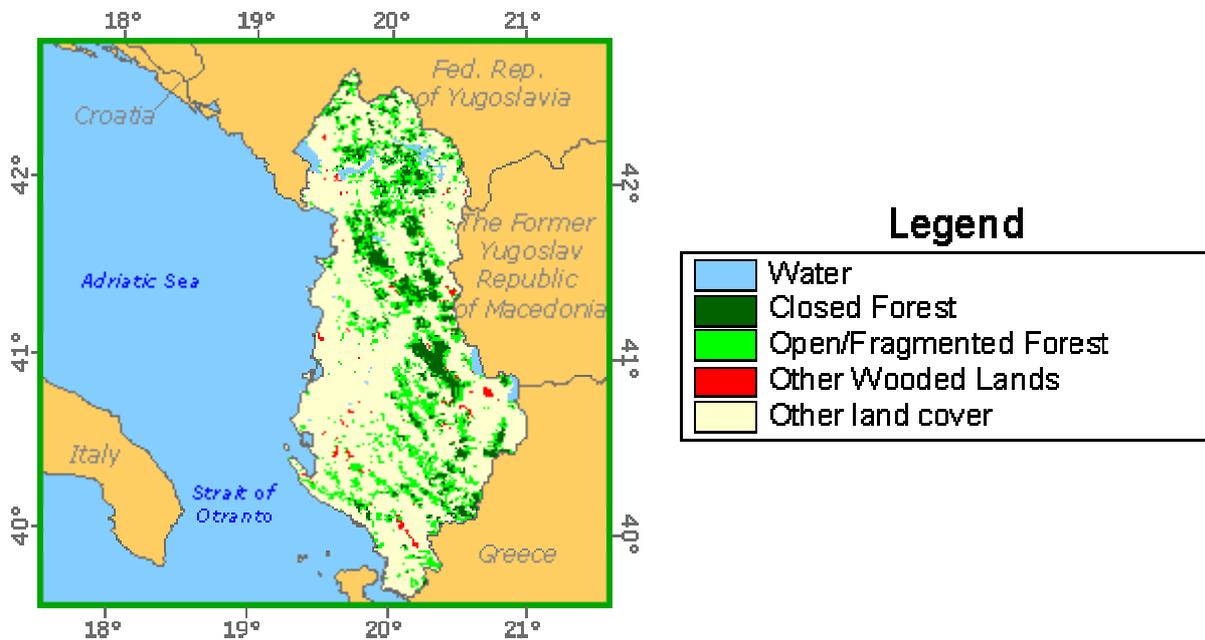


Summary

Resources

Forest covers less than two fifths of the land area of Albania, a small hilly country in southern Europe bordering the Adriatic Sea. Some areas of other wooded land are included with forest, half of which is classified as coppice and coppice with standards, the other half being high forest. Nearly four fifths of the growing stock consists of broadleaved species, predominantly species of deciduous and evergreen oak and of beech. The main coniferous species is Black Pine. Albania is one of the few European countries where there has been a decline in forest area in recent decades, due to clearance for agriculture, overgrazing and cutting for fuelwood. Fellings have exceeded net annual increment, resulting in a decrease in the growing stock; there has also been a decline in its quality as a result of illegal cutting. Most of the forest is available for wood supply; of the rest, the larger part is not available for economic reasons. More than four fifths of the forest is classified as semi-natural, with the remainder divided between forest undisturbed by man and plantations. There are efforts to increase the area of protection forest in order to preserve the rich biodiversity and the landscape. All forest is State owned.



