

SEMINAR ON THE ROLE OF FORESTS AND FORESTRY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT – IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREST POLICY

5 – 7 July 2000, Vienna/Austria



Minutes of the Meeting

The “Seminar on the Role of Forests and Forestry in Rural Development – Implications for Forest Policy” took place in Vienna/Austria on 5–7 July 2000. The seminar was jointly organised by the University for Agricultural Sciences Vienna, Institute of Forest Sector Policy and Economics and by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), Liaison Unit Vienna. It was attended by 69 delegates representing policy makers and scientists in the field of forest policy, forest economics, development economics and planning.

Opening of the meeting

On behalf of Prof. Dr. Leopold März, director of the University of Agricultural Sciences Vienna, Prof. Dr. Peter Glück (Head of the Institute of Forest Sector Policy and Economics) welcomed the participants of the seminar. He briefly highlighted recent and ongoing research on rural development carried out by the University of Agricultural Sciences in co-operation with international partners, and underlined the mutual benefit of the collaborative effort of forest policy and science in convening the seminar.

Dr. Peter Mayer (Liaison Unit Vienna) also welcomed the participants of the seminar and expressed his thanks to the University of Agriculture, Vienna for kindly hosting the meeting. In his opening statement Dr. Mayer recalled that rural development has been a central theme of the Third Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in Lisbon in 1998, as reflected in the General Declaration and Resolution L1 “People, Forests and Forestry – Enhancement of Socio-economic Aspects of Sustainable Forest Management”, and emphasised the significance of the meeting as a contribution to the Work Programme of the MCPFE.

Session I: Rural Development, Forests and Forestry – Concepts and Principles

In her keynote presentation Ms. Birgit H.M. Elands (Forest Policy and Forest Management Group, Wageningen University) informed on current research carried out in the framework of the EU/FAIR funded research programme on ‘Multifunctional forestry as a means to rural development; establishing criteria for region-specific strategies for balancing public demands and forest owners objectives (Multifor.RD)’. Ms. Elands outlined different approaches to definitions of rurality and noted that rural areas may be characterised either by socio-spatial, socio-cultural and locality definitions or through social representations. Based on the

LIAISON UNIT VIENNA

definition of rurality according to social representation, Ms. Elands then briefly presented five ideal-typical discourses on rural development (agri-ruralist, hedonist, utilitarian, community sustainability and nature conservation discourse) and described the perceived role of forestry within each discourse. Two examples of such discourses were given in the presentation.

Prof. Dr. Gerlind Weber (Institute of Regional Planning and Rural Regulation, University for Agricultural Sciences Vienna) addressed “The Future of Rural Areas from a Holistic Viewpoint”. Prof. Weber pointed out that from the view of spatial planning rural areas are seen as a multifunctional spatial type which provides varying services in a regional, but also sub-regional context. Prof. Weber emphasised that spatial planning determines its typology of rural regions apart from a fixation on agrarian issues and presented different types of rural areas. From the viewpoint of spatial planning, current objectives for rural areas would be to diversify the rural economy according to the specific development potentials of the rural areas, to secure basic supply of goods and services, to support a sustainable agriculture while maintaining its functional diversity, to develop economically and environmentally viable forms of tourism and recreation and to enforce inter-municipal co-operation.

In addition to these keynote presentations, the following speakers focused on experiences in forest policy:

- Mr. Alexander Buck (Liaison Unit Vienna) gave a brief overview of forestry aspects in the EU Rural Development Policy. He notably outlined those measures which aim to implement the policy between 2000 and 2006, including support for forestry.
- Dr. Ludek Sisak (Czech University of Agriculture) informed on experiences of Central and Eastern European Countries regarding the relationships between forestry and rural development concepts. Dr. Sisak stated that – in contrary to agriculture – the forestry sector is still developing and a profitable economic activity in Central and Eastern European Countries. Furthermore, forests have a lot of important non-market functions some of which – e.g. recreation function – could partly be transformed into marketed ones. However, Dr. Sisak diagnosed a considerable lack of co-ordination between forestry, agriculture and environment policies which should be enhanced, e.g. by means of national forest programmes. Similarly, financial support for different activities in rural areas should be co-ordinated to a greater extent in order to adequately address socio-economic needs of rural development.
- Dr. Adrian Whiteman (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations) highlighted the experiences of FAO in Developing Countries. Dr. Whiteman emphasised that objectives of rural development in developing countries might differ considerably from those ones in developed countries, as in many cases they would aim to meet more basic needs such as food supply and security or major social and environmental concerns. A strong competition of forestry with agriculture, major institutional weaknesses and poor infrastructure, uncertainty of land ownership and tenure as well as higher risks and time preferences of forestry in relation to agriculture were mentioned by Mr. Whiteman as some important constraints to integrated rural development in developing countries. In general, forestry’s contribution to formal income and employment in developing is small and often localised, whereas non-marketed benefits are significant. Therefore, bottom-up or community led approaches would be best to achieve rural development.

