

**National Report to the Fifth Session of the
United Nations Forum on Forests**

CYPRUS

January 2005

I. Key Contacts

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II. Progress and issues related to implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

General

Please provide additional or new information on initiatives taken or lessons learned since 1997 further to the information on forests included in your national reports¹ to UNFF 2, UNFF 3 and UNFF 4, the Commission on Sustainable Development, and other international instruments and organizations on the following points:

- *assessment (including of the relevance, priority, status of implementation, planned actions) of the IPF/IFF proposals for action in the national context*

The Department of Forests has initiated a process for a thorough and detailed assessment of the relevance, priority and the progress of implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action in the national context. This process is still ongoing and it is expected to be concluded with a report in 2005.

- *development and implementation of your national forest programme or similar national policy framework for forests,*

Forestry in Cyprus has been based on multiple use since a long time ago. In ancient times the forests were more extensive and the population smaller; timber was felled for building houses and ships, and the forests were a source of food, fodder and other needs. The capacity of the forest to meet peoples' demands was not questioned and sustainability was not an issue. Timber production based on the principle of "sustainable yield" was introduced by European foresters in the 19th century and has been practiced in Cyprus throughout the 20th century. In recent years the importance of forests as a source of a wide range of benefits, including biodiversity, climate amelioration, water, amenity and scenery, has been recognized and the sustainability concept has been expanded to cover them. It is now focused on protection of forest resources, so that their capacity to continue to provide goods and services of all kinds, for future generations, is not impaired.

In Cyprus the need to manage forest resources for multiple purposes has been clearly set out, right from the first official forest policy declaration in 1950. However, the emphasis previously given in practice to timber production and meeting domestic requirements for wood products is no longer appropriate and a new balance is emerging. Therefore, it was important to reinterpret the sustainability concept to allow for a different mixture of uses, and to focus on the maintenance of environmental quality while meeting the needs of local people and foreign tourists.

In this concept, a National Forest Programme (NFP) was adopted in 2002 covering the 10-year-period 2002-2011 and consists of three parts: the strategy, the projects and activities and the new National Forest Policy. The state of the forest resources was taken into account and measures for the betterment of the forests were proposed.

For the formulation of the NFP a steering committee was set up consisting of government and non-government organizations aiming at an inter-sectoral and holistic approach.

¹ National reports related to forests may be easily accessed on the CPF website at <http://www.fao.org/forestry/foris/webview/cpf/index.jsp?siteId=2461&siteTreeId=6947&langId=1&geoId=0>, however UNFF4 reports are available only at <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/reports-unff4.html> at the time of writing.

The Strategy that was adopted in the National Forest Programme, known as the Rural Betterment Strategy, has the following objectives:

- Better conservation of natural resources,
- better facilities for visitors,
- better forest villages and
- better rural development

This strategy aims at safeguarding forest resources for the benefit of the whole community while capturing the advantages of development on ecotourism. The strategy is achieved by:

- action to protect and enhance forest cover, water supplies, wildlife and the national heritage in State forests,
- afforestation and the restoration of degraded land in the wider countryside,
- safeguarding particular places such as national parks, nature reserves etc, 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 special 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.

The five main aspects of the strategy represent target areas in which the activities in the programme are concentrated. They include areas distinguished by geography and areas of interest connected with particular functions. For convenience they are labelled *action areas*. They relate to (i) the State forests and surrounding areas, (ii) the wider countryside, (iii) special sites, (iv) ecotourism promotion, and (v) information, publicity and education.

Action area I is focussed on the State forests and land near them; it includes the main forest areas in the mountains, which are surrounded by village communities, private land and unclaimed land that has reverted to the Government. Protection, conservation and management of these vital forest resources are closely linked with what happens on adjacent land and in the villages.

Action area II is concerned with the need to improve and restore land outside the forests, where it has been deteriorated, eroded or degraded, in order to protect water catchments, safeguard the flora and fauna and improve the scenery. Afforestation offers the best way of achieving this, although progress has been slow in the past, mainly for institutional reasons.

Action area III deals with particular sites, which have special significance for recreation and tourism, on account of their scenery or other special features, or contain important ecosystems, rare or endangered flora and fauna, or wildlife habitat, which form part of the

national heritage. Their value as national assets needs to be recognized by giving them special status in law, as national parks, nature reserves or monuments.

