

**МИНИСТЕРСТВО
ПРИРОДНЫХ РЕСУРСОВ
И ОХРАНЫ ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ
СРЕДЫ
РЕСПУБЛИКИ БЕЛАРУСЬ**
220048, г. Минск, Коллекторная, 10



**MINISTRY
OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS**
Kollektorная Str. 10, Minsk, 220048

ТЕЛ: (375 172) 20 66 91
ФАКС (375 172) 20 55 83

ФАКС (375 172) 20 47 71

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TELEFAX TRANSMISSION

To: Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity **Pages: 5**

Fax: 514 288 6588

From: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of
Republic of Belarus
Deputy Minister A Apatsky

Fax: +375 172 20 47 71

Subject: Decision IV/7 on Forest Biological Diversity

UNEP/SCBD 12133

RECEIVED

JUL 27 2000

ACTION JPLD/JM

FILE

FC

TG / HZ

Dear Madam/Sir,

On Secretariat's inquiry of 27 January, 2000, Belarus's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is sending in information on thematic studies in the field of forest biodiversity in which the ecosystem approach has been applied.

Information on Thematic Studies in Forest Biodiversity

1. Overview (summary)

Forests are Belarus's national property and pride, a source of raw materials resources, a storehouse of unique biological and landscape diversity, and an important environment-forming and environmental factor.

The Country's percentage of forestland accounts for 36%. All forests are state-owned. The target of the National Forest Policy is to develop, to strengthen by law and to implement sustainable balanced management for the economic, ecological and social functions of forests. The main provisions of the Forest Policy meet the provisions of international instruments in the field of forestry and environmental protection, signed by the State.

The priority trends of forest activities in Belarus are sustainable management for forests and forest resources, forest reproduction, conserving biological and landscape diversity of forest ecosystems. Conserving the genetic resources of forest-forming tree plant species is a standard practice both in-situ and ex-situ. Widely used is both natural and artificial reforestation.

The Ministry of Forestry energetically develops cooperation with foreign states in the field of forest conservation in Europe, reforestation, fire prevention, protection from pests and diseases, forest certification, forest monitoring, forest studies. By the Ministry's order Belarusian scientific institutions of forest type develop scientific fundamentals for multipurpose unexhausted forestry and practical recommendations on ensuring sustainable forest management, conserving biodiversity in forest communities.

2. Description of sustainable forest management practices in the Country or the areas that are concerned by the case studies

Sustainable forest management in Belarus, including biodiversity conservation, is provided by the system of measures, enforced at different levels.

1. Legal and Normative Framework

Belarus has created and is updating the National Normative Framework for Sustainable Forest Management that meets the spirit of the Resolutions adopted by the Ministerial Conferences on preserving European forests in Strasbourg (1990), Helsinki (1993), Lisbon (1998). At present a New Forest Code is developed and is under consideration in the Belarusian Parliament, the basis for which is the principles of sustainable integrated multipurpose utility of forest resources with ensuring the conservation of biological and landscape diversity of forests, strengthening their ecological functions.

Within the 1994-1999 period the Belarusian Parliament and Government passed a number of legal environmental instruments, including issues of sustainable forest management and conserving the natural resource potential of forests: "On the Concept of the National Environmental Protection Policy in the Republic of Belarus", "On Specially Protected Natural Areas and Objects", "On Fauna Protection and Management", "The Concept of Sustainable Development for Forestry in the Republic of Belarus up to 2015", "The National Strategy for Sustainable Development in the Republic of Belarus", "The National Strategy for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity", "The Concept for the Development of the Forest Complex in the Republic of Belarus up to 2015" and others.

2. Institutional Structure

All the forests in the Republic of Belarus are state-owned. The Government exercises the national general policy on sustainable forest management and biological and landscape diversity of forest ecosystems. The goal of the National Forest Policy is to elaborate, strengthen by law and implement sustainable balanced management for economic, ecological and social functions of forests.

Forests are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Forestry, the President's Affairs Management Office, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Emergency Measures and Protection of the Population from the Consequences of the Accident at Chernobyl, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Defense and the Institute for Forest. The Ministry of Forestry exercises state management for the use, reforestation, and protection of all forests in the Country, develops a normative framework for forest management, implement the forest policy, and provides efficient use of natural resources. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection carries out integrated management for environmental activities in the Country, provides interaction and co-ordination for activities of various departments to ensure inexhaustible utility of natural resources and exercises state control in this area.

3. Sustainable Forest Management Practices

Forest Management Plans developed and implemented in Belarus contain leading principles and criteria that are in line with the provisions of the international instruments signed in Strasbourg, Rio de Janeiro, Helsinki and Lisbon. The Government approved "The Concept of Sustainable Development for Forestry in the Republic of Belarus up to 2015". Pursuant to this Concept the main goal for forestry is the implementation of the stability principle, inexhaustibility and fair sharing in forest use, conservation and multipurpose integrated utility of the natural resource potential of forests to meet the society's needs in different products and benefits of Forest.

Practical Approaches to ensure sustainable forestry and conserve biological and landscape diversity of forests are framed in "the Strategic Plan for the Development of Forestry in Belarus", designed in 1997 by the team of Belarusian Experts in cooperation with and with financial support of foreign partners from Sweden and Finland. They are taken in consideration in forest management projects of specific enterprises in this sector and during developing a normative framework for forest management.