Following the presentations, two working groups discussed the concept of rural development in forest policy regarding its practical application:

- Working group 1 (moderated by Prof. Kazimierz Rykowski, Poland) discussed strengths and weaknesses of the concept of rural development in forest policy in practical application. The participants agreed that concepts and definitions of rural development applied in practice should specifically address the needs of a specific region. A uniform concept or definition would neither be necessary, nor desirable in practical application.

The working group also recognised the multiple stakeholder needs at different levels – ranging from global to local level – which should be addressed by policies identifying and responding to different stakes on different geographical scales. It was noted that forests constitute a significant share of the rural area and provide a multitude of values and benefits which should be evaluated and better communicated to the public. The application of the rural development concept might help to enhance visibility and to achieve a more balanced perception of society of these benefits. The working group also expressed the need for market development and for enhancing marketability of forest goods and services.

Finally, it was noted that, *inter alia*, the consequences of integration of forest and forestry issues into land-use planning and the relationship of rural development to national forest programmes need further consideration. The working group also noted the need for a better knowledge base through research and considered useful to test concepts in practice by establishing model regions for “sustainable regional management”.

- Working group 2 (moderated by Prof. Dr. Peter Glück, Austria) aimed at identifying basic principles and elements of rural development in forest policy for practical application at the pan-European level. Principles were defined qualitative rules and norms which relieve political decisions in issues of the same structure. In an initial “brainstorming” two referential documents, namely “The Cork Declaration” of the European Conference on Rural Development (1996) and the list of principle elements of national forest programmes (NFPs) as identified at the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF-4) were discussed. The working group identified the following basic principles as being most relevant:

- sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of forests
- respect for and implementation of property rights
- consistency with national policies and international commitments, in particular coherence between forest policy and rural development policy
- multifunctional approach
- long-term, iterative process
- participation and partnership
- correspondence between bottom-up and top-down approaches
- facilitation and encouragement of marketing processes of forest goods and services
- beneficiary principle
- development of human resources
- differentiated employment of financial incentives

Session II: Measurement and Enhancement of the Contribution of Forestry to Rural Development – Approaches and Methods

In his keynote presentation Dr. Bill Slee (University of Aberdeen, IUFRO Group 6.11.02) characterised the late 20th century as a time of profound rural restructuring. As part of this restructuring, forestry has been transformed from a relatively narrow production-oriented industry to a provider of multiple functions, some within and some outside the normal operation of markets. The measurement of such contributions of forestry to rural development would thus have to take into account the wide range of interactions between forests and the rural economy, including direct and indirect connections to other sectors. Techniques for assessing the many externalities associated to forestry, the concept of “rural development forestry” and the possible consequences of participatory approaches were mentioned by Dr. Slee as important areas where further work is still needed.

Following the keynote presentation, a series of speakers addressed experiences in measuring and enhancing the contribution of forestry to rural development.

- Mr. Alistair Johnson (UK Forestry Commission) informed on experiences made in the United Kingdom on the contribution of forestry to rural economy, as explored by means of a series of three multiplier studies for England, Scotland and Wales. Mr. Johnson concluded that although multiplier studies are very useful for assisting in making policy decisions, they should not be used alone, but rather along with several sources of advice and information, which can then feed into policy.
- Prof. Dr. Niels Elers Koch (Danish Forest and Landscape Research Institute) outlined structure and performance of the COST E3 Action “Forestry in the Context of Rural Development”. According to Prof. Koch, one of the important findings of the Action was the importance of distinguishing between different types of rural areas with different specific potentials and comparative advantages for the production of goods and services in different regions of Europe. Prof. Koch emphasised the huge need for knowledge about new products and services of the forests and how this knowledge can be anchored in policy and people’s perceptions. Furthermore, Prof. Koch highlighted the potential contribution of forestry research to rural development and recommended to promote a genuine inter-sectoral approach to research in rural development as a supplement to the less integrated approaches.
- Dr. Pentti Hyttinen (European Commission, COST Secretariat) presented results of the FORWARD project which had been carried out at the European Forest Institute from 1995 to 1999 and which studied the conditions for a successful utilisation of existing forest resources in contributing to the employment and income generation in rural areas. The study findings underline that regions and countries are different, and therefore, one has to be very cautious in drawing generally applicable conclusions. This means that the development efforts should be put on the approaches that utilise the local characteristics the best. In order to make these efforts successful cross-sectoral co-operation and entrepreneurial networks – as well as strong individuals – are needed.
- Prof. Dr. Udo Mantau (University of Hamburg) informed on results of the RES project as regards public acceptance and policy recommendations. In his presentation, Mr. Mantau focused on three parts of the RES project, namely (1) the legal framework as a long-term document of public acceptance, (2) evaluation studies of public acceptance studies in the Netherlands and (3) a household survey on public acceptance carried out in Germany. Prof. Mantau concluded that the forestry sector should start to produce and sell products, as this would lead to improvement of these products and to higher acceptance of the public.

