



UNECE



Workshop

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Country statement

Georgia

**- Policies affecting forest land use and forest
products markets -**

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Introduction

Georgia's forests are great national treasure. The constitution of Georgia urges all citizens to treat nature carefully with respect and accordingly the same attitude is expected to the forests - an important strategic source of our country. The concept of stable management of forests in Georgia stems from understanding of ecological, economic and social importance of forests. Ecological, economic and political aspects of forest management are a part of national development strategy and stable development of the country. The purpose of stable forest management is to satisfy basic needs of the society in forest resources on the basis of scientific rational multipurpose non-depleting usage, protection and reproduction saving biologic variety of the forests.



General information

Georgia is one of the most ancient countries in the world, a part of the Caucasus with 5.5 million population. The territory is 6.5 million hectares. Georgia borders Russia in the north, Azerbaijan in the east, Armenia and Turkey in the south and the Black Sea in the west. Forest areas occupy 3005.3 thousand hectares while pure forestry accounts for 2772.4 hectares which is 40% of the country's territory. The total timber resources of the world are estimated at 360 billion cubic meters, in the Georgian mountains these resources are estimated at 451.7 million cubic meters i.e. 0.13% of the world resources. Average forest density in the world is 100 square meters per hectare, in Georgia it is 163 square meters. 97% (2915.8 hectares) of Georgian forestry are situated on mountain slopes, the rest 3% are low-lying and flood plain forest in Kolhida region and in the west of Georgia. On the slopes the forests density is following 0-10 .5. % (165 thousand square hectares, 11-20 16.5% (496 thousand hectares), 21-25 16.6% (499 thousand square hectares)), 26-30 18.2% (547 thousand hectares), 31-35 19.6% (589 thousands hectares) 36 and higher 23.6% (710.4 hectares) Georgia defines forests according to age which might be of special interest. Mature trees dominate, 33.4 % (852.3 thousand hectares), ripe and old age plants 35.4% (904.4 thousand hectares), which gives opportunity to test and carry out regenerating measures. The tree types are distributed as follows: the beech - 1060 thousand hectares. 46.6 %, the fir - 161.5 thousand hectares. 7.1 %, the pine - 91.0 thousand hectares. 4.0 %, the oak - 241 thousand hectares. 10.6 %, the alder - 125.1 thousand hectares. 5.5 %, the Chestnut - 72.8 thousand hectares. 3.2 %, the hornbeam - 220.6 thousand hectares 8.8 %,

the Fir-tree - 102.0 thousand hectares 4.5 % and other types - 220.6 thousand hectares. 9.7 %.

Above sea level the areas of forests are distributed in the following order: 100 m. above sea level. - 2 %, 101-500 m. above sea level. - 5 %, 501-1000 m. above sea level. - 20 %, 1001-1500 m. above sea level. - 35 %, 1501-2000 m. above sea level. - 31 %, 2001¼ and the rest - 7 %. Distribution of the areas according to the category is the following: Reserves - 168.9 above sea level. National parks - 61.4 above sea level, Protected reserves - 12.4 above, Forests in green zones - 276.5 thousand hectares, Resort woods - 119.4 thousand hectares, Soil-protective and Water-protecting forests - 2366.7 thousand hectares.

Usage of forest.

In such a mountainous country like Georgia (where 97 % forests are located on hillslopes) the usage of forest and relevant financial resources and self-financing are rather limited. It is worth to note, that suitable for industrial operation forest areas account for 4 thousand sites, scattered all over the territory and they are small (5-10 hectares.), that does allow for concentration of works on preparation and transportation of timber.

The improvement of management in the forest enterprises is the main strategy for scientists and experts of forestry. In the government forests of Georgia the general volume forest usage (annual calculation) is defined on the basis of the inventory data researched by a special organisation, according to the State programme of Forestry development, and according to (the Forest Code) meeting the requirements of legislation and current instructions.

A number of factors are considered defining the usage of the forest *i.e.* ecological equilibrium of the nature and potential applications (water balance, soil protection, resort location), preservation and the improvement of the condition of the forest.

In mountainous forests according to current laws and legislation, disafforestation is forbidden in forests of certain category including reserves, green zones, national parks, inundated forests and state protected forests, etc. All in all, without a calculation of the main usage, this area covers 2162 thousand hectares. Areas where industrial and sanitary disafforestation is allowed are supposedly 590 thousand hectares. In these areas the annual growth makes 1.5 million square meters.