Action area IV concentrates on the need to stimulate, guide and regulate the provision of facilities for recreation/tourism and development in villages, so that a high quality rural environment is maintained and the national heritage is respected. Ecotourism promotion can bring substantial benefits to village communities and contribute to the general quality of life in Cyprus.

Action area V involves extending the Forestry Department's existing geographic information system (GIS) and forest inventories to cover aspects of forest management and conservation, which are not related to timber production. They include the mapping of ecosystems, recording the numbers and distribution of the flora and fauna, details of 'giant' trees and other natural monuments. The eventual aim should be to develop a national environmental database to which the Forestry Department contributes significantly. Information will then be available to support visitor centers, publications, educational projects, Internet sites, research and many other purposes.

The National Forest Programme is currently in the process of implementation. There is not any interim evaluation yet.

The Rural Development Plan for the three-year period 2004-06, which is co-financed by the European Union has generated the first considerable and streamlined interest by the public for its four forestry measures.

During the year 2004, a new attempt to thoroughly revise the Forest Legislation has been initiated under a Technical Co-operation Programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

- ***international cooperation, including development and implementation of partnerships***

FAO – Regional Statutory Bodies: a) Near East Forestry Commission and b) European Forestry Commission: Cyprus is traditionally a constant participant to the regional Commission for Near East where its role is considered to be very active. It is currently working on the Forest Outlook Study for the Western and Central Asia. Furthermore, there has always been a close attendance of the activities of European Forestry Commission. After the accession of Cyprus to European Union, the participation to the European Forestry Commission has gained a deeper interest.

FAO- Technical Statutory Bodies: a) Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions (Silva Mediterranea) and b) International Poplar Committee: Cyprus participates in both of these bodies but its role is more active in the former one.

Economic Commission for Europe – Timber Committee: There is a close cooperation with the Timber Committee regarding the exchange of forest statistics and other information.

MCPFE: Cyprus participated in the last Ministerial Conference in Vienna and signed all MCPFE's Resolutions.

Forestry issues within European Union: As full member of EU, Cyprus is in the position to participate in all activities relevant to forest matters, i.e. EU Forestry Strategy, Forest Focus Framework Regulation, Natura 2000 Programme, etc.

Cyprus-Greece co-operation programme in the field of rural sector: It is a cooperation programme in the field of which several forestry measures are included, particularly the

exchange of technical and scientific knowledge and expertise. The programme is renewed on a biennial basis, according to emerging issues.

There are also several other intergovernmental agreements or cooperation programmes in which occasionally, there are forestry-related provisions.

- *mechanisms or initiatives to facilitate stakeholder participation, including indigenous and local communities, in forest sector planning, decision-making and/or forest management*

The Forest Policy gives the opportunity to all interested parties (inhabitants of communities, forest owners and environmental NGO's) to express their opinion and make comments on each future management project. Their comments and opinions are taken into consideration in the planning and later on in decision-making. The multi-stakeholder participation in the procedure of National Forest Programme formulation has been proven of vital importance, and it can be considered as an excellent example of broad social dialogue for matters relevant to the forest sector. Currently, there is broad public consultation and stakeholder participation for the revision of Forest Legislation.

In this general context member States may wish to refer also to the resolutions of UNFF relevant to the above elements, in particular resolution 3/4 paras. 1-13., and provide information on the implementation of these resolutions or their contribution to facilitating the implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action.

Implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to thematic issues of UNFF 2

Please provide information on: activities undertaken since 1997, progress made, constraints encountered, lessons learned, and issues that have emerged, as well as relevant information related to means of implementation (financing, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, and capacity-building) related to the following elements:

Combating deforestation and forest degradation

2. *preparing diagnostic studies to analyse historical and underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, including processes outside the forest sector*

There is not any specific diagnostic study that analyses historical and underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, so far. However, from historical sources and data, Cyprus was described as a heavily forested island and the minerals and timber were its two main export goods. The forests of Cyprus were exploited not as a renewable resource but rather as a mine. Large quantities of wood were used for pyrotechnology during the Bronze and Iron Ages, until the Middle Ages. During the Turkish rule (1571 – 1878) the forests were heavily degraded because of misuse and the lack of measures for their protection.

