Minister Veysel Eroğlu: Turkey is a rightful host for the Forum on Forests

The UN's 10th Forum on Forests will be an enormous event where our country will be introduced and our activities in the field of forestry will be promoted. The forum will also make a huge contribution to our national economy

Thanks to our active involvement in the field of forestry in recent years, we have been able to keep up with the technological advances and to make ourselves heard in the world by hiring highly qualified staff. We have also taken part in international platforms in order to promote the projects we have developed, to introduce our efforts in the field of forestry and to share our experience in this field with other countries.

I personally represented our country at the ninth United Nation's Forum on Forests in 2001. In this forum, the state of the world's forests and the steps to be taken for better development in the field of forestry were discussed. In the end, a non-binding document which still had some impact of guidance was adopted. This forum, in which all UN member states were invited to take part, has until now been held in New York City. However, upon the initiative of the Turkish government, a decision was made to hold the 10th session in our country. The UN's 10th Forum on Forests will be an enormous event where our country will be introduced and our activities in the field of forestry will be promoted. The forum will also make a huge contribution to our national economy.

The forum will discuss forestry activities in our country and we will put a special emphasis on the projects that our ministry is working on regarding forestry products in addition to wood. We will present information about activities concerning honey forests, city forests, recreation areas and plants used in the field of medicine, as well the effect these activities have on the Turkish economy.


Veysel Eroğlu

The forum will be held under the theme "Forests and Economic Development" and discuss such major issues as the preservation of forests, their sustainable use, measures to be taken to increase the contribution of the forestry-based economy on the social and environmental development of society, the national forestry programs and the contributions of forests to communities, and the green economy.

Likewise, the early warning and surveillance system that we have developed to protect against forest fires is attracting international attention and demand from other countries. By this project we have reduced the response time to forest fires in our country, which faces a great risk of forest fires, to 18 minutes.

Our country, one of the rare countries that has actually increased the amount of its forest land, is a rightful host for the Forum on Forests. Our country meets its forestry goals through forestation and erosion control mobilization and enhances employment for rural residents by developing strong and sound projects.

At the forum we will have the opportunity to prove our reputation for great hospitality, introduce our country and take useful steps to improving forestry across the world. For each of our guests, we will also plant a tree in İstanbul. I hope the event serves as source of good for our country and the world.

PHOTO ◻ AA, İSLAM YAKUT

United Nations Forum on Forests kicks off in İstanbul

The United Nation's Forum on Forests began its 10th meeting in İstanbul on Monday with the opening speech of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In his speech, the prime minister stated that citizens of developed countries have to start questioning the items they produce. "We have to ask ourselves how a gram of gold, a liter of petrol, a cubic meter of gas and a bag of coal comes into our homes; we need to ask what tragedies occur for these things to reach our homes," Erdoğan remarked. The 10th session of the Forum on Forests, which started on Monday, will continue until Friday of next week. The forum secretariat has prepared a streamlined national reporting form in response to a request made in the Resolution on Forests for People, adopted at the ninth session of the Forum in February 2011. Prime Minister Erdoğan later spoke about the damage to the atmosphere from perfumes and ice fields melting while people race to drive faster and added that if people do not start to be conscious of how they affect the environment, the world will not be livable anymore. He later recounted a proverb of the North American Cree Indian tribe: "Only when the last fish is gone, the last river poisoned, the last tree cut down... will mankind realize they cannot eat money." Speaking at the meeting, Turkish Environment and Forestry Minister Veysel Eroğlu said deforestation is the result of rural poverty and an international matter that directly affects the whole world. "As for forests, the primary aim of all these countries gathered under the UN's Forum on Forests is to protect the current forests and to increase forestry fields," Eroğlu said. He added that the forestry ministry is working hard to increase the area of forests in Turkey. **İstanbul** Today's Zaman

UNFF10 MEMO

UNFF set up to preserve forests, promote sustainable development

The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was set up by the United Nations in 2000 to manage and preserve forests, promote their sustainable development and reinforce the political assurance in this regard will be held in Turkey.

Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs Veysel Eroğlu will serve as co-chair of the UNFF10, which will be held in İstanbul on April 8-19, along with Ecuador's forestry minister. Eroğlu, who will co-chair UNFF10, which will focus on the theme of "Forestry and Economic Development," will also represent Turkey in a roundtable meeting, the "ministerial segment," on the second day of the forum. During the roundtable meeting, 193 UN member states and four non-members (the Cook Islands, the Vatican, Niue and Palestine) will discuss the main theme of forests and economic development.

