

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMME

The National Forest Programme 2010 was prepared for the Government in 1998-1999. The purpose of the programme is to ensure the financially, ecologically, socially and culturally sustainable use of forests. Key aims of the programme are to increase harvesting and the value of production in the forest branch, to increase the use of wood for energy production and to achieve a good level of forest protection. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is mainly responsible for preparing and monitoring the programme. Interested parties including other ministries, private organizations in the forestry field, the forest industry, the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners and nature conservation organizations have also participated in preparing and implementing the programme.

The implementation of the programme was nearing the half-way mark when the audit was conducted. The purpose of the audit was to determine whether the objectives set in the programme can be achieved with the tools that are being used. This involved analysing the programme's objectives and tools. The programme's employment effects were also evaluated.

The main observation in the audit was that the programme mostly brings together in a single document previously implemented forestry measures and visions. It can be considered a real programme involving investments only with regard to forestry. This is indicated by the fact that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry does not have precise information on state resources applied to the programme. With regard to a number of objectives the programme does not say how measures will affect the achievement of objectives.

The original programme includes detailed measure proposals and financial plans only with regard to the Ministry

of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment. About 20 million euros of the planned 26 million euro increase in financing concerned state grants for forest centres as well as forestry and forest improvement work. The rest of the financial plan concerned developing nature conservation.

Other ministries' inputs have not been studied even after the fact. On the basis of the audit it would appear that other ministries have not committed themselves to the programme very well. In the opinion of the State Audit Office, a financial plan for state measures should have been drafted when the programme was in the preparation stage. This would have committed other ministries to the programme better and would also make monitoring easier to arrange.

The audit indicated that the programme's employment effects were overestimated. Employment effects are based largely on the projected increase in harvesting and growth in the value of forest product exports. Harvesting has not increased according to the objective. The objective for growth in the value of exports was more a forecast than a real objective. Nor has the value of exports developed as projected.

On the basis of the audit the programme's main significance lies in increased state funds for forestry and to some extent nature conservation. The programme has also increased cooperation among administrative sectors in issues regarding forests.