

Visit to Private Forest owners in

Bor and Majdanpek region, East Serbia, 04-06. VII. 2013

In the framework of SIDA NAPFO 2013 annual plan a Study visit to East Serbia (Bor and Majdanpek municipalities) was organized by CNVP Macedonia with assistance of Foragrobio CC - Serbia as local consultant. In March 2013 a preparatory meeting was conducted to Serbia where among CNVP Macedonia and Foragrobio CC was agreed for the objectives and programme of the Study visit. Team of CNVP advisors together with representatives of National Association of Private Forest Owners in Macedonia - NAPFO (President and Technical secretary) made a visit to Private forest owners organizations from the Bor region.

The visit was prepared with purpose of sharing experiences for private forest management in Macedonia and Serbia and establishing an initial contact between official representatives of NAPFO and representatives of local associations of PFO in Serbia.

Visit was organized in few villages in regions of Bor and Majdanpek municipalities. In municipality of Majdanpek, in village of Blizna we have met with the President of Local association of PFO "Majdanpek", and few other members. Private forests in Majdanpek area are represented with around 60% of all forests. First properties of forests took part in 1830's when Turkish Empire started to leave that area. PFO from Majdanpek is young organization established in 2012. The purpose of establishment was mainly for the needs of the local private forest owners to organize better in utilization of wood biomass. As newly established organization they already joined as partners in a project for establishment of Biomass trade center. They also emphasized the role of the association in future awareness raising among PFO's in that region and the role that association should undertake in organization and development of market for wood and wood products.



meeting in Blizna



meeting in Podgorac

In municipality of Bor, meeting was organized with representatives and members from PFO's from villages of Podgorac and Zlot. Podgorac is a village with 2.500 inhabitants and 600 households. Association in Podgorac has around 50 members with 700 ha of forests in their possession, so they represent 25% of whole private forest in the village. Around 40 % of forests in village area are in private ownership. Members of the organization stated that forests are with the same importance as other farming activities. This organization was established in 2006 as a respond to the government subsidies allocated for private forest owners organizations working in forestry. Subsidies were allocated for construction of forest roads. Organizations from Podgorac and Zlot were successful in implementation of these projects and more than 10 km of forest roads were built in the area of these two villages. The government subsidies were 10.000 euro/km. Many local construction companies were included in implementation of these projects.

Representatives of the local associations from the region emphasized the unfavorable position of PFO regarding management of their forests. They emphasized the position of Public Enterprise "Srbija Shume" as monopoly organization which is controlling management of their forests, by giving or not permits to cut and implementing rules and regulations that pose restrictions on private forest management. Main complaints were on the forestry staff allocated to support private forest management as not sufficient.



Private forest owners in this region are also engaged in production of charcoal. There are lots of locally constructed stoves for production of charcoal. They are mainly using wood which is not suitable and is not satisfying requirements on the market. But there are also situations when they use also quality logs or fire wood for production of charcoal. This is due to unfavorable prices on the market of firewood or logs in certain period of a year.

The price of produced charcoal is 0,25 euro/kg, and it is sold mainly to bigger retailers which are placing charcoal on the markets in bigger cities or even exporting it abroad.

On these meetings also historical context of development of Private forestry in Serbia was discussed. From the discussion made we understand that first Cadastre measurements were conducted in period of 1920-30. In the period of Yugoslavia the nationalization process in this region was not very intensive, so as a consequence of this much of the forests remained in private ownership, which resulted with better care and awareness about the forests in this region. But situation after the crash of Yugoslavia didn't change too much in favor of securing the rights of property and management of private forests.

Still restrictions by the State and P.E. "Srbija Šume" are posed on private forest owners, disabling them to utilize their forests by their own needs.

Denationalization/restitution of private land and forests started from 2012 and estimation is that around 100.000 ha of forests will be restituted in this process. At the moment the restitution is still ongoing and procedures for application and submission of all necessary documents are in place.

The Denationalization of church property on other hand started earlier in 2008. Till today church has restituted around 40.000 ha forest and at the moment is one of the biggest private forest owners in Serbia.

At Serbia in this moment there is no functional National Association of Private Forest Owners. There are local organizations that are functional and acting on their own interest and needs. There was a short period of time when National Association of Private Forest Owners in Serbia was active. It was established in 2009 through FAO project. National Association was abolished in 2011 due to unfavorable changes in law on NGO's, where all national NGO's were obliged to re-register. It was a costly procedure that association could not afford. No support from external projects or donors were found in that moment and the only feasible solution was to abolish the national association, while local associations of private forest owners continued to exist, but with limited activities.

In whole Serbia from 2006 to 2009 22 local associations of PFO were registered. From 2010 onwards some of them are canceled due to changes in law for Organizations. Most of PFO organizations have join mainly for the purpose of FAO project in that time and also because there were government subsidies for construction of roads in private forests.

Management of private forests today in Serbia is mainly under jurisdiction of P.E. "Srbija Šume" as explained above. Private forest management is controlled, but not very strictly due to not very clear regulations and their implementation in the practice. Harvesting of wood and utilization of private forests is mainly done through direct contact and agreement with local forest engineers. Forest planning process was not finished for private forests. Control in management of private forests is sometimes missing due to lack of forest inspectors in the field and due to missing regulations in the law that will sanction illegal logging and logging from private forests without proper documentation.

From the discussions done on this visit conclusion is that economical aspect of private forest management is motive for cooperation and integration in to associations of private forest owners in Serbia. Restrictions in management and legislative framework are not so strict to inhibit private forest management on a large scale. There is one aspect that proper attention is not paid. It is a process of negotiation that Serbia is starting with EU soon and the overall development of Rural Development policy. Not having organized private forest owners will not result in supportive RD policy towards private forestry.