At the meeting, in which Eroğlu will brief the audience on the impact of forestry on economic development in Turkey, the work of the Directorate of Forest Affairs will also be highlighted. In addition, the ministry will provide extensive information on projects to be developed and highlight the work done by the Turkish Coordination and Cooperation Agency (TİKA) abroad. **Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs**

UNFF AND TURKEY

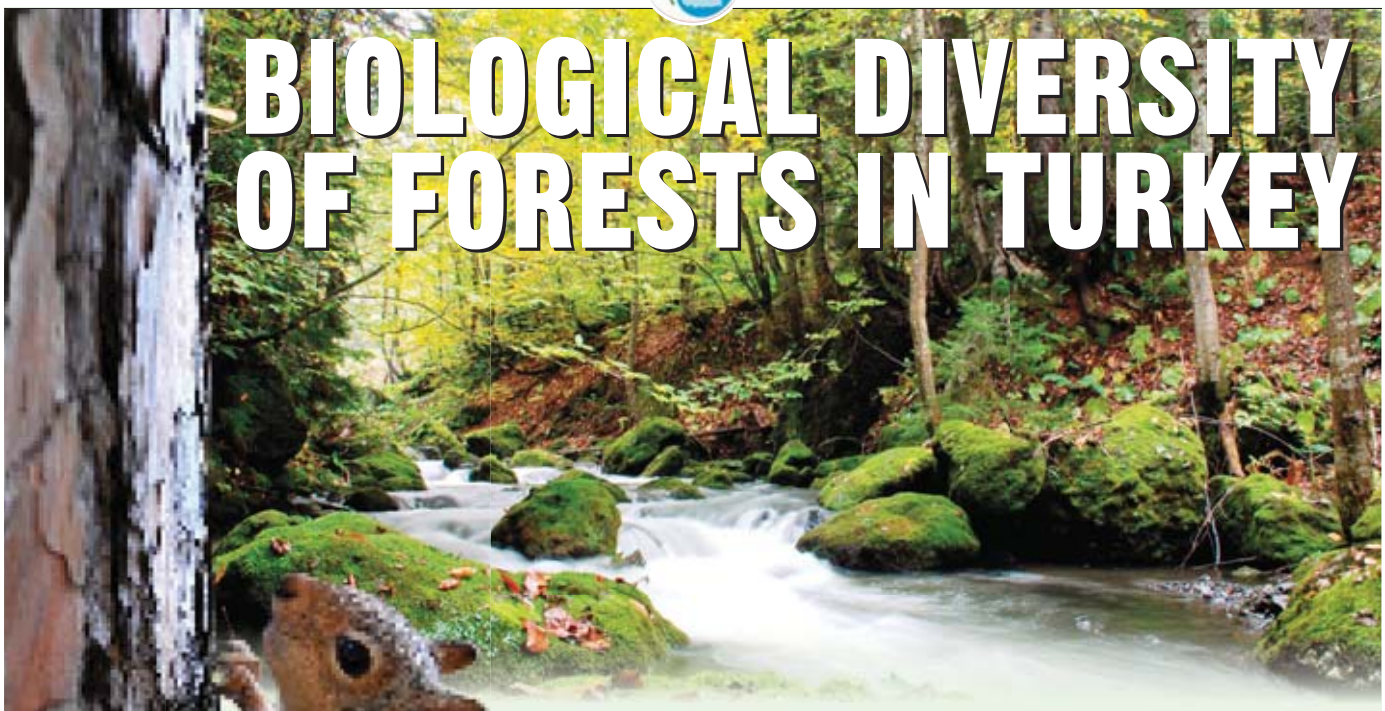
Turkey focuses on UNFF goals as it hosts 10th edition of forum

The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was set up to protect and manage forests and contribute to their sustainable use. The UNFF has four major goals: the minimization of loss of forests; the improvement of the economic, social and environmental benefits of forests; an increase in protected forested areas; and the maximization of aid to developing countries.

