I. National Forest Programme of Cyprus

Preparation of this National Programme for development of the forest sector in Cyprus represents the final phase of a detailed investigation and strategic review of its forest resources and the range of activities associated with them. The task commenced in May, 1998 and lasted approximately 18 months; it was carried out by the Forestry Department, with the full support of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment. External assistance was provided by The Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

The review has provided a new strategy for forest sector development in Cyprus, which is designed to protect and enhance the Island’s natural environment and national heritage while also promoting recreation and tourism. The National Forest Programme (NFP) specifies, in general terms, the action that needs to be taken to implement this strategy during the next ten years. It is a flexible programme, which can evolve in response to future events and allows for uncertainty about timing and the availability of additional resources.

Social and economic conditions are changing fast in Cyprus. External events affect the way of life of the country’s citizens, its institutions and its natural resources. Influences from abroad are expected to intensify due to the prospect of joining the European Union, which opens wider vistas and imposes obligations on member states.

The forests of Cyprus are an important national resource and the forest sector is subject to pressures coming from many directions to which it has to respond. Forests provide timber and non-wood products; more importantly they contribute significantly to the beauty of the landscape, preservation of the national heritage, protection of water supplies, rural life, village communities and the general well-being of Cypriot citizens; they attract visitors from abroad on whom the national economy is heavily dependent. The future prosperity of the country is bound up with its forests and what happens to them. With effective conservation and sound management the forest resource offers multidimensional opportunities for socioeconomic development, especially in rural areas.

During the review, a partial cost-benefit analysis was attempted for the State forests and a SWOT analysis was used to examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the forest sector. The social benefits attributable to recreation and tourism, water production from boreholes/springs and improvements in agricultural yields due to soil conservation, were shown to be very large, approximately 36.7 million Cyprus pounds total per year, or an average of 303 pounds per ha / year, far outweighing the revenue from timber sales, only about 0.5 million pounds per year, or 4.1 pounds per ha / year.

Note: Cyprus Pound is approximately equal to 2 USD.
Strategy preparation was based on consideration of four alternative scenarios: the first described the ‘now’ situation, the second was a timber production scenario. The third was focused on protection of the environment and heritage, and the fourth on recreation and tourism. Consideration of the scenarios led to the adoption of a Rural Betterment Strategy, which combines features from the last two scenarios.

The strategy aims at safeguarding and expanding forest resources for the benefit of the whole community while capturing the advantages of development based on ecotourism. The strategy will be achieved by:-

• action to protect and enhance water supplies, wildlife and the national heritage in State forests,
• afforestation and the restoration of degraded land in the wider countryside,
• Safeguarding as national parks and nature reserves, particular places which have outstanding scenery, cultural importance, exceptional ecological or scientific interest, and developing them for recreation and tourism where this does not conflict with conservation aims. These sites will be delineated both inside and outside the State forests,
• encouraging, guiding and controlling recreation and tourism development through Local Plans, zoning and development permits, in conformity with Town and Country Planning Regulations, on the strict proviso that State forests will on no account be used for building development,
• providing information and publicity about the forests and the flora and fauna they contain, directed particularly at schools, colleges, tourists and the general public, using up-to-date information technology and interpretation techniques.

This strategy is a broad statement of aims. It indicates the general direction to be taken, but is not a detailed ‘blueprint’ for future development of the forest sector. Implementation depends on converting the strategy into a coasted and time-based programme, based on the five main aspects which are identified.

This strategy builds on the capabilities and expertise of the Forest Department by spreading them more widely through collaboration with other ministries, departments and agencies. The Forest Department can initiate action in the State forests (which it controls), and extend its operations, by agreement with others, either acting alone or by joint ventures, to other rural areas outside the main forests. There need be no delay in beginning to implement the strategy, although the subsequent rate of progress will depend on the capacity and willingness of other organizations to cooperate. The strategy maintains continuity by linking existing multiple use policy for forests to new requirements for a broader approach, based on conservation and free trade principles.

The strategy involves reform of the forest sector’s organization, structure and institutions in order to contribute more effectively to the welfare and economic development of society as a whole. With support from the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resource and Environment, the Forest Department can reach out, offering assistance to others where there are shared interests and starting a dialogue to resolve differences. At international level, the strategy conforms with requirements for joining the European Union and offers the prospect of obtaining financial assistance from external sources.
The NFP covers the ten-year period, 2000 - 2009 and is based on the five action areas identified in the strategy. It contains seven subprogrammes, each consisting of several projects.

