



## **Policy brief on problems and urgent solutions in the forest management sector in Ukraine**

Absence of effective management system, transparency in forest management, and qualitative legal system is one of the main reasons for corruption in forest industry and social dissatisfaction with the actions of forest officers.

At the same time, wood is a renewable natural resource, and EU and North American experience indicates that it is possible to combine both economic and environmental functions of forest. That is why we suggest a series of urgent steps, which can correct the situation in the forest industry of Ukraine.

### Problems:

- 1. Aggregation of economic and supervisory functions in the system of State Agency of Forest Resources of Ukraine (SAFRU).** Authorities that prescribe logging and supervise its accuracy (the Production Association “Ukrderzhlisproekt” and state specialized forest protection enterprises) are under management of SAFRU and financially depend on forest enterprises. For this reason, they can prescribe unnecessary sanitary and forest regeneration cutting because it is the financial interest of SAFRU. Such biased actions are signs of corruption and sources of indignation in the society.
- 2. Contradictory legal documents that regulate logging.** Absence of a single document that standardizes performance of all types of forest cutting in Ukraine (currently we have four such documents) leads to misapplications and manipulations with the prescriptions of logging. For example, in the Carpathian Mountains approximately 10 % of wood is provided by forest regeneration cutting, which are prescribed applying a nontransparent procedure.
- 3. Absence of supervising in environmental and law enforcement authorities.** The State Environmental Inspectorate cannot perform unplanned inspections of forest enterprises, and this is used by forest officers to “cover up” illegal cutting. The Police and Prosecution Service do not have subdivisions that are specialized in environmental delinquency. For this reason, there are no effective crime investigations on forest officers who violate the law.
- 4. Absence of transparency and publicity in SAFRU work.** Only due to the public pressure during the last years, did SAFRU start to share online maps of forest enterprises and the register of performed logging. Unfortunately, this is not enough. There are maps of all forest enterprises in Ukraine in vector format, but there is no access to them even for law enforcement authorities. Without these materials it is usually impossible to establish any violation.
- 5. Neglect for the environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedure by forest enterprises.** In December 2017, the procedure of EIA came in force in Ukraine. Nevertheless, the majority of forest enterprises ignore the requirements of the law and do not apply EIA for their logging plans.
- 6. Logging in valuable for conservation forests and refuse of forest officers to establish new or enlarge existing national parks.** During the last years, forest officers almost always refuse to approve the establishment of new protected areas, intentionally sabotaging the process. Both State Strategy of Regional Development and EU-Ukraine Association Agreement

require the enlargement of protected areas. The total percentage of protected land in Ukraine is 6-7 %, while in the EU countries it reaches 15-20 %.

#### Solutions:

1. By Ordinance of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine to transfer the Production Association “Ukrderzhlisproekt” and state specialized forest protection enterprises under the authority of the Ministry of Environment of Ukraine and to envisage their budgetary funding. This will provide independence of their actions from SAFRU interests.
2. To freeze forest regeneration cutting by Ordinance of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and to oblige SAFRU and the Ministry of Environment within three months to develop the single document regulating all types of forest cutting in Ukraine and ensure proper public participation in this process. Later this document needs to be adopted by Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.
3. To allow the State Environmental Inspectorate to perform unplanned inspections of forest enterprises of all forms of ownership. To hold a series of trainings on violations in the forest industry for police officers and prosecution officers. To make investigations of environmental crime one of the priorities in work of these two authorities.
4. To oblige the Production Association “Ukrderzhlisproekt” to share online the vector maps and logging plans of all forest enterprises in Ukraine. This will raise the effectiveness of both state and public control in the forest industry.
5. To oblige all forest enterprises to pass EIA procedure according to the authorization of the Cabinet of Ministers to SAFRU that is to be adopted in future.
6. To instruct SAFRU to approve the establishment of new national parks – Kholodny Yar (Cherkasy oblast), Chorny lis (Kirovohrad oblast), Dniprovsko-Teterivsky (Kyiv oblast), Velyky Bir (Sumy oblast) and to approve the enlargement of existing national parks – Verkhovynsky (Ivano-Frankivsk oblast), Cheremosky and Vyzhnytsky (Chernivtsi oblast).

These steps will bring results in the shortest period provided that appropriate decisions on the level of ministries and the Cabinet of Ministers are adopted. Firstly, this will stabilize the situation in the forest industry, reduce illegal forest cutting, and preserve valuable forests that will significantly decrease the degree of social indignation. Secondly, in contrast to ill-considered populist prohibitions, this will not lead to pause of the legal logging, which plays a significant role in the Ukrainian economy.

In the future, through the development and adoption of legal changes it is possible to solve a series of other problems in the forest industry and to put it on the civilized european track of development. More details can be found in our green and white papers “Forests are for Wild Nature: New Policy of the Forest Management”.

Green paper <http://epl.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Zelena-knyga.pdf>

White paper <http://epl.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Bila-knyga.pdf>