Turkey is also focused on these four major goals in its forestation activities and efforts. Turkey has done a remarkable job in achieving the first goal to minimize the loss of forested areas; it is one of the rare countries that was able to increase its amount of forested area. Therefore, Turkey provides a positive contribution to this goal. According to the 2010 Global Forest Resources Assessments (FRA) report, Turkey is one of the five countries that have increased their forested areas. To fulfill the second goal, Turkey introduced some bold projects in order to enhance the economic, social and environmental benefits of forests. The third goal is to increase the amount of protected forested areas, which receive protection because of their natural and ecological value, in Turkey. The fourth goal is to increase the amount of aid to developing countries. In this area, some major reforestation projects in different parts of the world have been undertaken by the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA). **İstanbul** Today's Zaman

PHOTOS ⊡ AA

BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF FORESTS IN TURKEY



Turkey's woodlands comprise 21,678,134 hectares (27.2 percent of the entire country), although 10,119,116 hectares of this is damaged. Forests with leafy trees are more common in Turkey, while conifer trees can be found in all forests. In the Aegean and Mediterranean regions, in addition to bushes and maquis shrub land, there are also humid, semi-humid pine and dry forests (oak, black pine).

The topographic structure of the country and its varied climate and soil properties have made its forests quite abundant in terms of plant biodiversity. Turkey's forests are particularly rich in relic and endemic plants. The most important reasons for Turkey's high plant biodiversity are the relatively high proportion of endemics and a high degree of climatic and edaphic variety. About one-third of all plant species in Turkey are from previous geological periods and most of them are endemic. Most of these endemic species are located in the Mediterranean region (especially the Taurus Range and Nur Mountains) and the Iran-Turan area.

The many ecological and floral ecosystems of Turkey's forests have different functions. Turkey's ecosystems are home to a large number of endemic plant species and many bird species and wildlife. These ecosystems also host the wild relatives of many agricultural plants that are important in terms of agricultural biodiversity.

The Mediterranean Vegetation Area includes all areas located along the coast of the Mediterranean and the Western parts of Thrace. Woodland ecosystems in these areas create a variety of vegetation series from the lowest point at sea level to the highest points, depending on different ecological parameters.

The following are the life zones and the species that can be found in these areas in the Mediterranean and Aegean regions, where the typical climate is Mediterranean:

Supra Mediterranean (up to 1,000 meters): Xerophile marquis red pines (Pinus brutia) ecosystems, Pinus halpenesysis, Liquidambar orientalis, Cupressus sempervirens, mixed oaks (Quercus cerris-Q.infectoria-Q.libani-Q. brantii) and Pinus pinea ecosystems.

Oro-Mediterranean (1,000 up to 2,000 meters): Black pines, Abies cilicica, Cedrus libani, Ostrya carpinifolia-Carpinus orientalis, mixed oaks (Quercus petraea- Quercus cerris-Quercus trojana). In the higher parts of the Aegean region, mixed forestry ecosystems that include chestnut trees, beech, tilia, yellow pine, oak and red pine.

Alti-Mediterranean (1,000-2,000 meters): Juniperus excelsa-Juniperus foetidissima

The vegetation area of the Iran-Turan flora zone starts in Central Anatolia and extends into Mongolia, stretching across a highly diverse range of plants, species and land. This area, dominated by a continental climate, is rich in steppe plants. High mountain ecosystems and arid region ecosystems can be seen here, such as steppe forest, back pines, dry black pine and junipers.

The European-Siberian plant geography region extends across northern Anatolia and parts of Thrace facing the Black Sea. It is the rainiest climatic zone and much of it is covered with forests. In this region, dry oak and pine forests (oak, black pine and red pine) and forest ecosystems in shrub (pseudomaquis and maquis) formation stand out at areas below 1,500 meters. Between the altitudes of 500 and 1,200 meters, broad-leaved forests and coniferous forests (Fagus orientalis, Castanea sativa, Carpinus orientalis, Carpinus betulus, Alnus glutinosa) are found, while humid and semi-humid coniferous forests (Pinus nigra, Pinus sylvestris, Picea orientalis and Abies nordmanniana) exist between 1,000 and 1,500 meters.

In the high parts of the eastern Black Sea region, there are forest ecosystems such as mixed-forest rose (Rhododendron ponticum, Rhododendron luteum, Rhododendron ungernii, Rhododendron smirnowii), Rhododendron caucasicum and birch (Betula pendula). In the Thrace and Western Black Sea regions, longoz mixed forest ecosystems (Fraxinus angustifolius, Qurcus robur, Fagus orientalis) are found in the flat alluvial areas where the groundwater level is high.

