



Forestry

Overview

There have been no significant changes in the forestry sector related to policy changes and the EU accession process since the previous report.

The FLEGT Regulation²⁹¹, governing the import of timber products into the European Union, and the EUTR Regulation²⁹², governing the trade in timber and timber products, are two key elements of the EU *acquis* regarding forestry. Although the preparation of the Law on Trade in Timber and Timber Products has been announced, there were no activities concerning the adoption of new strategic or legislative documents for the purpose of transposing EU legislation in 2019 due to the need to address previously identified deficiencies in the implementation of the FLEGT and EUTR Regulations.

The forestry sector still does not have an umbrella strategic document. The Strategy of Forestry Development of the Republic of Serbia formally expired with the entry into force of the Law on the Planning System of the Republic of Serbia.²⁹³ No official information is available about the development of the Forestry Development Programme, stipulated by the Law on Forests.²⁹⁴ The results of the GEF project *Contribution of Sustainable Forest Management to a Low Emission and Resilient Development* are expected to significantly contribute to the development of the Forestry Development Programme, as well as other planned international projects.

The basic challenges facing forestry in Serbia remain the same as in the previous period. Although the state of forests is generally assessed as satisfactory, there are issues that must be addressed, such as the high number of coppiced

291 Council Regulation (EC), No 2173/2005 of 20th December 2005 on the establishment of a FLEGT licensing scheme for imports of timber into the European Community.

292 Regulation (EU), No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20th October 2010 laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market

293 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 30/2018.

294 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 30/2010 93/2012, 89/2015, 95/2018 – other law.

stands (57%), the proliferation of illegal logging, the lack of data on forests in private ownership and poor control of their use.

The decision-making and planning processes in forestry are still closed and mostly limited to the institutions and organizations in the forestry sector. The participation of other sectors and the broader public is very limited.

It is clear that topics related to climate change mitigation and adaptation have recently become relevant in the forestry sector. Several larger projects addressing these topics are currently being implemented, but changes to the legislative and strategic framework are not yet visible.

Strategic and legislative framework

No new legislation in the field of forestry that is relevant to the EU accession process was adopted in 2019.

The Forest Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management has prepared an IPA twinning project aimed at supporting the development of the Law on Trade in Timber and the Forestry Development Programme. The aim of the announced Law on Trade in Timber is to address the already identified deficiencies in the implementation of the FLEGT and EUTR Regulations.

The implementation of regulations

The Forest Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management is in charge of forestry policy implementation in Serbia. All publicly owned forests are managed by public companies (PE Srbijašume, PE Vojvodinašume and the public enterprises managing national parks). State owned forests account for about 43% of the forests in Serbia, with the remaining forests owned privately.²⁹⁵ State owned forests contain about 48% of the total wood volume in Serbia, with privately owned forests containing the remaining 52%. This indicates that privately owned forests are in a somewhat less favourable condition. Additionally, the annual volume increment in state owned forests is estimated at 4.4 m³/ha, compared to 3.6 m³/ha in privately owned forests.

High natural forests account for only 29% of the total forested area in Serbia, and about two-thirds of state-owned forests.²⁹⁶

According to Forest Directorate data, about 51% of annual growth is cut in state owned forests in Serbia. Available data about private forests varies drastically; it is estimated that around 90% of annual growth in privately owned forests is cut every year. Based on this data, and other qualitative assessments, the management and use of forests in Serbia is assessed by competent institutions as inadequate. The potential contribution of the forestry sector to the economy, society and environmental protection is far greater than currently realized. In recent years, the Forest Directorate has tightened control of planning and the implementation of annual forest management plans, which, according to

295 Available at: <http://upravazasume.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/1.-S.Stamatovic-Koncept-unapredjenja.pdf>

296 Available at: <https://upravazasume.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Godisnji-sastanak.pdf>

the Directorate's data, has resulted in an increase in the volume of wood being cut annually.

