

**National Report to the Third Session of the  
United Nations Forum on Forests**

**Lebanon**

January 2003

## **I. Key Contacts**

### **Head of Forestry in Lebanon:**

Name: Mr. Ghattas AKL

Title: Director of Rural Development and Natural Resources

#### Contact information:

Address: Ministry of Agriculture, Beydoun Street, Achrafieh, Beirut, Lebanon

Phone: 961 1 323873

Fax: 961 1 323873

E-mail: fadyasmar@terra.net.lb

### **UNFF national focal point for Lebanon:**

Name: Mr. Ghattas AKL

Title: Director of Rural Development and Natural Resources

#### Contact information:

Address: Ministry of Agriculture, Beydoun Street, Achrafieh, Beirut, Lebanon

Phone: 961 1 323873

Fax: 961 1 323873

E-mail: fadyasmar@terra.net.lb

### **Person to contact concerning the national report, if other than the UNFF national focal point:**

Name: Mr. Fady ASMAR

Title: Head of Service of Rangelands, Public Gardens and Protected Forests  
UNCCD Focal Point

#### Contact information:

Address: Ministry of Agriculture, Beydoun Street, Achrafieh, Beirut, Lebanon

Phone: 961 1 323873/ 961 3 259818

Fax: 961 1 323873

E-mail: fadyasmar@terra.net.lb

## **II. Progress and issues related to implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action**

### **General**

**1. Please provide additional or new information on initiatives taken or lessons learned further to the information on forests included in your national reports to the Commission on Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup> on the following points:**

- **assessment (including of the relevance, priority, status of implementation, planned actions) of the IPF/IFF proposals for action in the national context**
- **development and implementation of your national forest programme or similar national policy framework for forests, and**
- **mechanisms or initiatives to facilitate stakeholder participation in forest sector planning, decision-making and/or forest management.**

The Rural Development and Natural Resources Directorate (RDNRD) in the Ministry of Agriculture is the official body in charge of the forest sector, including rangelands and protected forests in Lebanon. The Ministry of Environment is in charge of the protected areas in general and has lately been handed the responsibility to prepare and undertake a reforestation program.

Lebanon has adopted the Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management during a national workshop involving all concerned stakeholders, line ministries, official institutions, NGO's and research institutes.

On the other hand, a Technical Cooperation Project is being submitted to FAO for the "Assessment, Evaluation and Monitoring of Forests and Tree Resources". The last (and only ever) assessment of the forest resources in Lebanon was undertaken in the early 1960's.

The preparation of a National Action Program for Forestry could only be undertaken after the achievement of the assessment and evaluation.

The RDNRD is always involving the concerned stakeholders, NGO's and research institutes in the decision making process. This collaboration will be extended and enforced when forest management and forest sector planning will be applied.

### **Economic aspects of forests, including trade**

**2. Please provide information on i) initiatives taken, ii) progress made, iii) lessons learned, iv) constraints encountered (including those related to financing, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, and needs for capacity-building) and v) initiatives planned, and vi) the role of enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination to facilitate progress related to trade in forest products or environmental services (e.g. carbon trading), including in:**

- **efforts to reduce negative impacts of trade,**
- **participation in forest certification and labeling schemes and work toward mutual recognition and comparability of such schemes, and**

- **efforts to reduce illegal trade (exports from or imports into your country) in wood or non-wood forest products. Please indicate achievements made, lessons learned, constraints encountered, and planned initiatives.**

Wood production is a minor activity of the forestry sector in Lebanon. Non-wood forest products constitute a major aspect of this sector and a major activity in several rural areas. As other low forest cover countries in the Mediterranean region, the wood production in Lebanon is very limited and restricted to fuel wood in some areas.

The uncontrolled production of charcoal used to constitute a major threat to the vegetation cover, as forests were totally harvested even on very steep slopes. This was frequently followed by intensive grazing as soon as the vegetation started to coppice again. The risk of occurrence of forest fires was very high during the charcoal production operations. A recent decree has totally forbidden the production of charcoal. However permits can be delivered by the RDNRD for the pruning and cleaning of dense maquis and wooded lands. This reduces the risks of forest fires and provides fuel wood to the local populations.

Uncontrolled timber harvesting and wood felling were undertaken in fragile upland ecosystems. Species like *Cedrus libani*, *Abies cilcica* and *Juniperus excelsa* were frequently illegally cut with no previous management plans. A law was issued to totally forbid the cutting of any resinous tree, even if dead. A special permit has to be issued from the Ministry of Agriculture for some particular cases. However, when the death of the tree is caused by an injury, a disease or an insect attack, the Ministry of Agriculture, through RDNRD, interferes to remove the dead trees and burn them if necessary, to prevent contamination to other trees and forests.

This total banning can only be transitional as it is well known that most of the Mediterranean broadleaved vegetation will coppice and be properly regenerated, thus reconstituting a good vegetation cover, if appropriate management is applied. Resinous trees could be replaced if natural regeneration is difficult. But this again is directly linked to the application of appropriate management measures.

The exploitation of non-wood forest products is tolerated in some cases and encouraged in some other cases. As a matter of fact, wild *Origanum sp.* and *Salvia sp.* are harvested for local consumption and for export. A decree was issued to regulate and organise the harvesting and export of these plants. The decree allows the harvesting after the flowering period. This insures the sustainability of the species, in addition to the fact that these flowering aromatic plants are highly appreciated by honey bees. *Origanum* for example can only be exported if processed, thus encouraging the development of small industries. Uprooting of both species is forbidden. This decree is therefore a good tool for rural development and nature conservation in the same time. The exploitation of the *Pinus pinea* forests for the production of the pine nuts is strongly encouraged, along with that of the *Ceratonia siliqua* for the production of the carob molasses, which is locally used and exported as a desert. Residues of the molasses production are used as animal feed and as compost. Seeds are exported to be utilised in several industries. The Ministry of Agriculture encourages reforestation with those two species in the appropriate areas (500m and below for the *Ceratonia siliqua*). Several rural communities depend on these two species for their living.

