FORESTRY POLICY AND STRATEGY, NATIONAL FORESTRY PROGRAMME

The forestry policy and strategy are defined in the Forest Development Programme of Slovenia (FDPS), which was adopted in the Parliament in 1996. Prior to discussion in the National Council and the National Assembly the draft of the NFP was co-ordinated in the normal governmental procedure among all sectors concerned. The FDPS was drafted beforehand in the Forestry Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food with a participation of forest owner’s organisations, environmental NGO’s, forestry companies and others. While preparing the draft, international commitments from the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 as well from the Strasbourg and Helsinki Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe were taken into account.

The FDPS is based on the Forest Act from 1993, Articles 6 and 7. Article 7 stipulates, *inter alia*, that the programme of forest development in Slovenia shall set out a national policy of close-to-nature forest management, guidelines for the conservation and development of forests, and conditions for their exploitation and multiple use.

Taking into account the natural principles of forest ecosystems, public interest, material possibilities of the country, and the needs and interests of forest owners, the FDPS provides a basis for the conservation and development of all its forests and their functions. It sets out a strategy for the development of individual spheres of forest management and provides professional guidelines for co-operation with fields which interact with forestry in the landscape. It also determines an organisational, personnel and material basis for the implementation of the strategy for sustainable, close-to-nature and multiple-use management of forests, which is further elaborated in the operational part of the FDPS, adopted by the Government only.

**Goals and objectives**

The long-term objectives of forest management are based on the provisions of the Forest Act, which stipulates that the Forest Development Programme of Slovenia shall ensure:

- conservation and establishment of the natural composition of forest biotic communities and enhancement of the resilience of forests;
- forest management which is directed towards the conservation of all forest functions and is based on efficient natural regeneration of stands;
- appropriate utilisation of forest sites in accordance with the natural development of forest biotic communities;
- co-ordination between silviculture and the harvesting of wood and other forest goods.

The fundamental long-term objectives of forest management are:

1. Conservation and sustainable development of forests with regard to their biodiversity and all their ecological, social and production functions

The objective includes:

- conservation and enhancement of ecological stability of forest ecosystems, and their sustainable and close-to-nature treatment;
- conservation and establishment of the diversity of flora and fauna, protection of rare or endangered forest species and ecosystems, and conservation and establishment of a proper living environment for all indigenous wildlife species;
• conservation and enhancement of the protective role of forests, such as protection against erosion, violent winds, noise, and avalanches, improvement of water conditions, mitigation of climatic extremes, and the contribution of forests to the quality of air;
• development of forests and activities directed at using the forest for recreation, tourism, education, instruction, and research;
• enhancement of the aesthetic function of the forest;
• increase in the utilisation of forest site potential and improvement of forest stand quality and use of wood;
• utilisation of non-wood forest goods in a manner which is not harmful to the forest;
• development of an environmentally-sound and humane timber production technology with the emphasis on work safety;
• maintenance and further development of a forest road network adapted to a multiple-purpose forest use.

2. Conservation of the natural environment and an ecological balance in the landscape
The objective includes:
• conservation and improvement of the quality of air, whose content of impurities must not be detrimental to the existence and development of natural forests;
• conservation of an adequate forest cover throughout the Slovenian landscape, and prevention of forest area fragmentation;
• conservation, establishment and forming of forest edges and groups of trees, solitary trees, riparian forest vegetation, windbreaks and hedgerows outside the forest;
• efforts directed towards the conservation and development of natural ecosystems above the forest line;
• efforts directed towards the conservation and development of aquatic ecosystems in the forest and other wooded land.

3. Conservation of landscape settlement, and cultivation and improvement of the quality of life in the countryside
The objective includes:
• recognising that the forest is part of the farm and that the farm must be dealt with in an integrated way;
• recognising that the farmer is dependent on wood, other goods and income from the forest;
• promotion of an integrated development of rural areas and of non-agricultural work on farms;
• permanent education and training of forest owners for safe forest work of quality.

