

Forestry

Macedonia

1. Forest cover

Forests in the Republic of Macedonia cover 950,594 ha, representing 37% of the total land area. By growth form, high forests constitute less than 30% of the total forest cover, while low forests account for 70%. As a result, only one-third of the forests are considered to be suitable as a source of raw materials for the lumber industry.

2. Forest utilization

Over the course of the last 10 years, the average gross volume of timber harvested has totalled 1,033,000 m³, of which 76% (786,000 m³) originated from State-owned forests and 24% (247,000 m³) from private ones. Statistical data on the timber harvested from private forests are not available. At present, it is not possible to make a satisfactory estimate of the tree harvest, nor is it possible to estimate the level of utilisation of harvesting equipment.

Usage, by category, of timber harvested from State-owned forests has also been economically inefficient for a long period of time. Fuelwood is the predominant use, with a share of more than 75% of the total volume of harvested timber. Wood intended for industrial processing, that is, sawing for lumber, constitutes less than 20%. Inefficient economic utilisation is evidenced by the fact that the highest and best usage of logs, for veneer, either does not occur or exists only in negligible quantities. Construction of forest roads has been increasing, allowing better access to remote areas.

Usage of forests during the period of transition has not experienced any dramatic change, although the manner of management has undergone a transformation (a public company for forestry management was established). Although the name has been changed, the same former enterprises have essentially remained in place, controlling the same forest areas and using the same forestry management planning.

Impacts to biodiversity from forestry activities are primarily manifested within the forest ecosystems themselves. Impacts from forest roads (erosion), over-harvesting (illegal), and ecosystem-wide changes in nutrient cycling resulting from the huge

quantities of biomass (i.e., waste) left behind after harvesting differ in each different forest ecosystem.

Changes occurring within indigenous forest types, which result from the introduction of alien tree species or from modifications to natural vegetation caused by the planting of inappropriate species (e.g., Arizona cypress [*Cupressus* sp.], Black pine and Douglas-fir [*Pseudotsuga menziesii*]) are of particular relevance.

3. Economy

Forestry is a sector that has been neglected for a long period and inadequately treated by the economic policy makers. Such a course is based upon its limited contribution to the GDP. This may be further evidenced by the fact that, in the official statistical methodology, forestry is combined with agriculture, making it impossible to glean explicit information on its sole contribution to the GDP. It is possible, however, to draw certain conclusions regarding the capital expenditures made in this sector over the course of the last several years. An analysis of the magnitude of investments in the forestry sector confirms its low significance. More specifically, in 1997 the modest share forestry received out of the total sum of capital expenditures in the Macedonian economy was only 0.9%. It decreased in subsequent years to 0.4% in 1999 (Source: *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Macedonia* 2001, State Statistical Office, Skopje, p.397).

Foreign trade within the lumber industry has been experiencing an upward trend. This industry has noted a much higher increase in imports relative to exports, which have also increased, but at a much lower rate. The lumber industry share of the GDP of the Republic of Macedonia is very low (0.3%).

Source: Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for the Republic of Macedonia. 2003. Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning. Skopje, November 2003