



Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
Development of Hungary



Food and Agriculture Organisation
of the United Nations



Budapest Forest Enterprise of the
Ministry of Defence

PRESS RELEASE

More money can be earned from forests in Hungary while making them more available for recreation – if public services are financed adequately

Efficient methods of managing forests proposed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) can help to market the range of forest products better and at the same time make forests available for recreation, but only if public services are financed adequately.

As in many European countries, people in Hungary are increasingly expecting various benefits from forests other than just wood. They want to enjoy forests for recreation and leisure, including the full range of forest amenities, such as hiking, mushroom and fruit picking, and animal watching. However, producing wood is very sensitive to market prices and hardly marketable non-wood goods and services can not provide a real alternative for diversifying the sources of income.

To make forests more available for recreation and at the same time increase the income earned from forest products, FAO helped at the request of the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to assess the situation and come up with a set of proposals that could help forest owners, managers and administrators to intensive the use of forests for multiple purposes, said Ms. Maria Kadlecikova, FAO Sub-Regional Representative for Central and Eastern Europe.

The Budapest Forest Shareholding Company under the Ministry of Defence initiated an FAO project and was designated in 2004 to take over the National Project Coordination of an overall project budget of \$ 270,000. International organisations, such as IUCN - The World Conservation Union, and consultants as well as national experts and NGOs have contributed to the successful implementation of this project. In February 2007 a meeting of the Steering Committee and stakeholder representatives reviewed the project outcomes and concluded that the project made remarkable input to fostering nature-oriented forest management, ecotourism and forest recreation, as well as marketing strategies for wood and non-wood forest products.

The originator of the Project, Mr. Gyorgy Keresztes, explains: “Labelled as “nature-oriented” forest management, the method used in various other European countries successfully, aims at managing forests as nature would, targeting for permanent forest cover without clear cuttings and plantations. This method would increase forest biodiversity, increase the stability of forests, raise income opportunities, and at the same time, contribute to landscape management and ecotourism. Almost half of the forests in Hungary could be looked after in this way mirroring in forestry more closely what happens in nature.”

In order to reach this ambitious target the project recommends to adapt forest policy accordingly, to give stronger support and provide financial incentives for nature-oriented management regimes. The project draws attention to the density of game as being frequently a key hampering factor for broader introduction of nature-oriented forest management. Certainly foresters will need training to help them manage their forests so that they will resemble more closely the types of forests that would occur naturally. Forest authorities too will need to find ways to support forest owners and managers who are enthusiastic about these new approaches and should apply broader nature-oriented forest management methods in forest management planning and monitoring. NGOs, such as PRO SILVA Hungaria for example, are seen as potential partners in promoting nature-oriented

forest management. The Program for Protecting the Forest Environment (2007-1013), financed from the European Agricultural and Rural Development Fund, will also be instrumental in furthering nature-oriented management. The Universities and Colleges can help by introducing natural approaches to forest management into their educational programmes.

Some other project recommendations are dealing with ecotourism and forest recreation where the development of so called Local Pilot Partnership Network (LPPN) could make input, assuming the full engagement of the national administration, the communities and local stakeholders (tourism related entrepreneurs, NGOs, church, infrastructure etc.). With regard to the marketing of wood and non-wood forest products the project outcomes draw attention to possible improvements e.g. through the establishments of a Marketing Information System (MIS), which would provide regularly updated information on wood prices and sold volumes. The project encourages state authorities to promote the environmental advantages of wood as a construction material and energy source more intensively to the public. Finally the project appeals to provide "Public money for public services!", suggesting that the financing for public services such as biodiversity, recreation and nature protection which are increasingly requested by the Hungarian society, should not be based on incomes from commercial wood production.

"The Department Natural Resources of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is grateful for this initial FAO support and calls on to invest further into nature-oriented forest management and multifunctional forestry. Sustainable forest management means that forests are saved for future generations while current generations can also enjoy their multiple benefits," said Mr. Peter Csoka, Head of Natural Resources Department.