General guidelines
According to the FDPS, the following general guidelines should be respected to achieve the above listed long-term objectives:

Forest in the Landscape and Its Functions, and Co-ordination of Interest of Different Forest Users
Slovenia has a relatively high proportion of forested land. Therefore forest management should not be directed at further extensions of forest area. Instead it should be focused on tending existing forests, on better utilisation of their site potential (in terms of quantity and
especially quality) and on the conservation, forming and establishment of solitary trees and groups of forest trees outside the forest.

Regarding spatial planning, it must be determined, in co-operation with the agricultural sphere, which overgrown farm land should revert to forest and which is suited for agricultural use. Green belts should be established around settlements and protected from future changes. For guidance on the development of forests in accordance with their functions, it is essential to determine which functions are of special importance in individual forest areas, or which forests are to be designated as protective forests and forests with a special purpose. Guidelines should be drawn up for landscape management above the forest line and for minority ecosystems (e.g. riparian groves and riverine tree vegetation). It is also vital to assess the environmental impacts of current stresses and of planned land use changes in the forest and other wooded land.

**Silviculture**

Guidance on forest development must be based on the principles of sustainability, the close-to-nature concept and multiple use. Therefore, the forest management strategy consists of small-scale systems, which allow a flexible adaptation to natural site conditions and to natural forest development trends. The emphasis is placed on the conservation of natural populations of forest trees, on the maintenance and establishment of natural diversity and on increasing the growing stock, all of which contribute to the ecological and economic stability of forests. The aim of tending measures during all developmental stages or forms of forest is to promote the development of more vigorous trees of high quality in order to increase the stability and economic value of forests, and thus to enhance the development of forests to enable all their functions to be optimally fulfilled under given conditions.

**Forest Protection**

For integrated forest protection, it is vital that threats to forests and their vitality be constantly monitored and that special attention be paid to natural and human-induced impacts. Efforts should be made not only to reduce pollution but also to increase the ecological stability of forests, or develop such forest structure and composition as will improve their resistance to different, mainly unpredictable impacts on them. The implementation of measures for the prevention of forest decline is the joint responsibility of the state, forest owners, and the forest service.

**The Programme of Wildlife Conservation and Management**

The diversity of indigenous animal species is an outstanding value, and wildlife is among Slovenia’s important natural riches. Each individual wildlife population is a unique and unparalleled gene treasure with particular features and characteristics of an animal species, and thus it must be conserved and protected in its living environment. To maintain the vitality of spatially separate populations, migration of animals between individual populations must be facilitated. The population of each wildlife species and its living environment constitute an integrated whole and should be dealt with accordingly. Guidance on the development of wildlife populations is the responsibility of all those who can exert a direct influence on them or on their living environment, and thus their active co-operation is a necessity.

The conservation of all wildlife and its natural living environment is, due to the conflict of interest in a given space, a demanding professional task, which must be based on proper wildlife management planning. In the cultural landscape, the natural self-regulating
mechanisms become disturbed, and so human intervention in wildlife populations (hunting) is a necessity.

**Protection of Watercourses in Forest and on Other Wooded Land**

Since Slovenia has a high proportion of forest area, which has a beneficial effect on water resources, and as most of its watercourses originate in forests, the forest plays a key part in the provision of water supply, in regulating water discharge, and in the impact on water as a biotope of a number of life forms. Hence, in the forest and other wooded land the forest service should in the future become involved as an equal partner in water administration and water management.

**Natural Heritage Protection**

There are many rare ecosystems and species of organisms in the forest that need special protection. Until now, Slovenian forestry has accomplished an important task by establishing forest reserves and protective forests and by setting apart wildlife habitats of special importance. Since forestry practitioners are well trained in ecology and properly organised in the field, it seems appropriate that the forest service would also be entrusted with natural heritage protection and the operational management of protected areas in the forest and other wooded land in accordance with the nature conservation strategy.