Most of the large mammals in Turkey live in forest ecosystems. For example, mammals such as bear (Ursus arctos), fox (Vulpes vulpes),wolf (Canis lupus), jackal (Canis aureus), lynx (Lynx lynx), porcupine (Erinaceus europea), rabbit (Lepus capensis), weasel (Mustela nivalis), red squirrel (Sciurus vulgaris); and reptiles such as snake, chameleon (Chameleo chameleon), lizard (Lacerta agilis, L. armeniaca, L. parvula, L. derjugini, L. princeps, L. trilineata, L. viridis, Anguis fragilis), tortoise (Testudo graeca). Birds such as pheasant (Phasianus colchicus); caspian snowcock (Tetraogallus caspius); wood grouse (Tetrao mlokosiewiczi); woodpecker (Dendrocopus sp.); diurnal birds of prey including falcon types -- Aquila sp., Pandion sp., sparrowhawk types -- Accipiter sp., cyaneus types -- Circus sp., hawk types -- Buteo sp., goshawk types -- Falco sp., Pernis sp. v.s.; various nocturnal birds of prey such as the tawny owl (Strix aluco), long-eared owl (Asio otus), tengmalm's owl (Aegolius funereus v.s.) as well as many singing birds make the forests their home.

GROUPS	TURKEY		EUROPE	DESCRIBED TAXA OF THE WORLD
	DESCRIBED TAXA	ENDEMIC TAXA	DESCRIBED TAXA	
VERTEBRATES				
Reptiles /Amphibians (Reptilia/Amphibia)	141	16	236	14.439
Birds (Aves)	460	-	488	9.956
Mammals (Mammalia)	161	37	260	5.416
Fresh-water fish (Pisces)	236	70	546	30.000 (Fish)
Sea fish (Pisces)	480	-	1.100	
Total	**1.478**	**123**	**2.630**	**59.811**

Among these species, animals such as a type of mountain goat (Rupicapra rupicapra), wild cat (Felis silvestris), black vulture (Aegypius monachus), imperial eagle (Aquila heliaca), greater spotted eagle (Aquila clanga) and lesser spotted eagles (Aquila pomarina) are protected according to international conventions.

Contributions from the General Directorate of Forestry on Biological Diversity

■ A total of 132 honey forests have been planted on 10,653.8 hectares of land since 2008. The forests contain over 100 species of herbaceous and ligneous plants that are rich in pollen and nectar. The project not only contributes to flora species richness but also provides for the food requirements of the fauna.

■ We use environmentally friendly forestry methods in our silvicultural activities. These methods help protect the biological diversity in the area.

■ Some dead trees, an important indication of biological diversity, are left in their own ecosystems. They are not included in the rehabilitation process.

■ Domestic species that fit the ecosystem are preferred in forestation and rehabilitation activities.

■ A total of 2,492,638 hectares of degraded forest land has been rehabilitated as part of rehabilitation activities thus far.

■ During forestation and rehabilitation activities, the food requirements of the fauna in the area have been met through the planting of fruit trees that suit the existing ecosystem.

■ Food is left for big mammals in the forests, particularly in the winter months.

■ Ecosystem-based functional plans are developed in order to integrate the biological diversity we possess in the forest development plans. To this end, the biological diversity of 450,917 hectares has been integrated into forest management plans since 2003.

■ Ecologic structures such as ecosystem bridges are built near highways, which damage forest ecosystems, in order to contribute to the biological diversity.

■ The Department for Non-Wood Forest Products and Services was established in 2011 for the sustainable management of the biological diversity we possess in our forests.

■ Thanks to a CBS-based web application called the BİYOD database, all plants are recorded, along with information about where and how densely they are found in our country; whether they are under protection; and their scientific and local names in Turkish and English.

■ The total carbon amount preserved in forests across Turkey as of 2012 was calculated as 1.1 billion tons. According to some calculations, forests in the country produce 38.7 billion tons of oxygen per year.

Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs

DESIGN: SELAHATTİN ÖZDOĞAN

MAP OF TURKEY'S FORESTS: FROM PAST TO PRESENT

Forests are extremely important resources that provide extensive benefits including food, fuel, shelter, fresh air, water, medicine, income, employment, leisure and landscaping as well as other economic, social and cultural assets. As an ecosystem, a forest is a living system and community where the trees interact with other creatures and organisms in a certain balance. The sustainability of the precious forests depends on its proper management by reliance on the principle of wise use.

