Framework conditions related to forest owners

TFD Dialogue on Tools for Small Landowners

by Kit Prins

UNECE/FAO Timber Section
Contents

- ECE/FAO activities
- The objectives of policies
- Forest tenure issues in Europe
- What is the role of the state?
UNECE/FAO Geneva

- An intergovernmental regional organisation promoting sustainable forest management
- Information, analysis, policy forum
- Reaches out to all stakeholders
- Outputs: EFSOS, market discussions, FRA etc.
Private forest ownership enquiry

- First detailed enquiry, in cooperation with CEPF and MCPFE
- 25 usable replies (northwest; central: Nordic/Baltic, Balkan)
- Data on area by ownership, number of owners, size of holdings, age/gender/occupation of owners
- Being finalised, to be issued autumn 2007
Some PFO enquiry results

- 56% private (>75% AT, FR, NO, SI, SE)
- Holding structure stable except CEEC
- 59% of holdings less than 1 ha (4% of area)
- Forest owners:
  - >60
  - Increasingly urban
  - Increasingly not rural
  - Mainly men
- Forest ownership “barely profitable”
- ECE/FAO workshop calls for “empowerment” of forest owners to form clusters
Main policy objectives …
SFM, but not only …

- Rural development
- Biodiversity
- Protection
- Energy
- Climate change
- Tourism
- Trade
The wider context

- Property rights
- Regional autonomy, subsidiarity
- Limits on public budget
- Etc.
Forest sector policy seen from the prime minister’s office (a cynical view)

- How to coordinate complex policies? (Can we get away with gestures?)
- If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it (is the forest sector in Europe « broke »?)
- How many votes in trees?
- In Europe forest tenure policy has not got the highest political priority, so the highest policy level will not spend political capital for it.
Forest tenure issues in Europe

- Small size of holdings => cost, lack of critical mass, expertise
- Absentee owners (urban) => little interest or knowledge of forestry
- Irresponsibility of some new owners
- Owners’ priorities (e.g. hunting, recreation) do not necessarily coincide with the public priorities
- No income from non-wood goods & services
- Willing to accept cooperatives?
- Do official incentives promote public interest objectives?
Externalities

- Unclear allocation of costs and benefits
- Many existing support systems insufficiently clear on public good, excessive emphasis on traditional forestry objectives (wood): vulnerable to criticism
- “forest management plans”
  - Often compulsory
  - Not really suited to conditions of ownership
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Typology of forest owners

- Entrepreneurs (profit maximisation)
- Forest as a hobby
- Rural subsistence
- Store of wealth
- Abandon
- Etc.
Roles of government

- Legal and institutional framework: stability, clarity, equity
- Funds: for « public goods » only? (in a context of shrinking public budgets)
- Example: management of state/communal forests
- « Convening » e.g. for nfps,
- Information: relevant, objective, transparent
- Advice e.g. on management plans
Thank you!

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