The lack of appropriate planning and control of the use of privately owned forests remains a significant issue in Serbian forestry. Data about privately owned forests, which is necessary for appropriate forest management, is either of poor quality or unavailable. One way in which control over use of privately owned forests is being strengthened is through the creation of associations of private forest owners and the professional of provisional forestry training to association members. However, this process is developing very slowly and the number of forestry associations remains low. One of the greatest challenges in private forest management is the lack of consolidation, private forests tend to be small, covering scattered areas, and with out-of-date and/or unresolved ownership details. According to the Law on Forests, Forest Management Programmes can be developed for forests owned by several owners. Three such programmes for municipalities in Vojvodina were published at the beginning of 2020.²⁹⁷ The implementation and/or control of the implementation of these plans continue to represent a challenge, as each programme usually covers numerous forest owners.

The Chamber of Forestry Engineers of the Republic of Serbia started operating at the end of 2018.²⁹⁸ In accordance with the Law on Forests, this Chamber issues work licenses to forestry engineers.

The quality of control over forest use has improved in recent years. The trend of increasing numbers of checks continued in 2019. According to Forest Directorate data²⁹⁹, the forestry inspection performed 5,020 checks in the territory of Serbia in 2019, 33% more than planned. The number of checks performed in 2019 was slightly higher than in 2018 (4,970). The amount of seized wood in 2019 was 9,327 m³, a slight decrease compared to 2018, when 10,392 m³ of wood was seized. Revenue generated from felled timber fees in 2019 remained similar to the previous two years, about RSD 454 million (compared

297 <https://upravazasume.gov.rs/sumarstvo/obavestjenja/>

298 <https://sumarskakomora.rs/>

299 Available at: https://upravazasume.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Zvijezdan-Go%C4%8D-decembar-2019_.pptx

to about RSD 470 million in 2018). 31 people currently work on tasks related to inspection at the Forest Directorate.

Illegal logging remains a significant issue, primarily in privately owned forests. However, activities that are not in line with forestry legislation also occur in state owned forests run by public enterprises. An illustration of this is the situation in the "Fruška Gora" National Park, where the Let's Defend the Forests of Fruška Gora civic initiative has highlighted numerous irregularities and filed six justified complaints to the competent inspection in 2019.³⁰⁰ No recent data or assessments of the amount of illegally felled timber are available. Based on the amount of wood seized by inspection checks (9,327 m³), the amount of illegally felled timber can be expected to be many times higher.

The implementation of the GEF project *Contribution of Sustainable Forest Management to Low-Emission and Resilient Development*³⁰¹ continued during the reporting period. The project includes the development of the second National Forest Inventory and the methodology for the collection of information about biodiversity, the development of an IT system for forestry, legislation promotion, and training for staff in the forestry sector, etc. The results of this project will provide significant information and contribute to drafting the Forestry Development Programme.

The drafting of an Interim National Standard for the certification of forests in Serbia began in 2018. Activities continued in 2019, but no official information about when the standard will be adopted and published is available.

Harmonization and cooperation between the forestry sector and nature protection sector is still not satisfactory. Given the complexity of the EU Habitats Directive and Birds Directive (forming the Natura 2000 Ecological Network) and their impact on forestry, structured cooperation by competent institutions, as well as the broader expert community, must be developed.

300 <https://fruskac.net/rs/novosti/inspekcijske-prijave-za-secu-i-smene-u-jpnp-fruska-gora>

301 Project info available at: <https://www.thegef.org/project/contribution-sustainable-forest-management-low-emission-and-resilient-development>

Financing

In 2019, about RSD 750 million³⁰² was allocated to the Budgetary Forest Fund – the same amount as in previous years.

In 2019, 95% of the planned budget was spent, compared to 87% in 2018.

Most of the funds were again allocated to the construction and reconstruction of forest roads, about RSD 450 million. About RSD 80 million was allocated to afforestation in 2019, which is about 40% less than in 2018.

³⁰² Regulation on establishing the annual programme for the use of Budgetary Forest Fund resources of the Republic of Serbia in 2019. "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 13/19.

Recommendations



Strategic and legislative framework

- 1.** Develop the national strategic document (development program) for forestry in order to provide a long-term vision for the development of this area in Serbia, with precise sources of funding and an implementation schedule. This document must take into account relevant EU Regulations in this area (the EU Forestry Strategy and Green Paper on Forest Protection).
- 2.** Develop an institutional and legislative framework with clearly defined competencies for the implementation of the EUTR and FLEGT Regulations.