Forests are administered by the state in Turkey, by the General Directorate of Forestry based on the principle of sustainability. As an application of the provision spelled out in Article 26 of Law No. 6831 on forests, stating that the state is responsible and authorized to conduct production activities in forests in line with the principles that shall be identified by the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, the forests in Turkey are administered under forest administration plans. These plans are periodically drafted by the department of forest administration and planning unit at the General Directorate of Forestry.

The first forest development plan was drafted in 1917; this plan became a turning point in terms of starting the era of planned development of forests in Turkey. The year 1963 was an important year for the Turkish economy and the forestry sector; the development plans of all forests were completed within 10 years in order to achieve the goals specified for the forestry sector in the development plans between 1963 and 1972. Forestry was the first sector in Turkey where plans were drafted in detail.

The information for the forestry inventory is being collected through combined inventory methods along with landscape work and remote sensing methods. This booklet includes the forestry inventory information that is periodically updated through the ENVANIS inventory and statistical database, which provides the latest statistical information.

Land use in Turkey

Turkey enjoys rich ecological diversity. In parallel to this ecological richness, the forests are also rich in terms of type and composition. According to recent data, the forests constitute 27.6 percent of total land in Turkey.

The forests are administered by the state in Turkey; the General Directorate of Forestry is responsible for their administration. The share of privately run and administered forests is extremely low (less than 0.1 percent of the total forest areas). The forests are administered by reliance on forest development plans drafted every 10 years. During the work on drafting these plans, efforts to create an inventory are also made, and the relevant statistical data are reviewed to finalize the plans.

Situation of Turkish forests in the past

Inventory during the period 1963-1972: The work to create an inventory of forests in Turkey started in 1963; during the period between 1963 and 1972, the forest development plans were drafted to create an inventory, and the relevant data were published in 1980. According to the data in this inventory, the total size of forest areas is 20.2 million hectares and the total amount of tree assets is 935 million cubic meters. The annual wealth surplus is identified in the inventory as 28 million cubic meters, while 23 million cubic meters were left in forested areas for wood production. In other words, 5 million cubic meters of woods were left in the forests for asset accumulation (General Directorate of Forest Affairs, 2006).

Inventory during the 1973-2004 period: The information and data in the plans drafted after 1973 were updated in 1999; the update revealed that the total size of the forests in Turkey was 20.8 million hectares. The size of the forests has increased to 21.2 million hectares as revealed by the evaluation reports of 2004. In this period, the total amount of forests constitutes 27.2 percent of total land in Turkey. According to the renewed forest development plans during the period between 1973 and 2004, the current situation, by annual average amount of use as wood production, is as follows:

The current situation: The total size of forest areas has been determined to be 21.7 million hectares as revealed by the updated data contained in the ENVANIS database created based on the renewed forest development plans during the period between 2005 and 2012.

Comparison between past and present:

Comparison in terms of forested area: In general terms, the size of forested areas has been increasing. The consideration of functions other than wood production in the implementation and planning activities has been influential in this change. In addition, the activities conducted to protect and improve forests have contributed to the expansion of forested areas.

The general size of forested areas, in terms of the changes and increases in size, is identified as follows based on the reviews of the inventory results:

- 1973 : 20,199,296 hectares (26.1 percent of total land),
- 1999 : 20,763,248 ha (26.7 percent of total land),
- 2004 : 21,188,747 ha (27.2 percent of total land),
- 2010 : 21,537,091 ha (27.4 percent of total land),
- 2012 : 21,678,134 ha (27.6 percent of total land)

These inventory results show that there has been an increase of 1.5 million hectares over the last 40 years.

Comparison in terms of asset values: The total tree assets of Turkey is calculated based on the total volume of tree bodies in terms of radius measures in the period where measures were taken. To this end, there was an increase of 560 million cubic meters in Turkey's tree asset values during the period between 1973 and 2012. The primary reason for this increase is attributable to the improvement of forested areas.

Comparison in terms of increase and surplus: The annual current surplus is calculated in cubic meters in terms of the annual increase during the vegetative period of the trees in the forests. The total amount of surplus was 28 million cubic meters in 1973, whereas it was 42 million cubic meters in 2012. The reasons for this boost include the increase in the productivity of national forests as well as the increase in forest assets.

