

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF POPLAR PLANTATIONS

SUMMARY

Poplar and willow species take some 0.3% of the forest area in the Republic of Bulgaria. Their growing stock is estimated to some 0.5% of the total growing stock in the country. Poplar and willow high productivity, broad range of timber utilization, opportunities for quick biomass production for processing combined with their agro-forestry potential and suitability for soil conservation afforestations define the actions and the policy for future developments of the poplar forestry in the country.

Brief overview of the poplar production in Bulgaria:

1. Total forest area taken by poplars managed as high stem forests accounts to some 20,600 ha; 18,400 ha of these are under 20 years of age. The distribution of this area by type of ownership is as follows:

- State forests 18,150 ha;
- Agricultural lands 310 ha;
- Municipal forests 870 ha;
- Private 1,160 ha;
- Other 110 ha.

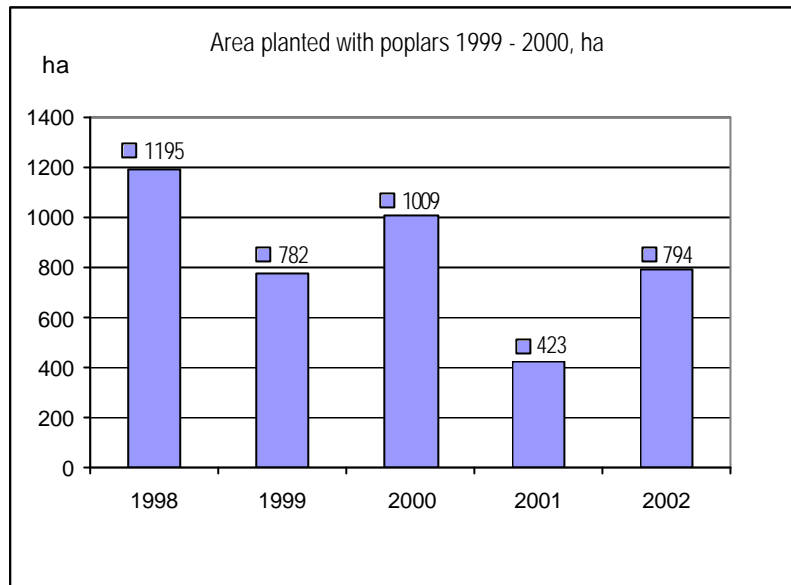
The growing stock of the poplar plantations in the country accounts to 1,76 million m³. State forests hold 1,485 million m³.

2. Annual timber production from poplar plantations is circa 123,000 m³ of construction timber and 18,600 m³ of firewood. For the state forests these figures are 122,000 m³ and 18,300 m³ respectively.

3. The biggest consumers of poplar timber in Bulgaria include: "Lesoplast" - Troyan, "Darvoprerabotvane" – Veliko Tarnovo, "Furnir parket" – Sofia for plywood production, "Mike trading" - Razlog for joinery, "Sviloza" – Svishtov for pulp and paper production and other small producers of panel boards.

4. According to the custom offices' statistics, the annual export of sawn poplar timber is about 44,000 m³ representing 22% of the total export of sawn broadleaved timber. The average export price varies between \$75 and \$86 per m³. Fresh sawn timber and particles are usually exported. The main markets for sawn poplar timber are Greece and Turkey.

5. Circa 800 ha on average are being established every year with poplar plantations /for the last 5 years/. That represents some 20% of all newly established broadleaved forests. Some 2 million cuttings and about 1.5 million poplar transplants are produced each year for afforestations and reforestations. The production of the reproductive materials is concentrated in two specialized poplar nurseries.



The establishment of poplar plantations marks a slight decline in recent years. This is mainly due to:

- Lack of investments for afforestations and reforestations;
- Lack of an adequate policy for support of non-state forest owners for afforestations.

The use of poplars in the afforestation of agricultural areas is an important option to be considered and it could well be made a reality with the support granted by some EU accession programmes like SAPARD.

In relation to the harmonization of EU legislation, new ordinances regarding the production and the marketing of forest reproductive materials complying with EU Directive 105/1999 were recently adopted.

The necessary interventions for improving poplar management in Bulgaria relate to:

- Undertaking an inventory of the poplar and willow species suitable for establishments in the forest areas and for afforestation of abandoned agricultural areas;
- Testing and usage of drought-resistant poplar clones;
- Carrying out an awareness programmes and state support for afforestations with poplars of land property of private owners and the municipalities.

In compliance with the obligations and the responsibilities arising from Bulgaria's membership in the FAO International Poplar Commission since September 1992 a relevant National Commission has been established. This Commission coordinates the efforts of all state authorities, state and private producers and consumers and research institutions in organizing a high productive and profitable poplar management.