One of the priority trends of sustainable forest management in Belarus is to extend forested areas by reforestation of cutting areas, reafforestation of worked out peat-bogs, quarries, lands gone out of agricultural use, including those ones polluted by radionuclides as a result of the Chernobyl Catastrophe and others. The majority of new forests are created by laying mixed forest cultures of indigenous species. The key role in total reafforestation belongs to natural reforestation; its rate reaches 40%. As a result of these activities forested areas in the Country had reached 36% by 1997 and an area of forests had increased by over 10%.

An important trend in activities is conserving the natural and biological diversity of forest ecosystems. The composition of natural flora in Belarusian forests includes 28 tree species, 42 shrub species, over 820 grass species, 203 types and 1178 associations present Forest phytocenoses. To conserve genetic resources of forest-forming tree species, in-situ genetic reserves with 4167 hectares and over 2400 plus trees are designated and protected. To reserve ex-situ gene pool, seed forest plantations totaling more than 1600 hectares and stationary seed forest sites totaling 540 hectares are laid. Also established is a network of experimental and geographical cultures, clone archives, family and hybrid plantations. Systematic activities are in progress on the genetic evaluation of main forest-forming species.

The System of especially protected natural areas serves the conservation of forest biodiversity. It comprises 1 strict reserve ('zapovednik'), 4 national parks, and 91 less strict reserves ('zakazniki') of republican significance, totaling over 1 million hectares (5,9% of the Country's area) and a number of other protected natural objects (1,3% of the Country's area). The Project of the "Belarusian Green Book" is developed, and it will list rare and reference forest communities being in need of protection.

Of all forests 42 % fall under special categories to protect soil, water, flora and fauna as well as to contribute to forests' performance of their social and environment-forming functions (green belts around cities, protective zones along motorways, water-protective zones along rivers, and a wide specter of other especially protected forest sites).

To exercise on-going control over the state of forests and their timely rehabilitation, Belarus has designed some schemes of monitoring: forest monitoring, forest-pathological monitoring, radiation monitoring, monitoring for overmoistened lands.

In the interests of ensuring sustainable, economically efficient, environmentally responsible and socially oriented forestry the Country is developing the certification of forest management, forest use and forest products that is based on the criteria and indices of the Pan-European System of Forest Certification (PEFC).

The Ministry of Forestry is a participant to a number of international incentives and programs in the field of sustainable forest management, conserving forests' biological and landscape diversity, forest monitoring (ICP), forest certification (PEFC), forest fires prevention, protection from pests and diseases, forest studies.

3. Presentation of case studies

By the Forestry Ministry's order a wide specter of forest studies are carried out and directed at developing scientific fundamentals for sustainable forest management; conservation of their biological and landscape diversity; multipurpose, inexhaustible forest use in the interests of increasing an economic, ecological and social role of forests. Among more significant developments the following ones should be mentioned:

- Evaluating the gene pool of main forest-forming species and developing measures on conserving forest biodiversity in Belarus. (Institute for Forest, Belarusian National Academy of Sciences).
- Comprehensive Program for developing seed forest and selection facilities for forest-forming in Belarus up to 20145 (IF, NAS).
- Developing a system of selection measures to ensure the conservation and enriching genetic resources, production increase, forest sustainability and quality (IF, NAS).
- Giving an integrated evaluation of the state of broad-leaved forests and to develop recommendations on their restoration (Institute for National Economy, NAS).
- Developing a technique for a cadastre evaluation of forest resources and a procedure for conducting the National Forest Cadastre (State Forest Industrial Association "Belgosles", Belarusian State Technological University).
- Developing a scientific feasibility study for optimizing forested areas in Belarus as a factor of the stabilization of ecological situation, and practical recommendations on improving the forest species composition (INE NAS, IF NAS, BSTU).
- Designing a forest-typological classification for overmoistened lands and justifying the designation of environmental objects in this area (INE, NAS).
- Designing an integrated set of measures on natural reproduction of coniferous forests (BSTU).
- Developing new techniques and schemes for forest management in order to increase productivity and conserve forest biodiversity (BSTU, IF NAS).

4. Assessment of success and failure in applying the ecosystem approach in sustainable forest management practices in the Country

The ecosystem approach in sustainable forest management in Belarus allows making administrative decisions based on more objective, comprehensive information that ensures the optimization of forest use and an increase in its environmental responsibility.

Within this approach at present step-by-step transition is being carried out towards a zone typological system for forest cultivation with a wide application of unfilled deforestation, applying environmentally justified techniques for production increase and forest sustainability, above all grounded on efficient use of the natural fertility of forest soils. Also strengthened is the base of sustainable forest use at the extent of annual growth. As well as ensured is profit maximization in all types of forest use. Both forest quality is being improved and forests'

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ecological role is being strengthened. In the end all these efforts contribute to the sustainable development of the national economy as a whole.

Applying the ecosystem approach is especially effective for landscape planning in land use with employing the GIS Technology that is widely developing in Belarus.

5. Lessons learnt that could assist other countries in developing their own national programs for conserving biodiversity.

In the interests of ensuring biodiversity conservation experience exchange could be expedient by following trends:

- Establishing the national network of protected natural areas, pooling protected areas of different level and designation as well providing a strategy for their development;
- Ensuring a maximum rapprochement of the national and forest policies concerning sustainable forest management and forest use, and the implementation of its basic principals by all forest actors irrespective of ownership;
- Presenting the principals of sustainable management and forest use in legislative and normative instruments, regulating sustainable forest management practice;
- Developing a system of state and public control over natural use.

Yours sincerely,



A. Apatsky
Deputy Minister