**Forest Management Planning**

Guidance on the development of forests and other wooded land, based on the principles of sustainability, multiple use and the close-to-nature approach requires careful planning. This consists of an analysis of the conditions of forests, leading to the establishment of objectives and the determination of measures in accordance with the condition of forests and their functions, and with the needs of forest owners. The planning must be based on an integrated, spatially determined information system consistent with the nature of the forest. It should allow dynamic adjustment to natural processes, to different roles of the forest, and to different kinds of disturbances in forest management;

**Utilisation of Forest Goods**

In conformity with the principles of sustainable management, utilisation of forest goods should be encouraged on a basis compatible with a long-term conservation of forests. Silvicultural measures directed towards increasing the yield of the individual product should not have an adverse effect on the biodiversity of the forest, its vigour, and the generally beneficial functions of the forest. An increase in the quantity and value yield of Slovenia’s forest sites should be considered an aim of strategic national importance. Efforts should also be made to attain the highest possible wood utilisation and profit.

**Forest Work**

Forest operations must be carried out in accordance with measures stated in silvicultural plans and with obligatory guidelines issued by the Slovenian Forest Service. Such timber harvesting techniques should be developed as are economical, environmentally sound and protect humans from harmful consequences of the heavy and dangerous work in the forest.
Programmes for the education and training of forest owners should be devised and more attention given to the counselling of forest owners who carry out forest work themselves.

**Forest Communications**

Among forest communications are skidding tracks, which are intended almost exclusively for skidding, while forest roads are of more general importance for forest management. Some of them are also meant to fulfil tourist, recreational and other social functions of the forest, or else to connect secluded farms and hamlets. Since all forest communications constitute an intrusion into a forest ecosystem, they should be very carefully planned, constructed and maintained, while the use of forest roads should also take into consideration the living rhythm of the forest.

**The Market of Forest Goods**

When forest yields are considered, all forest goods should be taken into account, from timber through hunting to the ecological and social benefits of the forest. The market fluctuations of forest goods should not have an adverse effect on the forest. The quality and value of forests in terms of timber production can be increased mainly by thinning carried out in younger stands. Therefore, conditions have to be provided for economical utilisation of small-size forest timber assortments.

**Forest Ownership**

Forest management practices should take into consideration the fact that forests involve both public (ecological and social) interests as well as those of private owners. Owners who manage their forests themselves should have regard for the principles of close-to-nature management, and the highest annual allowable cut which is ecologically still permissible, as stated in the forest management and silvicultural plans, and should carry out the required silvicultural and protection measures. Due to public interest in the conservation and development of forests and their functions, the state aims to extend the proportion of public forests, especially in areas where generally beneficial functions are of importance. In doing so, it is essential that all forests of importance for the conservation and development of the Slovenian countryside, especially mountain farms, remain private property (i.e., owned by farmers).

**Forest Co-operatives and Other Forms of Association of Forest Owners**

For the management of fragmented forest property to be more efficient and economical, it is advisable that private forest owners be encouraged to establish co-operatives and organise other forms of co-operation.

**Development of Farms and Rural Areas**

When objectives and measures for the management of rural forests are being determined, it must be taken into consideration that the forest is part of the farm and that the farm must be dealt with in an integrated way, so that its ecological, social and economic aspects are considered and its role in the maintenance of the cultural landscape is recognised. When silvicultural measures are being planned for a farm forest, the developmental needs of the farm must be taken into account. In mountain areas in particular - where forestry is more often
than not the most important economic activity of the farm— the forest service must co-operate
in designing common developmental programmes, in designing and implementing common
training programmes, and in drawing up a common programme for the construction and
maintenance of infrastructure facilities. Slovenia’s forested landscape, its good condition and
attraction, and its well-managed small farms and rural areas are a prerequisite condition for
the quality of life in the countryside and also an important constituent of the overall tourist
trade of Slovenia.