As average year growth in the forests under the supervision of the Forest department makes 3.7 million cubic meters, the permission of logging defines the maximum amount for disafforestation as 1 million square meters *i.e.* it is allowed to cut down 28% of the growth which is 0.46 cubic meters per hectare. This data served a basis for defining "Georgia's forest management programme" and was approved by the governmental departments and the President of the country on 31 December 1997.

Since 1 July, 2002 a new amendment, according to the "Forest Code" has been in force requesting a certificate of legal disafforestation in order to transport the timber out of the forest, According to the current "Forest Code" and basic principles of market economy, all disafforestation must be carried out by licenced agents. The procedure of obtaining a licence requires tenders and auctions. Lumberers are obliged, during disafforestation provide relevant forest works - care, protection, planting, restoration of the forest - all works which are defined by forest management projects.

In territory of the state forest fund the volume of annual commercial disafforestation does not exceed 90-100 thousand square meters that compared with annual growth of forest is 2,7 %, or 0,02 % of the total.

It is necessary to emphasize the fact, that the average growth of forest makes 3,7 million square meters while the programme of development of the forest management defines yearly disafforestation (all types) annual volume as not exceeding 1,0 million square meters. Taking into account Georgia's condition, the World Bank worked out "the project of development of forest sector" which addresses all existing problems in forestry making

suggestions and recommendations following which Georgia can become one of the leading countries in this area.

Restoration of forests

The share of artificially planted forest (nurseries) in Georgia makes 67124 ra. In the past selection was carried out on yearly basis but due to political turbulence in the country as well as financial problems, restoration of the forest was carried out less and less. Starting from 2001 works have been going in the area of 400 ra. In the future they will become one of key priorities in forest management. In 2004 with the aid from the World Bank planting works were carried out on 115 hectares assisting restoration on 105 ra. In 2006 also with the aid of the World Bank planting works will be carried on 150 ra in order to restore 400-500 hectares of forest.

In the long term the programme stipulates the development of forest nurseries, schools, special plantations (a nut, a filbert, fir - for Christmas trees, medical herbs, etc.)

Collateral use

The Georgian woods are rich with various gifts of nature and wood resources for agricultural production. Such are: pastures for cattle breeding, haymaking, forest berries - chestnut, forest pear, forest apple, blackberry, bilberry, etc, plants for medical application - dogrose, groundsel, sea-buckthorn, berries, etc. There has been no proper research done concerning the distribution of these riches, crop supply, etc. In order to research on this issue there will be a monitoring on the whole area of forestry. The issue was discussed within the programme on the development of Forest management in 1997-2005 and necessary calculation was made but due to financial crisis this programme was not realised. In the near future Forest Department intends to start works on this matter. We believe that collateral use of Forest will bring additional income helping to improve the financial condition of sector.

Export

For the last years export of timber became a problem in forest management. Export of timber required a special licence which was issued first by the Forest Department and later by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. In order to minimise negative consequences of export on forest a temporary moratorium on export of timber was introduced. The objective of this moratorium is to minimise illegal disafforestation. Currently there is no export of timber from Georgia. .

Protection of the Forests

Forests perform important ecological, social and economic functions. Partial disafforestation in the republic happened in 1990s (1990-95). Negative consequences in social and economic life in transition period resulted in negligence to forest resources, disruption of economic relations, growth of unemployment, high level of poverty, energy crisis, etc. which badly affected forestry.

Radical measures, adopted in the middle 1990s stopped the growth in illegal disafforestation. According to the "National concept" protection and restoration of the forests, the ecological issues became primary objectives of national importance.

In order to receive quantitative and qualitative estimated data on consequences of anthropogenous influence on forest ecological system, it is necessary to establish a system of monitoring. However carrying out monitoring should not serve only the purpose of assessing local and global influence of degradation in forest ecological systems and influence on environment (like erosive processes, landslides, cloudburst floods, climate warming, etc.)

By carrying out of monitoring it is necessary to clarify a degree of change and loss of a biological variety, a condition of geofund, rare and valuable species in habitat populations, dynamics of change in formations and ecological systems in general.