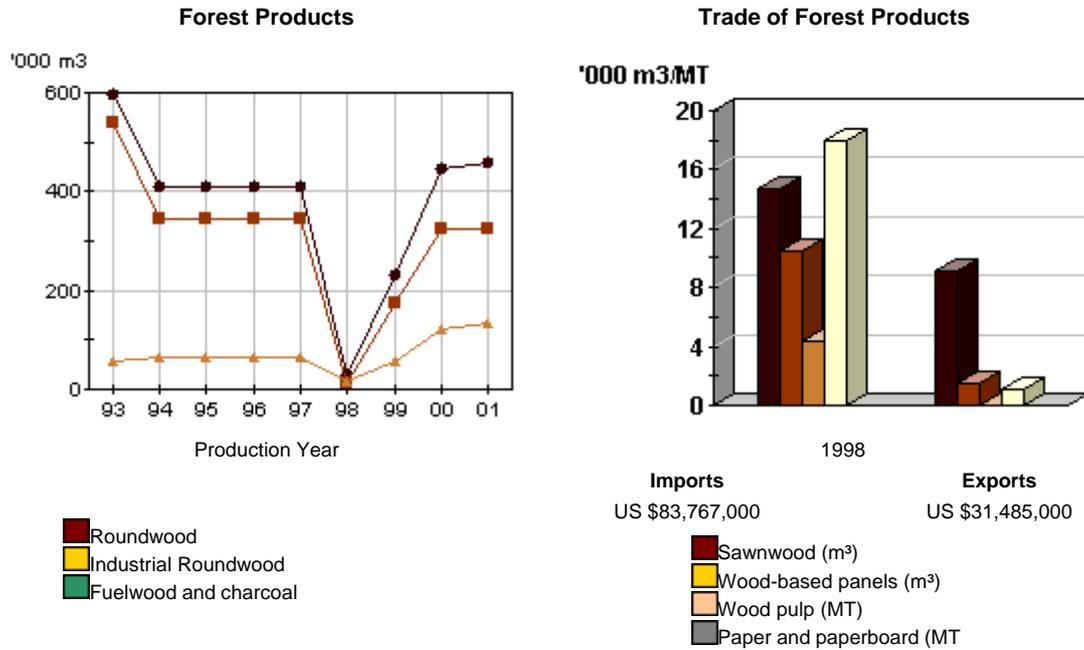
	Land area	Forest Cover 2000	Forest Cover Change 1990-2000		Distribution of land cover/use % (1995)		
	'000 ha	'000 ha	'000 ha/year	%/year	Forest	Other Wooded Land	Other land
Albania	2,740	991	-8	-.75	36.2	.0	62.4
Europe	2,259,906	1,039,250	877	.08	46.0	1.3	52.9
World	13,139,618	3,869,453	-9,319	-.24	29.4	11.2	58.6

Young age class forests occupy twice as much area as other age classes. This is an indication of over-cutting during recent years. The forest area has diminished as a result of deforestation before the 1990s and after that (uncontrolled cutting during the transition period). The country has had afforestation programmes, to plant mainly on difficult terrain, but at present they are reduced due to a reduction of investment in this area. Forest ownership is changing in the direction of state, community and private forests. Protected areas account for more than 100 thousand hectares, and will be increasing due to the hill and mountainous terrain and genetic conservation programme.

Products and trade

Most of the roundwood production in Albania is utilised as fuelwood. The Albanian forest industry is small-scale and based mainly on imported raw materials as growing demand is not met by domestic production.

The share of the non-wood forest products and services is relatively high in Albania: hunting is an important source of income as is willow (*Salix* spp.) wicker (used for furniture and decoration). Other important non-wood forest products include aromatic and medicinal plants, pine tar and touchwood.



Forests and the forestry sector

Resources

Forest covers about 991 000 hectares or 36 percent of the total land area of Albania, of which 45 percent is high forests, 30 percent coppice and 25 percent shrubs. Nearly four fifths of the growing stock consists of broadleaved species, predominantly species of deciduous and evergreen oak and of beech. The main coniferous species is Black Pine.

More than four fifths of the forest is classified as semi-natural, with the remainder divided between natural forest and plantations. Productive forests are 82 percent of the total, the rest being protective ones. Forest plantation resources amount to 102 000 hectares.