Conclusion: The forest development plans, which serve as the foundation of sustainable forest administration, are drafted in accordance with the forest development that entered into force with the view of an ecosystem-based functional planning approach.

The forest planning work covering a vast area of 1.5-2 million hectares conducted at regional branches of the forest administration every year to renew the forest development plans that have expired is done in the relevant departments under the supervision and guidance of the forest administration and planning body.

The national forest inventory is being updated through renewed plans which enable authorities to follow the change by year and offer proper analyses to protect and improve forest assets on a national basis. To this end, data and information are also provided for national forestry statistics.

According to the inventory review results done so far in terms of the size of the forests and changes, the size of the forest was 20.2 million hectares (26.1 percent) during the period between 1963 and 1972, whereas it was 21.7 million hectares (27.6 percent) in the latest inventory in 2012. According to these inventory results, there has been an increase of 1.5 million hectares in the size of forested areas over the last 40 years.

The total asset was 935.5 million cubic meters in the first period of inventory, whereas it was identified as 1.5 billion cubic meters in the latest inventory. It could be concluded that the total amount of increase in forest assets was 560 million cubic meters in the period between 1973 and 2012.

The primary reasons for the increase in the asset include plantations as well as the migration of the people residing around forests to urban areas, the amelioration of overall conditions in forested areas and an improvement in inventory techniques and tools.

The data relevant to size, asset, tree types and forest types in Turkey have been collected through detailed and meticulous efforts; therefore, these data are extremely reliable. As a result, the plans based on this data also become reliable. Because these plans serve as the basis for the relevant efforts and work for the forests, the need for additional data and information has been met during the period of planning. **Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs**

On the map of Turkey's forests*

Turkey, which hosts a number of plant species and fauna and 27.6 percent of whose land is covered by forests, is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of biological diversity. Using the forests effectively, defining the structure of the biological system in numeric terms and keeping this structure under control in line with expected needs is possible only through information and knowledge. The General Directorate of Forestry relies on an integrated approach of the ecological, economic and social functions of forests in the management of the forest resources in order to protect and improve forested areas and also monitors and reviews the planning and protection of forest areas.

Making public services available in electronic media is particularly important in order to ensure state transparency, swift and effective action in the provision of public services, improvement in living standards, participation by the people in management and government activities, prevention of the presentation of old data and maximization of benefits based on the decision making process. The gathering of information and its storage, analysis and effective use are also important for future advantage. In addition to its acquisition, the information should also be used wisely and in a timely manner in an integrated approach.

Since the 1990s, the General Directorate of Forestry Affairs has been extensively using geographical information systems (GIS), performing the gathering, storage, management and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data and information held in its inventory and offering services in relation to the use of this information by multiple beneficiaries at the same time. This resource was prepared to serve the staff at the general directorate and others who are interested and was made using GIS. In addition, this atlas also reveals the importance of resources. I congratulate all who have been involved in the preparation of the Forestry Atlas and hope that it will be effectively used by the relevant parties.

***General Director of Forestry İbrahim Çiftçi**

Kaçkar Mountains National Park in the Black Sea region stretches from Çamlıhemşin in Rize province to Artvin's Yusufeli district.

PHOTOS □ AA, SABRİ ASLISEN

Ministry rolls up sleeves to boost walnut production

The current number of walnut trees in Turkey is close to 9 million. The number of walnut trees planted as part of the special projects and efforts supported by the ministry was 1,748,000 by 2012. Walnut production has gradually increased to over 2 million metric tons; the leading walnut-producing countries are China, the US, Iran and Turkey

Walnut consumption has been on the rise in Turkey in recent years.

PHOTO □ REUTERS, REGIS DUVIGNAU

An action plan was launched in 2012, set to run through 2016, to increase walnut production. Below is data regarding walnut production and trade in Turkey and the world, and the goals of the action plan.

Purpose

Great importance has been placed on fruit and nut-bearing trees in order to improve the welfare of people living in the countryside and rural areas and to ensure that they lead a healthy and balanced life.

To this end, emphasis has also been placed on planting and forestry activities. The walnut is an indispensable product of the Anatolian region thanks to its nutritional value and wide use. The anticipated revenue to be generated from the 1 million walnut trees that have been planted as part of another plantation and forestation project over the last five years is around TL 160 million.

