Barbados

nfp UPDATE - information as of 2004

Nfp process

This section brings a brief chronology of the nfp process, from its early phases to the latest developments. Details are given on the mechanisms, procedures and structures put in place to advance the implementation of the nfp, as well as on the main issues constraining its progress. A final overview on the forthcoming actions and activities closes the section.

Chronology of the nfp process

The British settlement of Barbados began in 1627 and at that time the island was practically covered with forest. Within 20 years approximately 50% of the forest cover was removed and by 1665 all forest was cleared with the exception of isolated patches on steep hills and in gullies (deep ravines in limestone rock) (Watts, 1966).

In 1656, an act of Council was passed to prevent the illegal removal of timber or boundary trees. Parish Ordinances controlled strictly the removal of trees on unoccupied or common land in order to prevent the wastage of wood.

The Cultivation and Preservation of Trees Act -1875 was established to encourage the cultivation and the preservation of trees in the island. This act provided tax relief for land with trees and imposed penalties for the illegal removal of trees. It is believed that the early legislation, especially that of 1875, triggered the establishment of woodlots on private land, most of them used the West Indies Mahogany (Swietenia mahagoni) which was introduced to Barbados from the larger Antilles probably around 1780.

On July 8, 1907, two years after the celebrations of the first Arbor Day (November 9, 1905), the Government passed the Preservation of Trees Act. This act consolidated the acts of this island relating to the cultivation and preservation of trees.

This act not only put in place an incentive (Bounty) for the public to plant trees but also protected the land on which the trees grew and provided an incentive (no tax) for land (one acre or more) already under forest. An inspector was appointed to make sure trees were planted and cultivated correctly and that statements for bounties were not falsified.

The Preservation of Trees Act was repealed in 1950 and replaced by the Cultivation of Trees Act.1950-22, commencement March 13th, 1951. The Trees (Preservation) Act-1981 gave the Chief Town Planner a little more power.

During World War II (1939-1945) the fuel import to Barbados was restricted and many mature trees were felled for fire wood. The shortage of fire wood triggered the establishment of fire wood plantations. The government started the Afforestation Project to help unemployment and to provide firewood for the colony. During 1941-42, some 86,550 casuarina (Casuarina equisetifolia) were planted. Casuarina was introduced to Barbados in 1861 for the production of firewood. After the war the plantation establishments for firewood quickly ceased.

In 1961 a private landowner donated the Joe River Forest, 39 ha of abandoned agricultural land and secondary forest to the Government. The area was replanted with a variety of different tree species.

In 1994 IUCN recognized only 300 ha of Barbados as protected. National Park status is projected for two major wildlife sanctuaries in the Scotland District. Yet the relics of old forest, such as Turner’s Hall, are not given statutory protection. Twenty species of flowering plants are considered endangered.

A National Forestry Action Plan was prepared in the context of a combined sub-regional exercise involving eight CARICOM countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominicana, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago). A country mission team visited the country in February-March
The main areas of interest of the review mission were: reforestation and agroforestry; conservation; and institutional development. As a result, the main report of the NFAP was prepared in 1993, circulated to members of the National Coordinating Committee and submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mechanisms and procedures

Initiatives supported through the Soil Conservation Unit which have encouraged public participation include:

The Arbor Day Restoration Program which involved the establishment of a tree-planting day, sensitisation of the public through dissemination of information and participation and involvement of schools and communities in re-planting exercises and the establishment of small plant nurseries for the production of seedlings;

Scotland District development programs designed to render stability to the vulnerable Scotland District soils. Two major projects undertaken included a vegetation project to reduce erosion by replanting 1000 trees on the north-eastern coastline and an inland reforestation project which involved replanting 5000 trees to rehabilitate a site that had been mined for sand;

Government support to farmers around the island in areas of maintenance and technical assistance to stabilize soils and incorporation of the land into a poverty alleviation programme.

The tourism industry is promoting community based eco-agriculture activities which will present business and employment opportunities for the rural population, e.g. providing accommodation, food and entertainment services, renting buses or bicycles, selling crafts, and guide services. The establishment and maintenance of trees will be important to the success of this nature base tourism.

Main constraints

Notwithstanding the potential identified, there has been negligible growth and development in the country’s forestry subsector over the years. The following factors were identified by the CARICOM/ODA/FAO study, 1993 as contributors to this state:

- The country’s overwhelming reliance on the SCU, a unit with no trained ecological, silvicultural or arboricultural personnel, to oversee its activities of tree planting (undertaken primarily as a soil conservation measure), or for monitoring the security of the forest cover on Government lands in the Scotland District, and which furthermore has not been given a mandate to pursue the management of the properties on which it operates under the Soil Conservation Act.
- Inadequate management of the Government’s agricultural properties by the body responsible, the Barbados Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) due to its preoccupation with commercial priorities under severe financial constraints.
- The absence of environmental planning and management skills in the NCC, an agency which seems logically to be the one entrusted with a mandate for the management of a system of national parks and protected areas.
- The lack of a coherent land use policy, of adequate extension services, and of incentives designed to encourage optimal utilization of land on a sustainable basis, which has been further compounded by the reluctance of local labour to work in traditional agriculture.
- The existence of a profusion of laws which seems to cause confusion within agencies regarding overlapping areas of responsibility.
- Failure to enforce enabling legislation although this and other facilities exist for example, for the control of stray livestock.