The implementation of regulations

- 3.** Strengthen the capacities of competent institutions regarding the implementation of EU legislation and international treaties related to nature protection (Birds Directive and Habitats Directive, CITES Conventions, etc.).
- 4.** Strengthen the capacities of competent forestry institutions integrate/implement EU climate change and energy policies in the forestry sector.
- 5.** Enable public participation in the development of key documents governing the use of forests (including forest management plans).
- 6.** Value and promote other ecosystem services provided by forests, aside from wood, and use these ecosystem services in forest management planning.

7. Improve the quality of information available about privately owned forests and intensify the control of their use.
8. Improve cooperation with other sectors (nature protection, energy, climate change, and water management) for the purpose of integrated management of forest ecosystems.



Financing

9. Direct a greater proportion of the funds of the Budgetary Forest Fund towards financing the protection and improvement of forest ecosystems providing services of general interest.



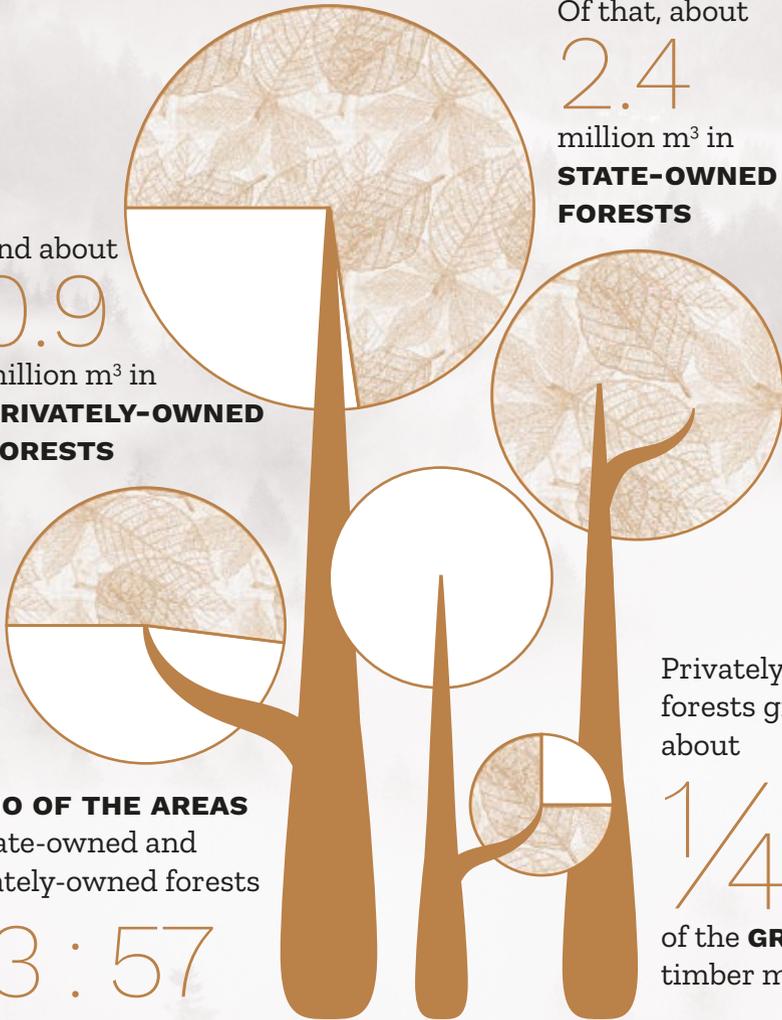
FORESTRY

3.3 million m³ of
timber is cut in Serbia
EVERY YEAR

3,300,000

Of that, about
2.4
million m³ in
**STATE-OWNED
FORESTS**

and about
0.9
million m³ in
**PRIVATELY-OWNED
FORESTS**



RATIO OF THE AREAS
of state-owned and
privately-owned forests

43 : 57

Privately-owned
forests give only
about

1/4

of the **GROSS**
timber mass

* source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