The Forest Service

A large forest area, great diversity of forest sites, stands and functions, a high fragmentation
of forest property and the current level of forest management intensity, all require well-
organised professional guidance on the development of forests. Another reason for providing
an efficient forest service is the fact that healthy, stable and high-quality forests can be
developed only over a longer period of time. The responsibility of such a professional service
is also to monitor and control adverse effects on the forest, through counselling and with
economic and legal mechanisms, and to ensure, along with the inspection service, the
conservation and development of forests and their functions. The forest service is, together
with forest owners, responsible for all forests.

Inspection Service in Forests and on Other Wooded Land

Since the main responsibility of the forest service is counselling, which provides professional
guidance for forest owners or contractors of forest work on appropriate management of
forests, the staff of the inspection service may be relatively few in number. To ensure a
uniform approach to cases of impermissible forest treatment, inspection should be carried out
jointly by a joint forestry, hunting and fishery inspection service, which should supervise the
entire natural environment together with the environment and physical planning inspection
service.

Education and Professional Forestry Personnel

The importance of forests, the demanding task of integrated guidance on their development
and the long-term effects of improper treatment require a broadly educated forestry expert, a
suitably educated forest owner and a well-trained forestry worker. Consequently, the whole
educational system of forestry must be further developed and expanded, from training
programmes for forestry workers and education programmes for forestry owners, to education
programmes for forestry experts.

Research

Research on forests and forest management should be based on a uniform multidisciplinary
research project, regardless of the sources of financing, and conducted by qualified research
organisations in co-operation with experts of the forest service and forestry enterprises.
Research should consist of applied studies as well as pure research in order to contribute to
the world treasury of knowledge. The line of research is determined by the target research
programme entitled GOZD (Forest).
**International Co-operation**

Slovenian forestry as a whole must open up its doors still further to the world and join the efforts directed towards finding solutions to problems related to forestry and to the conservation of the natural environment; in this endeavour, it is vitally important to have coordinated action between government bodies, the Forestry Department of the Biotechnical Faculty, the Forestry Institute of Slovenia, and the Slovenian Forest Service.

**The Financing of Forestry**

Forest owners are materially responsible for the execution of all the work required in their forests. In state forests it is the duty of the state, via the Slovenian Fund of Agricultural Land and Forests, to ensure that all the forest work is carried out. The state finances the forest service from the budget and also provides - because of the generally beneficial role of forests - compensations for reduced yields from protective forests and forests with a special purpose, and subsidises the management of private forests.

The state, thus, finances primarily measures for preventing or mitigating the disturbances in the functioning of the forest and forest work in protective forests and torrent watersheds. It subsidises the following measures on the basis of silvicultural plans and other operational projects or plans within the framework of the investment programme for forests, drawn up by the Slovenian Forest Service for the current year:

Types of measures:
- forest regeneration: artificial regeneration - total cost of plants paid, natural regeneration - 30% of the cost paid;
- forest tending: 20-40%;
- forest protection: from fires - up to 70%; from game - material costs plus 30% of other costs; from diseases and phytophagous insects - 30% or material costs plus 20%;
- maintenance of wildlife habitats: 30-70%;
- conversion of degraded forests: according to the terms of public tender;
- afforestation after fires, and restoration of damaged forests: plants plus 20% of the cost;
- maintenance of forest roads: 35% of the maintenance cost;
- investments (forest roads, tree nurseries): according to the terms of public tender;

If ecological and/or social functions considerably affect forest management, the subsidy is increased by 10%, but if they determine the forest management method, it is increased by 20%. Forest owners for whom farming and forestry are the main sources of income (farmers) and owners who unite to form larger groups are given priority for obtaining funds in a public tender. Under difficult natural conditions, the subsidy can be increased by not more than 30%.

**Fiscal Policy**

It should be recognised that the forestry fiscal policy has a direct influence on the state or on the living conditions of rural areas. This particularly concerns mountain areas, where the income from the forest is higher than that from farming. Since forests are important not only commercially, but also ecologically and socially, they should not be regarded by the fiscal policy as a merely commercial subject.
FORESTRY ADMINISTRATION

Responsible for forestry in Slovenia is the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food (MAFF). It is responsible for preparing forestry regulations and supervising the Slovenian Forest Service (SFS). An independent body within the MAFF is the Inspectorate for agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing, which is responsible for the supervision of the implementation of the Forest Act and all regulations issued on the basis of it.