Albania is one of the few European countries where there has been a decline in forest area in recent decades, due to clearance for agriculture, overgrazing and cutting for fuelwood, especially before and after the 1990s. Fellings have exceeded net annual increment, resulting in a decrease in the growing stock. Young age class forests occupy twice as much area as other age classes. This is an indication of over-cutting during recent years. There has also been a decline in its quality as a result of illegal cutting. Between 1990 and 2000, a drop of about 80 000 ha of forest cover has been recorded.

The country has had afforestation programmes, to plant mainly on difficult terrain. But at present, a cut in investment in this area has hampered the programmes.

Forest ownership is changing from State to the community and the private sector. Eighty-two percent of forests are state-owned, 17 percent are communal and private forests represent only 1 percent of the total.

Protected areas account for more than 100 000 hectares, and are expected to increase in the hills and mountainous terrains and as a result of genetic conservation programmes.

Products and trade

The contribution of forests and pastures to the country's economy has remained negligible. The sector continues to be oriented toward meeting domestic demand. Economic efficiency criteria are only slowly taking root in forest and pasture management.

Most of the roundwood production in Albania is utilised as fuelwood. The Albanian forest industry is small-scale and based mainly on imported raw materials as growing demand is not met by domestic production. Albania imports more than US\$15 million worth of forest products.

The share of the non-wood forest products and services is relatively high in Albania. Hunting is an important source of income as is willow (*Salix* spp.) wicker, which is used for furniture and decoration. Other important non-wood forest products include aromatic and medicinal plants, pine tar and touchwood.

Forestry policy, institutions and major programmes

Policies

The Government of Albania is committed to the formulation of a sound policy for the development of the forestry sector. Recently, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, with the support of the international community, has taken important steps towards improving the condition of forest resources. The Ministerial Declaration of April 2003 gives the conceptual outline of the key long term goals. The priority objectives for the following 10 years were:

- Halt of commercial logging;
- Continuation of State forest and pasture transfer to local governments;
- Protection and improvement of pastures; and
- Sustainable forest and pasture management.

As Albania transforms its economy, the government authorities are now supporting a much wider understanding and commitment to the importance of a multifunctional management of the forest and pasture sector taking into account the full value of the forest for the society and the high level of linkage with the other sectors of the economy, in order to promote sustainable development for the benefit of the whole nation. The need for a balance between ecological, economic and social aspects of forest development has become a priority for the Albanian government.

Legislation

Another government priority is the harmonization of the legal framework for forestry land use. Changes in the legislative framework aim at an improved contribution of the forest sector to sustainable development, the definition of basic rules for sustainable forest management and the decentralization of the forestry sector. It also aims at raising public awareness and encouraging participatory approaches in the sustainable management of natural resources.

During the ten years earmarked by the ministerial declaration, some regulatory improvements will be progressively introduced as a basis for the preparation of a new law.

Institutions

Changes in the present institutional structure are being introduced. The overall restructuring and decentralization of the forestry sector is based on:

- The organization of a small, effective public agency that will develop forest policies, co-ordinate legal harmonization, monitor compliance with the law and oversee the extension program;
- the creation of an effective agency that will manage and administer forest resources;
- active involvement of local governments in forest and pasture sector development.