Consistent with Turkey's 2023 vision, our ministry has drafted a walnut action plan to step up tree-planting efforts at the local and national level. The purpose of the walnut action plan is to analyze the plantation of walnut trees completed so far, to identify the areas in which walnut trees will be planted over the next five years, to discuss efforts to plant trees in clusters, to determine the number and types of trees that will be planted, to address the problems experienced during planting efforts, to create facilities that work in cooperation in an attempt to increase the quality of walnuts and to create unions of walnut producers that will help these producers market their products.

When the action plan was drafted, the views of domestic and foreign stakeholders were considered at joint meetings. The ministry will continue to support exclusive work on walnut plantation as long as they do not damage the ecological balance.

World walnut production

Walnut production has gradually increased to over 2 million metric tons; the leading walnut-producing countries are China, the United States, Iran and Turkey. China, ranked first in walnut production, experiences some problems in industry standardization. Unlike China, the US relies on standardized production techniques.

Walnut production in Turkey

The current number of walnut trees in Turkey is close to 9 million. The number of walnut trees planted as part of the special projects and efforts supported by the ministry was 1,748,000 by 2012. According to data from the Turkish Statistics Institute (TurkStat), Turkey's walnut production was at 178,142 tons in 2010, whereas US data foresaw Turkey's production in 2009/2010 to be around 88,000 tons. The number of walnut trees has been climbing thanks to projects supported by bodies in both the private and public sectors and because of a growing interest in walnuts in Turkey.

Despite the fact that Turkey is one of the leading countries in walnut production in the world, its production and export of walnuts are lower than they could be. Recently, the special efforts to plant more walnut trees, incentives for walnut production by the private sector and other efforts have contributed to a growing interest in walnuts.

The use of durable types of walnut trees, including Chandler, Pedro, Fernor and Fernette, has become widespread in recent years. The planting of millions of walnut trees without testing their adaptability resulted in low production. Another significant problem was the establishment of walnut orchards in vast, non-agricultural areas.

Production remains low at walnut orchards that were set up without proper prior investigation and research, the seeking of expert views and proper preliminary efforts. This is particularly the case for walnut orchards established as part of special forestation and plantation projects in areas that are not suitable for planting walnut trees. In such areas, extensive care and attention is required for better production. Today, the use of more durable trees, including the Chandler and Fernor, has become widespread.

Walnut consumption in Turkey

Walnut consumption has been on the rise in Turkey in recent years, with a few exceptions. Estimated annual consumption per person is 2-3 kilograms. The rise in consumption has been attributed to a diminishing price and an abundance of walnuts because of an increase in the amount of imported products. However, walnut consumption was believed to have declined due to the changes in global currency fluctuations in late 2011. The price of walnuts in Turkey, depending on the quality of the product, varies between TL 25 to TL 40 per kilogram at regular stores and between TL 15 and TL 25 at public markets.

Walnut trade in Turkey

Turkey has exported walnuts since the 1960s; however, since the early 2000s, it has also imported walnuts. The total amount of imported walnuts in Turkey was around 46,000 tons in 2009. Turkey imports walnuts primarily from the US, Chile, Moldova, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This action plan aims to make Turkey self-sufficient in walnut production and also put the country among the major walnut sellers in the world.

Walnut planting efforts in Turkey

The Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs has been focusing more on efforts to plant walnut trees in an attempt to increase the amount of walnut production and to ensure the production of high-quality walnuts, to create further employment opportunities in rural areas, to raise the standard of living in such areas, to provide access to nutritional foods for the good eating habits of future generations and to other similar efforts.

The share of walnut trees in special forestation efforts is 13 percent. These special efforts to plant walnut trees have involved 10,888 hectares of land over 983 projects that saw more than 2 million walnut trees planted. A total of 9,040 hectares out of this plantation area where special plantation efforts have been made are forest areas owned by the state, whereas the remaining is either private property or Treasury-owned land. A total of 5 million walnut trees will be planted as part of the forestation and planting efforts of the walnut action plan between 2012 and 2016.

Action taken for forestation and prevention of erosion

An action plan was implemented between 2007-2012 aimed at reducing erosion and increasing forestation across Turkey. In an action plan report from the Environment and Forestry Ministry, the need for the plan was explained as follows:

There has been growing pressure on natural resources due to the rapid increase of the world population and the expansion and growth of the global economy. The fundamental environmental indicators are getting worse as a result of overconsumption. Forested lands are disappearing and erosion is destroying the land. Wetlands are disappearing and rivers are drying up. The average temperature around the world is visibly increasing, and many species are becoming extinct. The solution to the problem that the world needs to resolve is to design a system which will ensure that people are able to meet their own needs without destroying the environment. Turkey is one of countries that are susceptible to severe erosion due to its topographical features and climate.

