

Careful attitude makes balance possible

Forestry Ministry has already earned over \$30m for our country this year

By Veronica Timokhina

The Alps are the business card of Austria while India is famous for its jungles. Belarus' green forests, so much resembling animal fur from above, are our true pride. However, they aren't just beautiful and pleasing to the eye; they are a treasury of unique biological and landscape diversity. Moreover, they are a priceless source of timber. How can we preserve the fragile balance, enabling us to use the country's natural wealth without damaging it?

"Forests are one of the

most important natural resources for the country," asserts Mikhail Amelyanovich, Belarus' Forestry Minister. "Forests account for around 10m hectares — almost half our territory. These are significant reserves, with 60 percent of Belarusian woods filled with coniferous species. Birch prevails among deciduous trees while hardwood trees, such as oak, hornbeam, ash, maple and elm, occupy just 4 percent. We should mention that almost 25 percent of all forests are planted and managed; we devote much attention to their cultivation."



Specialists from Mogilev's forestry, Alexander Yevsyukov and Alexander Rogovnev, take part in Forest Week

The Forestry Ministry is conducting serious work. How does this influence the quality of our forests?

World experience, alongside that of domestic forestry, testifies to genetic-selection being the only way to improve the structure of our forests, while enhancing efficiency and sustainability. Great achievements have already been made, creating a permanent collection of seeds.

How do we earn money from our forests without damaging them?

Implementing the principles of sustainable forest man-

agement and forest exploitation, we ensure economic and ecological security of the state. A careful attitude towards our green wealth is our top priority.

Such instruments as active forest certification help enhance our forest management. At present, it's obligatory to certify timber for the ecologically sensitive EU market, especially for Germany, the UK and Holland. This year, the Forestry Ministry has already exported \$32m of produce and services.

Ecological tourism is gaining popularity world-

wide and is developing in Belarus. What role does the Forestry Ministry play in this process?

We're taking a very active role, with 74 forest hunting farms operational — popular with hunters and those keen to spend time in the countryside. Many forests have tourist sites, with open air cages containing wild animals, ecological routes and nature museums. Moreover, by 2015, we'll have a series of woodland parks, aiming to enhance the ecological education of the population. In all, 50 such sites are to be set up, occupying at least 135 hec-

tares.

How do you plan to preserve and expand our forests?

Belarus has approved its 2011-2015 Forestry Industry Development Programme, stipulating the major aims as preserving, expanding and rationally using the Republic's forests. Modernisation of forestry equipment is necessary, with the latest technology acquired, alongside IT resources and aerospace devices. Additionally, woodland seed collection will be developing, using genetic-selection to ensure healthy saplings are grown.

Underground waters' warmth receives study

By Tatiana Olkhovskaya

Geologists assess potential of geothermal energy in each region

Research has resulted in the compiling of maps indicating the distribution of geothermal resources for each region. Priority sites have been determined, focusing on the depths of 100-200 metres. The Pripjat Trough (in the Gomel Region) and in the Podlaska-Brest Depression (Brest Region) boast the richest reserves of geothermal energy.

The warmth of underground waters is a renew-

able and ecologically friendly source of energy. The technology of extraction is also ecologically safe. Unlike traditional fuels burnt in boilers, geothermal energy lacks emissions of hazardous particles, smoke or soot. Geothermal energy is used all over the globe. In the USA, over 200,000 heat pump plants operate, with around 19,000 in Switzerland and over 600 in Poland. By 2014, the share of geothermal energy within the fuel-energy balance should reach 10-12 percent across the EU.

In some Belarusian regions, underground water



Geothermal station at Berestie facility, in Brest

temperatures reach 80 degrees Celsius or above, with salinity increasing at lower depths. This makes extraction more difficult and requires special processing to remove

salinity; solutions are still being developed by scientists. At present, it's more profitable for Belarus to use water from shallower wells, with lower levels of mineralisation.

Convenient site for market mastery

Microsoft to open office in Belarus in April

Microsoft Corporation is eager to open an office in Belarus, while financing new IT projects and training specialists. It hopes to sell software produced here both in Belarus and abroad. "We'll invest in training Belarusian specialists, teaching them the most advanced technologies — including clouding-computing. In July, we'll start working for the benefit of the country," asserts Microsoft's representative in

Belarus, Mikhail Makhanev.

Microsoft plans to invite specialists from the World Intellectual Property Organisation to explain the importance of qualitative software for Belarusian organisations. "The transition to modern software leads to raised labour efficiency and improved service quality," the expert stresses, praising the high potential of the Belarusian IT market. Mr. Makhanev notes that Belarus is a very promising country for young IT specialists.

Exchanging potential

Slovakia and Belarus keen to co-operate in machine building and metal processing, as noted by the Head of the Slovak Economy Ministry's International Trade Department, Peter Zengo, during opening of Business Co-operation Days in Minsk.

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Slovakia to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Marian Servatka, notes that specialised exhibitions in Slovakia lack Belarusian companies. "We are here in Minsk to show our capabilities to Belarusian businessmen. They can also present their produce

at our exhibitions. When a Belarusian product is showcased somewhere in Bratislava, for example, it might be seen by guests from neighbouring countries," added the Ambassador.

A business matchmaking session involving representatives of Belarusian and Slovak companies took place as part of the Business Co-operation Days. The Slovak side was represented by enterprises specialising in the production of metal-cutting machine tools and bearings, the repair of electrical equipment and other areas of manufacture and services.

Eliminating misbalance

By Anna Smuglova

Over next five years, share of high-tech goods in export supplies to rise 6-fold

"By 2015, we plan to reach \$12-13bn of exports from high-tech goods," notes Belarus' Economy

Minister, Nikolai Snopkov. "We believe that this major direction will eliminate our negative foreign trade balance."

The official stresses that each investment project is being considered from the point of view of efficiency and that reducing imports

is a major task for the real sector of the economy, enhancing the competitiveness of our produce.

In 2010, each US Dollar spent by the country on importing equipment to achieve technical modernisation resulted in Belarus' receiving \$1.90 in

revenue from the sale of its 'value added' goods. "This is a good trend which we should build upon in 2011," adds Mr. Snopkov. The necessary prerequisites are being created, with the Government currently stimulating export growth.