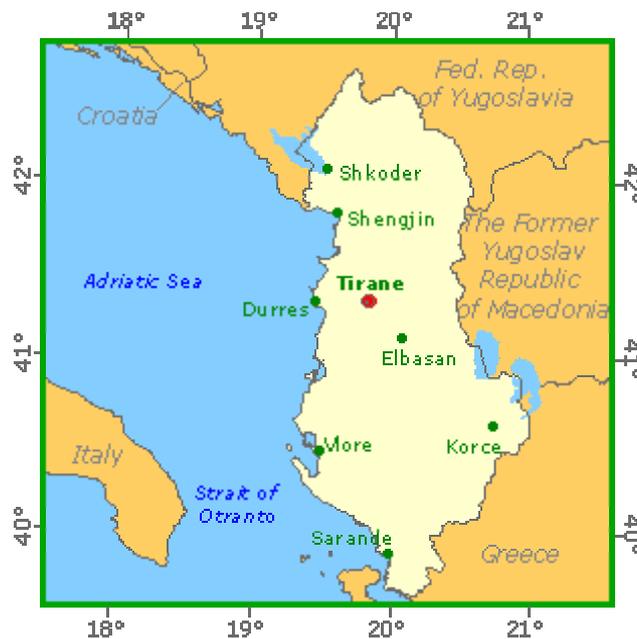
International activities

Albania is committed to implementing the resolutions of the United Nations Forum of Forests (UNFF). Albania is a Party to the Biodiversity Convention, and has taken an active role in the Year of the Mountain 2002. The government of Albania has also signed the Kyoto protocol. Albania is a member of the Joint Programme of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission.

On the other hand, Albania is an active member of the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of the Forest in Europe (MCPFE), and has officially presented in April 2003 in Vienna, Austria, the Ministerial declaration of April 2003 to be translated into action through the National Forests and Pastures Program (NFFP).

Last updated: August 2004

Geographic description



The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The Republic of Albania is bordered by the Adriatic Sea to the west, Greece to the south, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the east, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the north and north east, the Yugoslav republic of Montenegro to the north and the republic of Serbia to the north east. Its land area totals 28 750 km². It is about 350 km north to south and 150 km east to west.

Albania is mountainous, with about 70 percent of the land above 300 m. The land rises steeply from the coastal plain to elevations of more than 2 400 m (2 764 m at the country's highest point, Mount Korab). The most rugged mountains, the Dinaric Alps, are in the north. The mountains become gentler to the south, eventually merging with the Pindus Mountains of northern Greece.

Albania's major rivers, the Bune, Drin, Shkumbin, and Vjose, all empty into the Adriatic Sea. It shares Lake Scutari (also called Lake Shkodra) with Yugoslavia, Lake Ohrid with Macedonia, and Lake Prespa with Macedonia and Greece.

The coastal lowlands have a Mediterranean climate with hot, arid, almost cloudless summers with mild, rainy winters. In the mountains, there is more summer rainfall and higher humidity, especially in the north. Temperatures in the mountains have much larger diurnal variation. The average temperatures in August, the hottest month, range from 17°C to 31°C. January, the coldest month, ranges from 2°C to 12°C. December, the wettest month, has an average rainfall of 211 mm while the driest months, July and August, receive only 32 mm. On the coast, annual rainfall averages 1 200 mm, but it may range up to 4 060 mm in the mountains, often occurring as snow.