The goals of the plan include the following: The problems of an increasing amount of greenhouse gas and accompanying global warming and climate change are worsening. Turkey is one of the countries that will be affected by these the most. The amount of greenhouse gas emitted into the atmosphere should be reduced, and the number of carbon sinks should be increased in order to maintain a balance of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere. This is our most fundamental goal in the plan. To this end, we want to increase the amount of forested areas and rehabilitate existing ones to ensure that lands are not susceptible to erosion. The National Afforestation Mobilization action plan aims to ensure that all the relevant public institutions and various social groups work in coordination and cooperation. This action plan covers the period between 2008 and 2012. Within the plan, afforestation and rehabilitation as well as planting activities are scheduled to take place in a vast area of 2.3 million hectares. The work that has been done so far includes rehabilitating forests, planting new trees and raising farmers' awareness of erosion. **İstanbul** Today's Zaman

The plan aims to see 5 million new walnut trees planted*

The ministry drafts action plans with the intent to protect, improve and rehabilitate forests; support social and economic development; prevent migration from rural areas to cities; and create income opportunities for villagers. The action plan on walnuts aims to see 5 million new walnut trees planted. Despite the fact that Turkey is a center for walnut diversity and the walnut tree is indigenous here, our production and export of walnuts lag well behind expectations.

Walnut production does not meet domestic demand; 60 percent of the walnuts consumed in the country are supplied by imports. Consequently, a walnut action plan was drafted to create walnut orchards and thereby new income opportunities for the residents of these rural areas. As part of the action plan, 5 million walnut trees will be planted, and walnut tree farms will be created to supply high-quality raw materials for the logging industry.

The walnuts will be best used in medicine and cosmetics through the implementation of the action plan, which will promote their use in these sectors. I strongly believe that the work envisaged in the plan will be extremely useful in improving the welfare of the people living in rural areas. Through this plan, forests will be expanded and new employment opportunities will be created; this will eventually contribute to socio-economic development.

The plan represents a huge step forward for our people and future generations. Owing to the action plan, a kind of synergy will be created among universities, village administrations, international institutions, ministries, development agencies and other relevant public institutions as well as our ministry.

I wish for the walnut action plan to bring joy and benefit to our country, our ministry and our villagers, and I extend my gratitude to those people who expended their efforts in the drafting of the plan, including Dr. Yaşar Akça.

***Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs Veysel Erdoğlu**

Mustafa Kurtulmuşlu

PHOTO □ AA

'The walnut action plan will serve as a milestone'*

We cooperate with all relevant parties, including villagers, when conducting our work in rural and forested areas. The rapid loss of natural resources in the world places restrictions on people's access to nutrition and shelter as well as fresh air, food and drinkable water. According to a report provided by the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the rapid decline in forested areas has been at a yearly average decrease of 5.2 hectares over the last 10 years worldwide, yet over the last decade Turkey has ranked fifth among the countries increasing the size of these areas thanks to its forestation and rehabilitation projects. According to data from the World Bank, which works to alleviate the problem of poverty in the world, 3 billion people will be in poverty over the next five decades due to income imbalances and the loss of natural resources.

In consideration of this, the Turkish Forestry Department drafts action plans to protect and improve forest resources and land. To this end, we cooperate with the relevant public institutions and people living in rural areas in the implementation of these action plans. Our department works tirelessly to achieve the goals spelled out in its action plans.

Notably, we are working to increase the country's forested areas from 27.6 percent to 30 percent by 2023, when we will celebrate the centennial of the foundation of the republic. To bring this about, we will conduct joint projects with public institutions and civil society organizations as part of the action plan to mobilize for planting and erosion control, which is being implemented under the auspices of our prime minister. The implementation of the plan is having a serious impact on the expansion of forested areas, making us really excited about what we have been doing. The walnut action plan will serve as a milestone within this work and will make a huge contribution for healthier generations thanks to the forested areas. This will play a strong role in the development of the nation. I wish all the people who will take part in the implementation of the walnut action plan, for which we have great expectations, success and strength, and I congratulate them for their efforts and dedication. ***Former General Director of Forestry Mustafa Kurtulmuşlu**