The national program on renewal and reproduction of forests of Georgia stipulates active participation in international environmental programmes, including setting objectives directed on protection and a biological variety in forests. And in that respect consolidation and mobilization of resources and intellectual opportunities is important, both on international level and regional and inter-regional cooperation with all interested state and nongovernmental organizations. Realization of the national programmes on restoration of forests, apart from state budgetary funds will require international grants, donations from commercial institutions, business and private individuals.

The legislation

Georgia ratified and incorporated into national legislation some of the main international agreements in the area of preservation of natural resources. They include the agreement on biological diversity, the agreement on international trade of rare species of wild fauna and flora, Ramcar agreement on boggy places for preservation of migratory species of wild animals, Bonn Agreement with its attachments.

The national forest legislation annually introduces necessary changes in order to address the standards of market economy. New laws must guarantee ecological protection and social functions of forestry as well as to improve economy.

New reform in Georgian forestry legislation took place in 1999 by adopting a New Forest Code. "The Forest Code" has established legal grounds for reforms in protection, restoration and use of Georgia's forest resources. The "Forest Code" stipulates the conduct of reforms in forest sector providing legal basis for the organisation of management and financing, and sets an objective of rediverting Forest sector from central planning to market economy. New instructions are introduced at the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources as well as a new law on state control and a law regulating the use of natural resources.

The international cooperation and cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

International obligations of Georgia on forests stem from the decision of Conference of the United Nations on environment and development (Rio 1992) defining in particular, that "Forestry and forest grounds should be administered steadily for satisfaction social, economic, cultural and spiritual needs of current and future generations of people "

Forest management carries full responsibility to correspond to all obligations according to ratified international conventions and other documents on forests. It is also obliged to carry obligation on shaping long term national forest policies in the area of steady forest management with the purpose of preservation of a biological variety and amplification of ecological function of forests (see also the appendix).

Forestry management must develop regional programs of the greatest possible involvement of the population in realization of various kinds of agricultural activities (restoration and use of forest, protection from fires, protection against wreckers and illnesses), Participation of public non-governmental organizations in decision making on the management of woods should be considered, as an additional source of ideas in the given sphere.

With the support of international organizations the system of forest management has to be reorganised such as reform of the staff, effective systems of preparation of retraining of personnel, creation of the new mechanism of the internal control, etc.

We have been introducing the principle of selecting employees on competitive basis, enlarge timber enterprises, reduce personnel in management position.. All this is stipulated in the project on the development of forest sector which was prepared with the assistance of the World Bank.

Developments of public relation, the state control of forests at all levels should promote positive objective perception with local population. It is necessary to propagate objective

impression of woods and forestry of Georgia, promote the importance of global value of woods for the environment, economy and social sphere, and also to introduce conscious understanding of necessity of steady development of the country to the public. This activity should be carried out at active interaction with local authorities and mass media.

Information and scientific management of the forests.

Information of forest industry presumes not only wide introduction of computer technologies but also the integration of used traditional methods of collection and processing information as well as transition to new progressive methods of inventory and management. In the forest management information development must be provided by the management via state system of forest husbandry, accountability of Forest fund, conducting a cadastre, monitoring forest exploitation and lease, other activities on modern technical level. In current situation the main functions of institutions of research are scientific decision-making and social economic forecast, planning, validity of choice, scientific motivation of realization. It is necessary to increase interest of territorial forest management in the use of scientific data on forest husbandry for creating investment programmes and projects of stable development of particular areas using the potential of research institutions and Georgia's forest services.

Data collection and distribution on forest resources

It is quite a complicated matter to collect necessary data on forest resources in Georgia (including for a five-year edition FAO/UNECE) due to a number of reasons, in particular - existing data is out-of-date (inventory of forests have not been carried out for several years. Apart from that, there is no common database where all information on forests of Georgia is collected. In this area the Forest Department actively cooperates with FAO. With active support of this organization there is a project of creating a common database which will contain all available data on Georgia's forests. This database will provide easy access and the distribution of the data. In spite of all current problems in Georgia all necessary data is currently being collected.

Conclusion

In order to guarantee preservation and efficient use of forest resources, it is necessary to conduct the following reforms: the improve social and ecological conditions, strengten and improve national forest legislation as well as regional and international cooperation.