Also Session II of the seminar was concluded by the discussions of two working groups:

- Working group 1 (moderated by Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl, Austria) focused on measuring the contribution of forestry to rural development and aimed to elaborate recommendations for European forest policy. It was stated that – in order to reflect changes regarding demands and perceptions of society, but also to create mutual understanding of different groups of society – the scope of measurement should be broadened. All wood and non-wood products and services should be measured in a comprehensive and balanced way, taking into consideration all aspects of sustainable development (social, economic, ecological factors).

Building on participatory mechanisms, the demands of society should be investigated and policy instruments taking into account financial flows and trade-offs in a product mix should be applied. The use of existing instruments, transparency, cost-effectiveness and common rules which take into account local differences - were mentioned as important principles for measurement. It was suggested to check existing sets of indicators regarding their relevance for measuring the contribution of forestry to rural development and to elaborate specific indicators, if needed. A common pan-European frame for measuring was considered useful.

- Working group 2 (moderated by Prof. Dr. Piotr Paschalis, Poland) discussed approaches and measures to enhance the contribution of forestry to the sustainable development of rural areas. The working group identified multifunctional forestry and the promotion of wood as a renewable resource as basis of enhanced contributions of forestry to rural development. Complementarity between forestry and other sectors and a coherent land-use and forest policy were seen as essential prerequisites for rural development. There was also broad consensus that measures have to take into account different scales and levels.

With regard to non-marketable commodities (e.g. recreation) subsidies were regarded as necessary but should be seen and referred to as incentives. However, it was noted that in the long run the mix of forest products and services has to be optimised to sustain the development of forestry in the context of rural development. Long-term investment as well as short-term capital to change directions were regarded necessary to reach the goal.

The working group also underlined the importance of capacity building and education, information and public participation. The demand of information on forests by society and the need for information on societal and economic developments by the forest sector were expressed as very important aspects, which could be addressed by establishing information tools. In this context the necessity to raise public awareness was seen as evident. The dissemination of information through all media including internet should be enforced.

The role of forest policy was seen as to serve the sector and the society and to support product diversification by means of enhancing education, information and adaptation of institutional frameworks. Science could support this process by *inter alia* providing tools for the establishment and marketing of new products (e.g. by means of communication tools), by investigating the scales of investments for new products and by providing solutions to adapt the legal framework to new conditions. International co-operation was seen as necessary in this context.

Plenary Session

In the plenary session the outcomes and findings of each working group were presented for further discussion. In his concluding remarks, Dr. Mayer stated that the conclusions of the seminar constitute an important contribution to the work of the MCPFE with regard to rural development. According to Dr. Mayer it became clear that approaches to rural development – and thus also concepts and definitions - have to take into account the differences and specific potentials of rural areas and that policies have to identify and to respond to different stakes on different scales. However, a coherent approach at the pan-European level, e.g. by formulating principles for rural development in forest policy, could give essential guidance. International co-operation was considered important for rural development and sustainable forest management.

Furthermore, Dr. Mayer concluded that a broadening of the scope of scientific and political action is necessary with regard to goods and services provided by forests and forestry. Such an approach would aim to further evaluate and develop measurement of the full spectrum of forest goods and services and to support and encourage marketing processes. The development of human resources was considered another important aspect in this context. Finally, there was a clear understanding that further research is necessary in order to get a clearer picture of rural development.

Closure of the meeting

On behalf of the MCPFE and the University for Agricultural Sciences Vienna, Dr. Mayer thanked the participants for their active participation and comments made in the discussions, especially expressing his thanks to the keynote speakers and working group moderators. He announced that the proceedings of the seminar will be published by the Liaison Unit Vienna.