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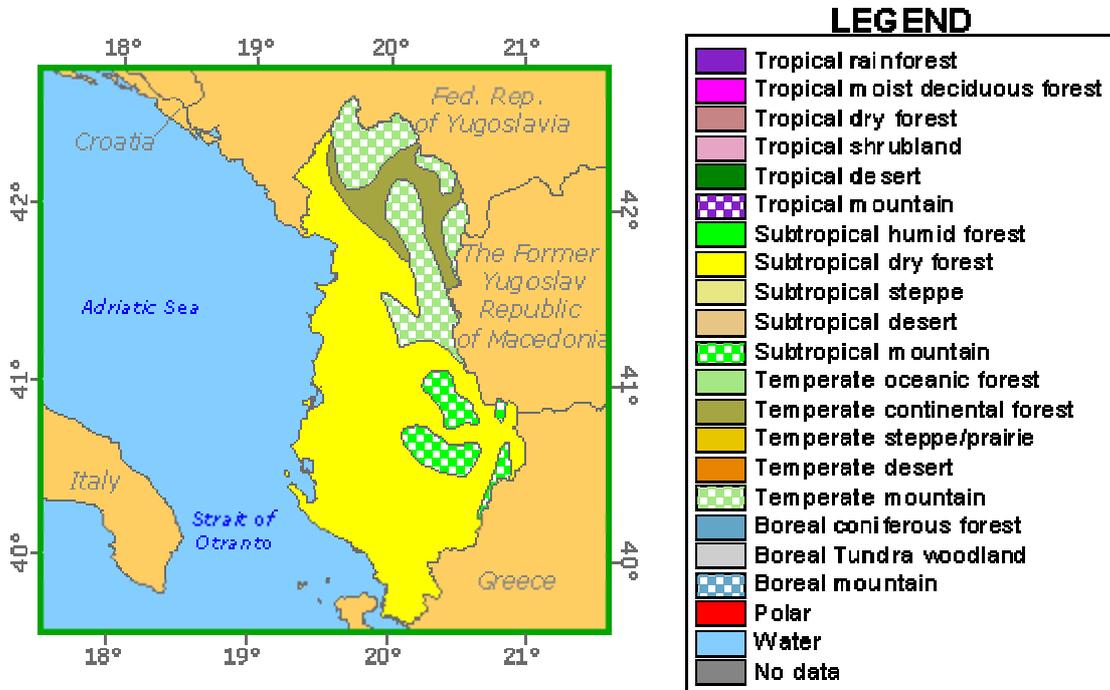
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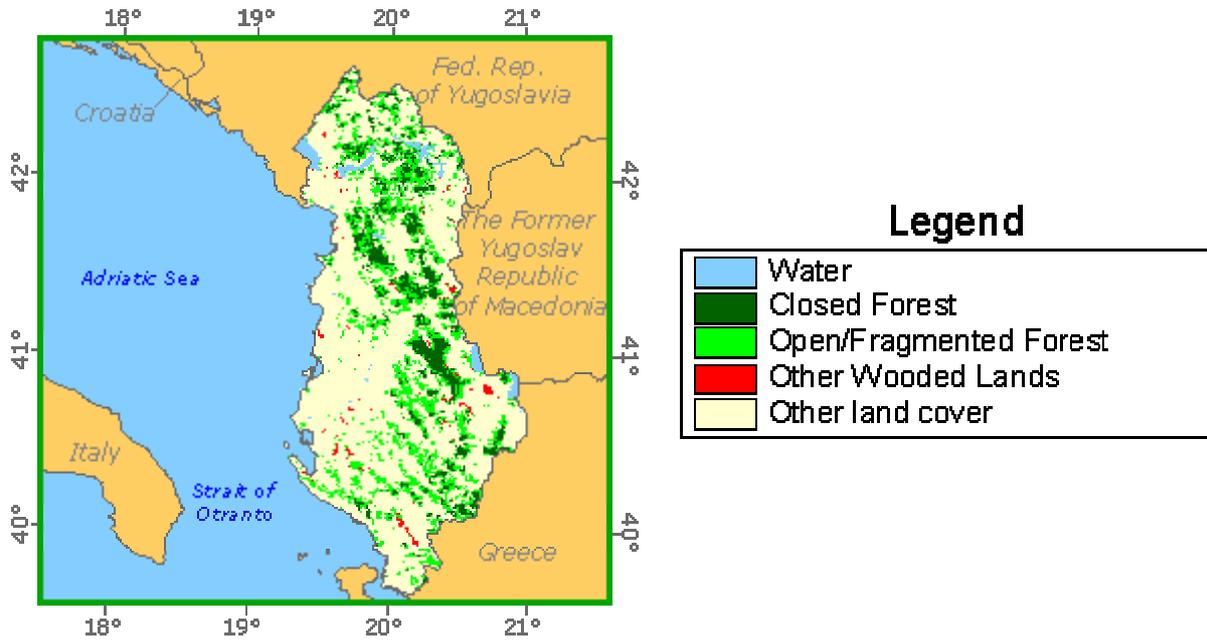
Ecological zones

The map below shows the ecological zones, as shown on the FAO global map of ecological zones produced as part of the [FRA 2000](#). Please refer to [FRA Working Paper 20](#) for further information on the Global Ecological Zone map.



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Introduction



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The above map is an extract from the Global Forest Cover map produced as part of FRA 2000. Please refer to [FRA Working Paper 19](#) for a background to the production of the map.

