a Producer Group, WWF is currently working to promote Romanian and Bulgarian timber trade based on responsible forest management and towards the protection of those forests with outstanding or critical biological, environmental or social values defined as High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs).

The forest sector in both countries is at present, dominated by the state and the restitution of the up to half of all forest to new owners is in progress. At the same time the importance of these forests as wood suppliers to the market is growing.

To improve forest management in these countries, support groups focused on forest managers and primary wood processors are needed. The gap between current management practices and those required for responsible management and timber trade can in some cases, especially for private forests and companies, be very wide.

A Producer Group offers forest managers and companies a program that includes basic membership requirements, routines for verification and improvement, information, training and help for them to move from current practices to the level required for certification or for achieving chain of custody.

Promoting responsible timber trade in Bulgaria and Romania through the establishment of a Producer Group and through the development of the HCVF Toolkit are activities included in the "WWF and IKEA Co-operation on Forest Projects". WWF International and the IKEA Group have joined forces to promote responsible forestry. In a three-year co-operation, the organisations will carry out a series of forest projects that will contribute to the development of global toolkits on forestry issues.

The aim of WWF through the HCVF project is to create in Romania and Bulgaria a set of practical guidelines which can be used by forest managers, standard setters, certification bodies or anyone else using the concept to identify High Conservation Values and manage High Conservation Value Forests.

Romanian and Bulgarian responsible timber trade based on responsible forest management will contribute to the sustainable management of forests in this region and also to the protection of those forests with outstanding or critical biological, environmental or social values defined as High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF).

Key words: producers group, transition timber, high conservation value forests, sustainable management, responsible management.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

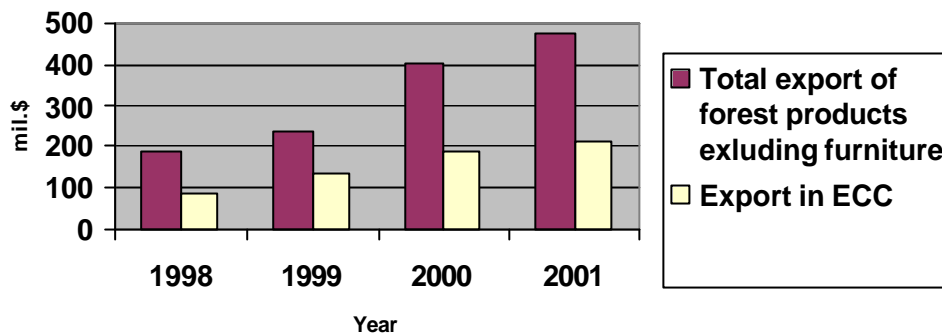
Forests in Romania and Bulgaria are some of the most biologically important temperate forests in the world. As an example, Carpathian forests belong to one of 200 most important ecoregions defined by WWF in the world.

Through the establishment of a Producer Group, WWF is currently working to promote Romanian and Bulgarian timber trade based on responsible forest management, and towards the protection of those forests with outstanding or critical biological, environmental or social values defined as High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs).

## **SUPPORT TO FOREST MANAGERS AND PRIMARY WOOD PROCESSORS**

The forest sector in Bulgaria and Romania is at present dominated by the state and the restitution of up to half of all forest to new private ownership is in progress. At the same time the importance of these forests as wood suppliers to the market is growing. For example, in 2001 the value of Romania's export of forest products (excluding furniture) to countries in the European Union reached 210 million Euro, and total value of exports was 474 mil Euro.

**Romania forest products export-excluding furniture(source:INS and FAOSTAT)**



The gap between current management practices and those required for responsible forest management and timber trade can in some cases, especially for private forests and companies, be very wide. Lack of support to help managers through the improvement process and the lack of incentives for managers while improvements are underway are two of the main barriers to forest certification in many producer regions.

To improve forest management in these countries, support groups focused on forest managers and primary wood processors are needed.

To overcome these challenges mechanisms are needed that can provide support for forest managers and companies.

One such mechanism is Producer Groups, which are now being set up in many regions in the world by WWF's Global Forest and Trade Network (GFTN). A Producer Group offers forest managers and primary processing companies a program that includes basic membership requirements, routines for verification and improvement, information, training and help for them to move from current practices to the level required for certification or for achieving chain of custody.

As a part of the WWF's Global Forest and Trade Network the aim of the Romanian/Bulgarian Producer Group is to promote improved forest management and certification through a combination of services such as:

- Information and training on how to reach certification through a modular approach
- Links to markets for certified forest products
- Training and capacity building on RFM (responsible forest management).

#### **HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE FORESTS**

The WWF Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative has carried out a gap analysis of the protected area network and identified the most biodiversity significant forests which still require protection. A system of protected areas and protection for biodiversity is being developed in both countries. This is the most significant problem and challenge, requiring the development of an institutional framework and the enforcement of forest regulations, in that there is the potential if not carried

out properly for major negative impacts on forest ecosystems and their biodiversity. WWF is, in co-operation with other stakeholders, currently developing a High Conservation Value Forest Toolkit, which will enable the HCVF concept to become a practical reality for responsible forestry and the protection of critical conservation values globally and in the Carpathian's and Balkan's region.

Promoting responsible timber trade in Bulgaria and Romania through the establishment of a Producer Group and through the development of the HCVF Toolkit are activities included in the "WWF and IKEA Co-operation on Forest Projects". WWF International and the IKEA Group have joined forces to promote responsible forestry. In a three-year co-operation, the organisations will carry out a series of forest projects that will contribute to the development of global toolkits on forestry issues. By strengthening multi-stakeholder based forest certification, and management and promoting legal compliance in forestry and trade, the projects are important steps in implementing IKEA's forest action plan and in achieving WWF's conservation goals.

High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) are those forests with outstanding or critical biological, environmental or social values and who posses one or more of the following globally, regionally or nationally attribute:

HCV1. Significant concentrations of biodiversity values (endemism, endangered species,)

HVC2. Significant large landscape level forests where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance.

HCV3. Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems.

HCV4. Forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (watershed protection, erosion control)

HCV5. Forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities

HCV6. Forest areas critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity.

The aim of WWF through HCVF project is to create in Romania and Bulgaria a set of practical guidelines which can be used by forest managers, standard setters, certification bodies or anyone else using the concept to identify High Conservation Values and manage High Conservation Value Forests.

## **CONCLUSION**

Romanian and Bulgarian responsible timber trade based on responsible forest management will contribute to the sustainable management of forests in this region and also to the protection of those forests with outstanding or critical biological, environmental or social values defined as High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF).

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