They deal with the following groups of activities:-

A. Afforestation and silviculture,
B. Production of timber and non-wood products,
C. Protection against fires and other hazards,
D. Conservation of ecosystems, flora, fauna and heritage,
E. Water,
F. Local plans and village development,
G. Institutional reform, modernization and capacity building,

The total cost over ten years, from all sources, is estimated at 10.2 million Cyprus pounds annually (or 102 million). The NFP adopts an evolutionary approach; it provides a flexible framework for continuous development. The projects have not been planned in detail, leaving this to be done by a small Project Planning Unit in the Forestry Department, which will also monitor progress.

The present Forestry Department budget is sufficient to provide about half the total costs of the NFP proposals. The incremental costs can be met from a variety of sources, including other ministries and organizations, the private sector and EU.

Implementation depends on joint action with other government ministries, departments and agencies, and with individuals and organizations in the private sector, NGOs etc. The Forestry Department will be the lead agency, generating momentum and providing continuity, coordination and accountability. Progress will involve consultation, conflict resolution and organizational changes.

II. Forest Policy of Cyprus

1. Main issues of the Cyprus Forest Policy

The practice of forestry and sound forest administration involve long-term planning which requires continuity of policy and finance. A statement of policy helps to focus attention to the main questions affecting forest administration and preserve continuity.

The forest policy of Cyprus had taken shape over many years under the joint impact of internal experience and of expert guidance from abroad; it was issued in 1950 and reconfirmed after independence in 1960.
The forest policy of the Cyprus Government is to conserve and develop the forest resources of the Island with the following special objectives:


2. New National Forest Policy Statement for Cyprus

A new National Forest Policy statement was prepared, in a different format, which relates the aims of the policy to the action required to achieve the aims set out in the NFP.

This Forest Policy Statement sets out the strategy and provides guidance for its implementation. It includes the general conditions that must be observed and the detailed policy objectives that will be followed for the implementation of the NFP. It identifies the constraints to development that must be overcome, the criteria by which success will be judged, and the indicators used to measure progress.

The detailed policy objectives which will guide implementation of the NFP are related to the subprogrammes as follows:

Subprogramme A. Aforestation and silviculture

This subprogramme is primarily concerned with the physical condition of the state forests and wider countryside. Aforestation aims at increasing the forest area and silvicultural operations seek to improve its quality for conservation purposes.

Subprogramme B. Production of timber and non wood products

The aim of this subprogramme is to increase economic and social benefits from the State forests and wider countryside.

Subprogramme C. Protection against fires and other hazards

This subprogramme seeks to increase the effectiveness of protective measures in the State forests and adjacent land, and to extend the fire control system to cover other rural areas.

Subprogramme D. Conservation of ecosystems, flora, and heritage

A wide range of specific conservation objectives, which relate to all action areas, is included in this subprogramme.

Subprogramme E. Water
Watershed management and protection are provided for by subprogrammes A and C, which seek to extend and improve the vegetative cover, prevent soil erosion and increase permeability in the main catchment areas.

**Subprogramme F. Local plans and village development**

Development for tourism and recreation needs positive direction and control to protect the quality of the environment and preserve the traditional character of forest villages. These cut across departmental responsibilities. The aim of this subprogramme is to encourage appropriate development, based on ecotourism, within the framework of comprehensive area plans.

**Subprogramme G. Institutional reform, modernization and capacity building**

Successful implementation of the strategy depends on overcoming various institutional limitations on forest sector development.

The National Forest Programme was submitted to the Government and we are waiting its final approval, before organizing its implementation.

**III. Forest Legislation**

The Forest Law has been amended from time to time since its first enactment in 1879, its last amendment having been made in 1999. The term Forest Legislation covers both the Forest Law and the Forest Regulations issued for better application of the Law.

The current Forest Law, known as Forest Law, 1967-1999 relates mainly to the State Forests but it relates also, though to a far less degree, to Private Forestry, to the Cyprus Forest Industries Co. Ltd and to Private Forest Industries (sawmills) that is to say to the whole of the Forestry sector.

There is provision in the Forest Law for enactment of Forest Regulations. The current Forest Regulations, 33 in number, are known as Forest Regulations, 1967-1993.