



Confédération Européenne des Propriétaires Forestiers
Confederation of European Forest Owners
Zentralverband der Europäischen Waldbesitzer

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INFORMAL WORKSHOP ON POPLAR, 30th November 2010 **European Forestry House, Brussels**

Summary of the workshop

Welcoming words

Fernando Molina, Vice president of the CEPF

Mr. Molina expressed the urgent need for action to promote and enhance the poplar production in the EU. The need to compile information about poplar growing regarding social, environmental and economic aspects was highlighted.

Poplar production and market situation in European Union

Arvydas Lebedys, Forestry Officer, Global Forest Assessment and Reporting Team, FAO, Rome

Mr. Arvydas Lebedys presented the current poplar production and market situation in European Union and globally. Poplar forests in Europe can be divided into two categories: natural forests and planted poplar forests, which are mostly plantations or part of agro forestry systems. On a global level more than 80 % of all planted poplar forests and about 90 % of all poplar agro forestry systems are located in China. The area of productive poplar plantations in EU-27 is about 700 000 hectares. In EU the biggest area (about 90%) of poplar plantations are in France, Hungary, Germany, Spain and Italy. Poplar logs trade volume has halved over the last 10 years in the EU.

The average price for poplar logs has fallen by 20% in real terms since the 1980s and there seems no prospect for real price increase in long term perspective.

FAO hosts homepage with information on poplar: www.fao.org/forestry/ipc/en/

Poplar production in sensitive ecosystems and the Green Paper on Forest Protection

Joost van de Velde, DG Environment, Unit B.1 Agriculture, Forests and Soil

Mr. van de Velde from DG Environment highlighted the difficulties related to poplar production from an ecological point of view. Also the ongoing proceedings on the Green Paper on forest protection and its possible implications on poplar growing were discussed. It was clearly emphasized that there is no special poplar policies on EU level, as there is none for other tree species. The EU has very limited influence on forestry practises on member state level. However from an environmental side the EU directives are binding and must be implemented as such on member state level.

Difficult points on poplar growing in sensitive ecosystems:

- Sites suitable for poplar growing are often also at high nature value (river benches, wetlands, open meadows) that could be saved for nature conservation or landscape purposes



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- Poplar management causes changes in soil profile and plant composition in understory of stands as well as in water balance in soil and landscape.
- Sites suitable for poplar are also the ones needed for watershed management (open areas for controlled flooding etc.)
- Outside of Natura 2000 the decisions on land use for poplar growing have to be done on member state or local level, there are no instructions from EU.
- The increase of the pH-value was seen as a positive aspect of poplar growing poplar

The conclusions drawn from the public consultation of Green paper on Forest protection and information were that:

- There is a clear need for better forest information in EU
- More research is needed to manage the forest in a way they can best adapt to changing climatic conditions (water stress, new pests and diseases etc.)
- The need to update sustainable forest management schemes to adapt to and mitigate climate change must be considered
- Different forest functions must be balanced better in future

Poplar in the Common Agriculture Policy

Roland Beck, DG Agriculture, Unit H.4 Bioenergy, biomass, forestry and climate change

Mr. Roland Beck presented the different funding possibilities in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for poplar growing. In general forest related measures are in the second pillar of the CAP, in rural development programmes. Since the definition of the poplar production varies between the EU member states, being considered in some countries as agriculture and in others as forestry, the measures for funding vary too.

The measures can be divided in three categories: forestry measures, agro-forestry measures and bioenergy production measures.

- Forest measures:
 - Improving of economical value
 - First afforestation – investment and premiums paid for income losses
- Agro-forestry measures
 - Have not been taken up intensively by member states
 - Agriculture and tree management meantime
- Short rotation coppice forests for energy purposes
 - Investment in bioenergy facilities such harvesting technologies, but only for farmers or other micro-entrepreneurs
 - Plantation defined as energy crop
 - Nurseries (for “own use”)

The debate about the CAP after 2013 is not closed yet. Since all measures in the rural development programs are co-financed, the member states decide which measures are implemented. There is still time for input to the discussions on various levels. Member states have to clearly define the legal status of poplar plantations to make clear which measures can be applied for poplar growing.



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Tendencies for the future agriculture policy:

- Forestry measures will very likely further be included in the rural development pillar of the CAP, however, there is no guarantee for a dedicated budget, which also depends on Member States due to co-financing.
- The further "greening" of the CAP including rural development is under discussion: This may imply
 - Maintaining or increasing measures dealing with sustainability and environmental aspects
 - Payments for environmental services are one of the crucial questions for forestry and forest owners

Final Discussion and Conclusions of the Workshop

There are contradicting policy measures in different programmes. Agricultural/forest and environmental policies can be conflicting; there is a clear need for better balancing and coordination of EU policies.

- From one side the production of poplar may be supported via afforestation or bio-energy support and from other side there are restrictions for land use that prohibit the poplar production (nature conservation sites)
- E.g. Life –programme may support restoring certain habitat for nature conservation when rural development programmes support the use of land e.g. through afforestation funding

The definition of poplar plantations is varying in the member states

- In some countries poplar plantations are defined as forests, in others as agricultural land. The short-rotation plantations for energy purposes are the third class.
- Environmental effects of poplar growing must be compared with the same production category: as agricultural crop or as timber product (effects on biodiversity, carbon neutrality)
- Short rotation plantations often considered as agriculture (effect on CAP funding)

Fast growing poplar from intensively managed plantations was seen to be a solution for the increasing demand for wood. An increasing production of poplar could ease the pressure (increasing demand) on primary and semi-natural forests.

Outcome of the meeting:

- There is NO general policy against but also not particular policy for poplar growing from the European Union.
- Poplar grower should search the dialog with environmentalist – not “defend themselves against ENGOS”
- CAP including rural development sets a EU wide funding framework
- Better balancing and coordination of EU policies desirable
- No common EU forest policy, hence specific poplar EU policy is not seen to be feasible



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- Members states have to set framework within the CAP to make funding available, lobbying on the national level crucial
- Legal definition of poplar plantations in the Member states seen as a problem
- The ecological aspects of poplar growing are not very well recorded or compiled in any data-bases. There was seen a need for action also from the FAO side. Also the general lack of reliable data on poplar production and markets worldwide was discussed after the presentation

Possible actions for CEPF to contribute

- Securing appropriate funding for afforestation in the CAP post 2013
- Working for better data collection in relation to poplar production
- Working for harmonised definition of poplar production within EU