Future actions

- Institutional strengthening is required, as Barbados only has one trained forester.
• Comprehensive legislation is required to provide for the wide coverage of environmental matters and to provide for a monitoring/coordination role for the Environmental Unit of the Ministry of Labour, Consumer Affairs and the Environment. A good example is the necessity to revamp the draft Environmental Protection Act, 1986 (CARICOM/ODA/FAO 1993).

• Much more needs to be done to convince the Barbadian people of the importance of biological conservation. Moves that develop tourism, regardless of prospective environmental consequences, are rarely opposed.

Forest policy

The national forest policy and theirs main achievements are hereby pointed out, together with the draft or official policy statement, when available. Two specific sub-sections on forest tenure and financial issues provide a more complete vision on the socio-economic context influencing the forest policy.

Main achievements

There is no national forest policy in Barbados, nor terrestrial habitats legally designated as protected areas. Nevertheless, there is a Tree Preservation Act which governs matters relating to forest management.

The Government has stated its commitment to halt environmental degradation and to improve the quality of life for its citizens. Intrinsic to the achievement of such goals, is the requirement for the Government to move urgently towards a rationalization of environmental legislation to ensure adequate provisions for the protection and development of forests, natural habitats and wildlife, in the interest of conservation of the environment and biological diversity (CARICOM/ODA/FAO 1993).

The contribution of Forestry and trees to the socio-economic development and environmental stability of Barbados can be realised through the following stated facets of national development policies (CARICOM/ODA/FAO 1993):

• the maximisation of the use of indigenous resources, particularly for the furniture and handicraft industries;
• the forging of stronger linkages with tourism and other sectors;
• the stimulation of non-sugar agriculture and agro-industrial development to meet a greater hare of domestic demand;
• the enhancement of rural development;
• the promotion of the optimal utilization of land;
• the protection and conservation of the island's soil and water resources.

Forest, trees and land tenure

Most of the land of Barbados is privately owned land, and the fact that forestry is a long term investment, most people would avoid venturing into this area.

Joes River Forest (40 ha) was donated, by a private owner, to Government in 1961 for reforestation and soil conservation and the production of timber. A number of selected hardwoods were either close planted or inter planted during a 20-year period beginning in 1963. The species included mahogany, cedar, cypress, eucalyptus and teak. There is presently a proposal to use this "forest" for a nature based tourism project.

The National Physical Development Plan (NPDP) 1998 has identified a number of forested areas with diverse flora and fauna. These areas are categorized as forests and woodlands and shall be managed for protection and conservation purpose

• Turners Hall woods: 30 ha of natural forest
• Joe’s River Forest: 39 ha of mature plantation of forest and fruit trees
• Under cliff and gully woodlands: approximately 5000 ha
• Bawden and Greenland: 8 ha of young plantation forest
• Mangroves and Wetlands: 63 ha
• Fallow Areas

Forest finance

The Soil Conservation Unit maintains a tree nursery and distributes seedlings (mostly fruit trees) to farmers and members of the public at a subsidised price.

Any investment into forestry, even for watershed purposes, is unlikely to happen unless there is an incentive scheme to establish forest plantations and the forest provides an income, for example payments for watershed services to the landowner.

Institutions

This section presents an overview on the main forestry and forest-related public bodies operating at the national and local level. Details on the decentralization processes and structures are also provided, when available. A special subsection on the major national and sub-national stakeholders outside the public sector completes the picture.

Other stakeholders

Active NGOs include the University of the West Indies, the Barbados National Trust and the Barbados Environmental Association.

Legislation

The main forestry laws and regulations, either enacted or under development, are listed and shortly presented. Details are given on other significant legal instruments pertaining to sectors having a bear on forestry, such as agriculture and environment. A complete list of legal papers from the joint ECOLEX database is provided.

Forestry legislation

Barbados does not have specific forest management legislation, however there are a number of laws that are directed towards the preservation of trees.

• The Soil Conservation Act (1958) provides for the protection and rehabilitation of the vulnerable lands of the Scotland District including the re-vegetation and reforestation of selected areas;

• The Town and Country Planning Act (1972);

• The Tree Preservation Act (1981-49) makes it an offence for anyone to fell or kill trees of one metre or more in circumference without a permit;

• The Draft Physical Development Plan (2003) outlines a general policy for forested areas within the National Park. The National Park boundaries coincide with the Scotland district, a hilly area in the northeast of Barbados. The Plan mentions forests more as a potential than an actual resource, it distinguishes between existing and emerging forests. The plan proposes a programme to assess extent and ecological value of those emerging (successional) forests.

Other relevant legislation

• The Soil Conservation Act (1958), which provides for the protection and rehabilitation of the vulnerable lands of the Scotland District, including the re-vegetation and reforestation of selected areas.

• The Town and Country Planning Act (1972), which has overall responsibility for development.
Sources used

- Latin America and the Caribbean, National Forest programmes, 1998. FAO, Update 33
- CIA - The world fact book; Barbados: CIA - The World Factbook -- Barbados
- Unpublished material and FAO internal documents.

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