Drafting national forest policy and forest strategies in Georgia

A board of trustees with the representatives of all engaged offices and institutions was established in Georgia and a statute was approved this month. Based on the statute, a set of technical tasks to carry out first stage of National Forest policy and strategies will be established.

National Forest Policy and strategies draft.

Stage I.

What do we possess? Evaluation of Georgia's forests, in terms of resources, finance, potential. Alternative non-industrial use (*i.e.* ecological tourism etc.) Evaluation of forest biosphere, functions of forests: soilprotecting, water balancing etc.The evaluation of industrial production and processing methods, possible potential. As a result of this research we will receive a tangible feedback what we have and our forests' potential (based on the regions).

2. Public participation in the preparation of forest policy which means proper ways of informing the population.

Stage II.

1. We need to decide what do we expect from forests? This issue also means:

a) what size forests we want to have,
b) what proportion we place between sanitary and industrial forest fund, structural and quality standards. In the conclusion we will have the understanding what we expect from the forest and what forest we want to have (on regional level).

2. Next step – how do we want to manage forest, how to achieve the set objectives. The issue should cover the following issues

- a) privatisation of forests,
- b) community forestry,
- c) long-term system of use.
- b) certification of forests, works etc.

It is necessary to define priorities whether it is going to be a governmental or alternative scheme of management. At this stage several options should be available where we make a choice.

Outcome: after nominating a scheme we know how to manage the forest sector in order to receive an intended result.

State III

Strategies and plan of actions: improvements in legislation, adoption of necessary reforms and law or corrections and amendment in the existing ones.

State IV

The mentioned above stages will be put in use.

g) Please list the governmental institutions, which are responsible for law enforcement on forests, their objectives with regards to forest land use and their main instrument used

Policy area	National Ministries	Objective	Main policy instrument used (please mark with an X)			Year	Source of data/ link
			Legal/ Regulatory	Financial/ Economic	Informational		
Production of wood	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources	Production and reproduction of forests	Forest code			1999	
Short term plantations	Department of Forestry	Short term plantations	Forest code			1999	
Health and vitality of forests	Department of Forestry	Production of forest plantation	Forest code			1999	
NWFP	–	–	–				
Hunting	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	Regulation of environment and natural resources					
Water cycles (forests)	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	Regulation of environment and natural resources					
Air cycles (forests)	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	Regulation of environment and natural resources					

Carbon issues (forests)	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	Regulation of environment and natural resources					
Biodiversity (forests)	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	Regulation of environment and natural resources					
Erosion prevention (forests)	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	Regulation of environment and natural resources					
Tourism	Department of Tourism and Sport						
Public awareness and participation	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	Regulation of environment and natural resources					
Research, Training and Education	Institute of Mining and Forestry Georgia						
Cultural and spiritual values	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	Regulation of environment and natural resources					
National Parks/Conservation	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	Regulation of environment and natural resources					

h.) Please list the governmental institutions (Ministries) which have responsibilities for the administration of state owned forests and indicate who is carrying out the management in these areas.

Ministry/ Ministries	Forests and other wooded land (ha)	Management is carried out by (%)			Year	Source of data
		State financed management	Outsourced to commercial enterprises	Total		
Ministry of Forestry	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia 2702400 000 ha	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	0	100		
Ministry of Environment	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia 2702400 000 ha	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	0	100		
Ministry of Defense	no information	no information		100		
Ministry of Agriculture	no information	no information		100		
Total state owned				100		

i.) Please list the governmental institutions on major governing levels, which are responsible for law enforcement on forest land- and the institution responsible for the management of state owned forests.

	Institution responsible for law enforcement			Institution responsible for state forest management			Year
	Name of Institution	Number of entities	average forest area /entity (ha)	Name of Institution	Number of entities	average forest area /entity (ha)	
National Level (1 ministry)	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	1	2702400 ha	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Georgia	1	2702400 ha	
Regional -2 (second highest)	Regional Institutions of Environment and Natural Resources	10		Regional Institutions of Environment and Natural Resources	10		
Regional -3 (third highest)	Regional Forestry	42	2456100 ha	Regional Forestry	42	2456100 ha	
Regional -4 (fourth highest)	Forest districts	308		Forest districts	308		