The most important factors of forest degradation in ancient times were: drought, overgrazing, misuse of forests, forest fires and the high demand for fuelwood and charcoal to meet basic energy needs. Many of these factors were interacting and some were synergistic.

The systematic management of forests started after 1878. The British rule established the Department of Forests and started the scientific management of forests based on the principle of sustainable management. The main measures taken for the protection of forests were the demarcation of the state owned forests and the institution of forest legislation.

Today the main factors causing deforestation or forest degradation are drought and successive forest fires. When these factors are followed by grazing, they have tremendous consequences on the ecosystem. In forested areas adjacent to inhabited areas or areas under urban development, the pressure for change in the land use is very high, especially for development of facilities for public use i.e. churches, sporting centers, restaurants, etc.

3. *formulating and implementing national policies and strategies, through an open and participatory process, for addressing the underlying causes of deforestation*

During the formulation of NFP and the Rural Development Plan, as well as the ongoing process for revision of the Forest Legislation, the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation have been addressed and all relevant stakeholders involved are well aware of the current threats for forests.

4. *raising awareness of the importance of issues related to deforestation and forest degradation and the multiple values of forests*

Education and training of people are crucial for the protection of forests against the main degrading factors. Responding to this need, the Department of Forests organizes lectures in schools, the army and other organized groups about the benefits of the forests, the forest enemies, which can lead to deforestation and forest degradation and measures, which should be taken for the protection of woodlands. Many articles are written by foresters in newspapers and magazines every year about matters related to forests. Also a number of radio and television interviews are given through the various TV and radio networks in the country. However, there is much work to be done in the field of raising awareness among farmers and shepherds mainly, to control grazing especially in recently burnt areas.

Forest conservation and protection of unique types of forest and fragile ecosystems

5. *creating or expanding protected areas to safeguard forest and related ecosystems and their full range of values and, developing and applying criteria and methodologies for assessing the conditions and management effectiveness in protected forest areas*

The protection of ecosystems and their functions is supported by the National legislation.

Since 1997, two Nature Reserves with a total area of 3745 ha and three National Forest Parks with a total area of 158 ha were added to the existing list of protected areas.

In 2004 thirty-two (32) sites were preliminary selected and proposed for addition to the European Network of special Areas of Conservation, which is also known as Natura 2000 Network. Among them, ten (10) sites with a total area of 57 728 ha are exclusively located in forest areas, while some other sites include forests as well.

The condition and management effectiveness in protected forest areas as well as the entire forest area of the island can be assessed using evaluation tools like the Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management.

6. *developing and implementing partnership mechanisms to engage forest owners, private sector, indigenous people and local communities in the planning and management of forest conservation areas and developing and implementing a range of innovative mechanisms for financing and encouraging forest conservation*

Due to several social and environmental conditions, the development of partnership mechanisms to engage public in the planning and management of forest conservation areas is not a challenge, so far. The management of areas included in the Natura 2000 Network may give the first examples of such mechanisms.

Provisions for financial aid to forest owners taking measures for the protection and conservation of their forest areas were included in the Rural Development Plan (2004-2006). This is the only financing mechanism until now.

7. *giving high priority in national forest programs to the rehabilitation and sustainable management of forests and trees in environmentally critical areas, recognising the linkage between forest protection and sustainable development and improving the coordination among such policies and programmes*

The National Forest Programme includes provisions for the protection and restoration of degraded land, watershed protection, the maintenance of ecosystems and biodiversity and the conservation of the flora and fauna of Cyprus. High priority has been given in the Rural Development Plan to protect and restore woodlands and single trees in environmental critical areas or of important ecological value.

Rehabilitation and conservation strategies for countries with low forest cover

8. *expanding forested area, establishing and managing plantations to enhance production of forest goods and services, while avoiding the replacement of natural ecosystems, and recognizing the role of imports in satisfying the needs for forest products and services*

Despite the fact that the forest cover of the island is about 19% of the total land area, Cyprus cannot be classified as a country with low forest cover since the total wooded area is estimated to be around 42% of the total land area. However, climatic and edaphic conditions are such that they hinder forest productivity and do not allow extensive exploitation of timber products.

Afforestations and reforestations are principally guided by the necessity to primarily provide forest services like the improvement of aesthetic values. erosion control and

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