A tax policy is being applied to encourage the production of pine nuts (or pinelets) from *Pinus pinea*. The Ministry of Agriculture has set a maximum price for the kilogramme of pine nuts (20 USD) above which the top quality nuts should not be sold on the local market, in addition to the imposition of taxes on the import of nuts. This policy encourages the local production and pushes the consumer to give the priority to the local pine nuts.

Ecotourism is an expanding activity in the forests of Lebanon, attracting local and foreign tourists. However the valuation of this service is not properly studied yet, as currently only private initiatives are developing this sector.

### **Forest health and productivity**

**3. If damage to forests from air pollution is a significant problem in your country, please provide information on recent national strategies or programmes to minimize damaging air pollution. Please indicate if your country is involved in any international cooperation efforts aimed at strengthening scientific knowledge, increasing information access or reducing the impacts of long-range air pollution on forests, as well as your views on the role of enhanced cooperation at the regional and international levels to facilitate such work.**

Not available

### **Maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs**

**4. Please indicate progress made and lessons learned in efforts to harmonize or to make compatible policy frameworks in your country (e.g. national forest programme or a similar policy framework for forests, biodiversity strategies and action plans, national action plans to combat desertification, etc.) that collectively address the full range of forest values.**

Lebanon did not elaborate a national forest program yet. However, a national action plan to combat (NAP) desertification is in its final stages. The NAP is prepared in a very participatory process, involving the different concerned stakeholders. The NAP addresses the different aspects of natural resources management, (forests, rangelands, protected areas, sustainable agriculture, soil and water) along with the legislation framework and socio-economic issues in specific lines of action. All these issues are discussed in meetings with the concerned stakeholders like official authorities, researchers, grass-root organizations, heads of municipalities and private sector. This consultative process will be extended to reach the largest possible portion of the civil society and grass-root organizations. In the forestry sector (including rangeland and protected areas), the major outcomes of these meetings were the strong need for sustainable management plans, the harmonization of the legislation framework and the strengthening of the cooperation among the different actors.

The Ministry of Agriculture, through the RDNRD is in charge of the preparation and implementation of the NAP, and is providing a major financial and technical contribution. This directorate hosts the national focal point of the UNCCD (Mr. Fady ASMAR). The German Government through the GTZ, the Dry Land Development Center (former UNSO) and the UNDP are assisting the process.

On the other hand, with the assistance of FAO, Lebanon has adopted the criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management and is proposing to host the regional workshop for the final adoption of these criteria and indicators.

**5. Please provide information on recent efforts to assess long-term trends in national supply and demand for wood, non-wood forest products and services and whether your country's national forest programme or similar policy framework for forests takes into consideration future needs for forest goods and services. Please provide views on how enhanced cooperation at the regional and**

**international levels, including through UNFF, could further facilitate implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, other information and emerging issues**

Not available

**6. Please provide any additional relevant information on the implementation of proposals for action or emerging issues<sup>2</sup> related to: i) economic aspects of forests, ii) forest health and productivity, or iii) maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs.**

Damage to forests from air pollution does not seem to be a significant problem in Lebanon, or at least no major studies were undertaken on this issue yet. However, a new pest, *Cephalcia tannourinensis n. sp.* is attacking the cedar forests. The pest was discovered in the Tannourine cedar forest in North Lebanon, and named after it. It is causing serious damage to the trees and is endangering the surrounding cedar forests in Lebanon and in the region. Thanks to an FAO Technical Cooperation Project and to the joint efforts of the RDNRD team in the Ministry of Agriculture, researchers from the Faculty of Agriculture at the American University of Beirut, the Lebanese Army and researchers from the INRA-France, the life cycle of this insect is studied and means to control it are developed and applied. The French expert Mr. Guy Demolin played a major role in this issue. After four years of air treatment, the population of the insect is substantially dropping and hazard on the forest seem to be reduced. However the hazard of the attack on surrounding cedar forests in Lebanon and in the region still exists as the insect population is not totally controlled. Countries in the region are invited to check their cedar forests on a regular basis as the occurrence of a new outbreak is still possible. Further information concerning this pest can be obtained at the Ministry of Agriculture, RDNRD.

Like in all countries submitted to the Mediterranean climate, forest fires constitute a major threat to the forests and other wooded lands of Lebanon. Despite all the joint efforts between the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Interior, Municipalities and NGO's forest fires destroy hundreds of hectares of forests and other wooded lands every summer. The French Government has assisted Lebanon by providing a technical and financial assistance to the RDNRD for combating forest fires. Through this assistance a comprehensive capacity building program was undertaken. Engineers were trained in France and Lebanon; French trainers assisted by Lebanese engineers provided training to the forest guards. In addition to this capacity building initiative, the RDNRD was equipped with cars and trucks for immediate intervention. Some NGOs are benefiting of international assistance for training, equipment and capacity building. Helicopters of the Lebanese Army were equipped with Bambi Buckets through a private sector initiative. However, further efforts have to be undertaken in order to prevent and combat forest fires.

### **III. Preparation of the Report**

This report was prepared by the Rural Development and Natural Resources Directorate in the Ministry of Agriculture. Further reports for the UNFF will be prepared in a participatory approach with the involvement of all concerned stakeholders.