The SFS is of great importance in ensuring the sustainability of forest management and the preservation of biological diversity. Under the Forest Act the function of the SFS is (a) to monitor the state and development of forests, (b) to protect forests, (c) to orient the management of forests, the forest environment, individual forest trees and groups of forest trees outside settlements, (d) to orient the construction and maintenance of forest roads, (e) to keep records and data bases for forestry, (f) to give specialised advice and training to forest owners, (g) to provide seeds and saplings of tree and bush species, and (h) to assume control of work carried out in the forests if co-financed out of the national budget.

The SFS is organised on national, regional (14 regional offices) and local levels (94 local offices) and employs 700 forestry experts who are distributed rationally in such a way as to cover the entirety of Slovenia's forest land. The board of the SFS includes representatives of the government, local communities, forest owners, education and research organisations in the field of forestry, and non-governmental organisations in the fields of nature conservation, hunting and agriculture, all of whom are able to influence the orientation of its operation. The internal organisation of the SFS is characterised by a combination of classical territorial organisation (local foresters) and experts operating at the regional and national levels in departments for planning the development of forest and forest land, for silviculture and forest protection, for forestry and forest road technology, for wildlife and for relations with forest owners and the general public.

The Fund for Agricultural Land and Forests (FALF) is responsible for ensuring the most effective management of the state forests. According to the Law on the Fund for Agricultural Land and Forests, the FALF enters into concession contracts with private forestry companies. The FALF also has a contract with the SFS for the supervision of the implementation of the concession contracts in the field since its forestry staff is very limited. Another important function of the FALF is to implement policies concerning commercial transactions of forest land.

Under the Act on the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry, adopted in 1999, the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry should be constituted until May 2000. Members of the Chamber should be all physical and legal persons who are active in agriculture or forestry, and the membership is compulsory. Besides other tasks, the Chamber carries out extension in forestry and conducts professional training for their members. It supports and facilitates co-operation between the forestry education and research damaged forests.


**FORESTRY LEGISLATION**

Following Slovenia's independence, a new Forest Act was adopted in 1993. The Act regulates the protection and exploitation of forests with the objective of permanently and optimally ensuring both the integrity of the forest ecosystems and their functions.

Under the Forest Act, the rights of ownership of forests shall be exercised in such a manner as to ensure their ecological, social and productive functions. The owner of the forest must therefore:

- manage the forest in accordance with regulations, management plans and administrative acts issued on the basis of this Act;
- allow free access to and movement in the forest to others;
- allow beekeeping, hunting and the recreational gathering of fruits, herbal plants, mushrooms and wild animals in accordance with regulations.

Forest roads are deemed to be of public relevance, which means that they may be used equally by non-owners.

Under the Act, forest management and silviculture plans shall be drawn up for all forests, irrespective of their ownership. The plans are prepared by the Forest Service, a public body that is established in order to direct the management of all forests towards ensuring their sustainable development. The guidelines and measures laid down in the forest management plans follow the general guidelines of the FDPS. Owners of forests shall have the right to participate in procedures for adopting forest management and hunting plans and in the preparation of silviculture plans. Their needs, proposals and requests are respected as much as possible under the restrictions imposed by the requirements of the ecosystem and the law.

The most important enforcement measure laid down in the Act is the requirement that forest owners comply with administrative orders that are issued to them by the Forest Service on the basis of the silviculture plan following a prior consultation and a joint selection of trees. The Act on the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry was adopted 1999. It lay down the organization, goals and tasks the Chamber. The Chamber represents its members in economical, technical, legal and social issues primarily ahead of state and local authorities.

Nature Protection Authority of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning is, according to the Nature Conservation Act of 1999, responsible for the overall conservation of biodiversity and especially for protection of natural values. It prepares governmental acts for protected areas and is responsible for their management.