

## **Research about the Role of Owners Associations in the Sustainable Development of Forests in the North West Region of Romania**

**Marioara ILEA<sup>1)</sup>, Diana DUMITRAȘ<sup>1)</sup>, Roxana PĂTĂRLĂGEANU<sup>2)</sup>, Iulia MUREȘAN<sup>1)</sup>**

<sup>1)</sup> University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Horticulture, Manastur Street, no 3-5, 400372, Cluj-Napoca, Romania; milea@usamvcluj.ro.

<sup>2)</sup> The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Faculty of Agrifood and Environment Economics, 6, Romana Square, district 1, Bucharest, Romania.

**Abstract.** Sustainable management of forest ecosystems should ensure the synergy of the economic, environmental and social functions. The research is designed as an explorative study using the documentation technique by collecting bibliographic information in order to achieve a synthesis of the social, economic and technical studies available until now, to emphasize the role of owners associations in the sustainable development of forests in Romania. The area of research was represented by the North West Development Region of Romania.

**Keywords:** owners associations, forests, North West Region of Romania

### **INTRODUCTION**

Forest owner associations will play a decisive role in connecting, organizing, extending and representing owners' interests. Professional instructions of field foresters will greatly influence the future development of associating process. (Medved *et al.* 2010)

Serbruyns *et al.* (2006), Bouriaud (2005) consider that the research about the role of owners associations has been designed as to meet exploratory scientific objectives and to offer a broad overview of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors most likely to influence owners' attitudes in respect to multi-purpose forest management.

Nechiforel (2010) concludes that, an assessment of the identified patterns at a larger scale are needed as to adapt the financial, regulatory and informational instruments to the diversity of attitudes in respect to multi-functional forest management in small scale forestry.

In the last decades, researchers from Romania and also worldwide towards studies have expressed an increased interest about sustainable forest management given that the forest is a resource of global strategy, regenerating, limited and dependent of the human activity. (Poschen, 2000; Warner, 2000; Pretzsch H. *et al.*, 2006).

Therefore, understanding the complex relationships, on a local scale, between environmental, economic and social, is important. (Wang and Maclarenb, 2012)

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research has been carried out an explorative study using the documentation technique by collecting bibliographic information in order to achieve a synthesis of the social, economic and technical studies available until now, watching that they have credibility as possible by forest owners from the NW region towards the implementation of forest management principles. Research methods used in the study are structured accordingly to the specificity of every step. The study is based on a literature review and sources consulted

included background documents on organization and organizational principles, proceedings and reports of relevant international meetings and symposia, study tour reports, print and web based material on forestland owner organizations, research results and reviews by selected resource people.

The North West Development Region of Romania represented the area of research. Through comparison with observed and collected data at a national level, one has tried to surprise the existent situation at a regional level in Cluj County. It is composite of 6 counties (Bihor, Bistrița Năsăud, Cluj, Maramureș, Satu Mare, Sălaj) and he has a total area of 34,159 km<sup>2</sup>, which represents 14.32 % of the area country.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Organizations vary according to the relative influence of a number of factors related to both the objective of the organization and the instruments and strategies chosen to achieve them. According to the the factors, which determine the structure, aims and activities of the organization, can be grouped into:

- External factors - those from the enabling environments which are not under the control of the organization but which affect its structure and development. They include: economic factors, socio-economic factors, political-administrative factors;
- Internal factors - organizational characteristics, including: purpose of the organization, organizational instruments;
- Individual choice factors - members joint or individual decisions regarding expected costs and benefits.

Analysis of forest organizations shows a broad distinction between emphasis on political issues at regional/ national level vs. an emphasis on economic and forest management activities at local level.

One characteristic of the new private forest owners of Eastern Europe, however, is that the majority are non-farmers, very often-absentee landowners. For areas where this form of ownership is dominant, higher levels of co-operation may be more suitable, such as management associations offering full management service packages.

The development of forest owner organizations in Eastern Europe has already begun. In particular interest associations at the national level have been formed. Local or regional level organizations with economic and/or information activities, however, are still rare due to a combination of lack of information, interest and support.

The Romanian Forest Owners Association (R.F.O.A) was created for the idea to gather all the Romanian forest owners in order to meet each other and to fight together for their common purpose: restitution in integrality. Also trough E.L.O (European Landowners Organization), R.F.O.A is in contact with all the national forest- and land-owners organizations from Europe. R.F.O.A. represents its members at national and international level, regarding the recognition of the rights of restitution of all the forests and other areas of vegetation, of the lakes and mountain empties, the buildings and land for silvicultural administration and other goods, which were confiscated abusively by the communist regime from Romania.

The "true owners" which R.F.O.A. supports are the:

Juridical owners like:

- "composesorate"; "obsti de razesi"; "osti motesti"; "obsti de cumparare" which all are traditional forms of ownership in common
- Cultural institutions, charity institutions, churches, monasteries, schools.
- Forest of the villages

Physical persons who are owners and others.

Vasile (2009) showed that forest restitution was made in three steps:

(1) the first step was a very small and stumbled one and the result was that only 7.8% of forest surface got privatized and almost all of this deforested;

(2) the second step was a brave one, although it was a little hindered by the previous one, 34% of the total forest surface went into the hand of private owners (including individuals, associations, communes);

(3) for the third phase, everybody took a deep breath for a huge step, but could not get much further, many of the claims encountered hindrances from the state that was seeing its domain diminishing; after this law, the estimation is that 45.6% of the total forest resource will be privatized.

According to the data from the National Institute of Statistics, Romanian Statistical Yearbook the situation of the reconstitution of the right to property in the case of the Forestry District Cluj, between 1989-2012 is:

Tab. 1

The situation of the reconstitution of the right to property in the case of the Forestry District Cluj, between 1989-2012

Year	Forestry fund surface (ha)				
	total	State property	Administrative units	Juridical persons (associations, cult units, schools)	Physical persons
0	1	2	3	4	5
1989	153501	153501	0	0	0
1995	153499	144703	0	0	8581
2000	153502	144053	178	11	9260
2005	153497	93916	31285	9281	19015
2006	153497	90000	32660	11482	19355
2012	172999.82	78657.53	45326.3	5335.142	38663.19

Source: own processing after data from the National Institute of Statistics, Romanian Statistical Yearbook

In the Cluj County there are two private structures of the Forestry Department type:

The Forestry District Mărgău, which administers a surface of 3500 ha, the property of Mărgău Village;

The Forestry District Valea Ierii, which administers a surface of 8000 ha, the property of 16 city halls, member of the Association of owners of private forests Soimul-Aries;

The association of the city halls has been made precisely with the aim of founding a forestry structure of its own that would maintain and manage the forests of private and public ownership.

This kind of association in a private structure would allow a better conservation of the biodiversity and would assure the continuity of a durable maintenance, accessibility to development programs, assurance of a logistic base and the support of local authorities. Experience and the obtained results in the activity have by these two private structures underlined their roles in the long-lasting maintenance of ecosystems at the level of the county.

## CONCLUSION

Sustainable forest management requires the expertise and advice of forestry professionals and motivation of forest owners. Information on forest resources, effective communication and supportive organizational structures are also necessary. The survival of forests depends on the recognition and protection by humans of their ecological value of climate regulations, social and economic values.

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