



Boreal forest platform: Russian perspective

Declaration

The transition to effective sustainable forestry, which due to its importance was put in the basis of forest policy of Russia, is aimed at improving the effectiveness of forest exploitation and the profitability of forestry, moreover it promotes sustainable forest management in the most productive forests which ensures a sustainable supply of raw material for forest industry. Exploitation of forests that have already been in use gives the opportunity to conserve intact forest landscapes, protection and other valuable forests. The transition to effective forestry requires certain economic and legislative incentives for forest businesses as well as enhancement of the role of forest users and public in decision-making and guaranteed protection of investments in forestry fund and forest transport infrastructure. This will allow the logging and wood processing enterprises not only to receive a significant economic benefit in the long term (savings on logging and transportation of raw materials, comprehensive utilization of resources, the production of target forest products in demand), but also to become more responsible and to invest more in wise forest management, thinning, other silviculture operations and in sustainable forestry.

All stakeholders are interested in the transition to more effective forestry: for business it means guaranteed supply of wood as well as reduced costs of transportation and harvesting; for environmentally conscious community it means protection of forests of high conservation value including intact forest landscapes; for public authorities it means increasing the yield of the forest sector; and for local population it means the emergence of new jobs and the development of settlements. At the moment, Federal Forestry Agency is developing the concept of transition to effective forestry, which is being actively discussed. Forest business conducts experiments on the introduction of effective forestry in model areas. In certain regions the standards of biodiversity conservation in the process of logging are introduced with the support of regional authorities, environmental NGOs and scientists. These documents form an integral part of environmental aspect of effective forestry.

However, the transition to the new model of forestry raises concerns among some of the representatives of forest sector. They need to come to a common understanding of what effective forestry means and to define clearly what does it include, what are the perspectives and the responsibilities. Will they be able to protect private investment in state forest fund in the long term and will it be profitable in the long run? What standards for forestry measures are needed to make forest cultivation as efficient as possible? Is it possible to protect biodiversity, ecosystem services, forest landscape integrity and other social and cultural values in effectively managed forests? How to find compromise between timber harvesting and biodiversity conservation within one forest landscape? An open dialogue between all stakeholders, based on the best national and international experience, will help to find, the answers to these questions, to consider different interests and to avoid conflicts, to promote the transition to effective model and the exchange of experience of introduction of this model by different forest companies and public organizations.

Boreal forest platform is created for open discussion and for sharing experience between forest companies and public authorities that develop forest legislation and control its effective implementation. Consumers that are concerned about products produced through sustainable forest management as well as environmentally and socially public organizations can also participate in the work of the platform. Using the experience of model effective forestry projects of Russian companies and organizations and best international practices including the project "New generation plantations" Boreal Forest Platform will promote the transition to effective sustainable forestry in Russia. The work of the platform will be focused on the discussion and making suggestions in order to improve the legislation necessary for the

transition and to ensure the socio-economic and environmental priorities and their combination on the basis of landscape planning and the dialogue between all stakeholders.

May 19 representatives of forest governing authorities, forest companies, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions came together in Moscow to define the goals and the objectives of the platform, to discuss its format as well as existing barriers for the transition to effective sustainable forestry and ways to overcome them, also the participants of the meeting talked over the perspectives and further steps.

The goals of Boreal forest platform

- to turn boreal forests into sustainable source of valuable forest materials and services produced through environmentally and socially conscious forest management that contributes to conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem functions, integrity of forest landscape as well as social and cultural forest values
- to introduce the mechanisms for business stimulation and to guarantee investment protection in forest sector for the successful transition to effective sustainable forestry;
- to make real changes in legislative system for the transition to the new model of forestry and practical realization of its principles;
- to provide conditions for increasing employment and better social and economic development in rural and forest territories of the regions.

The objectives of Boreal forest platform

- finding a common understanding of goals and objectives of effective sustainable forestry model which under present conditions is the only possible way to develop competitive forest sector;
- promoting an open dialogue and exchange of experience of the transition to effective sustainable forestry, including the aspects of the return on investment in forest cultivation and effective forestry practices and technologies;
- promoting the landscape approach as a method of forest management planning that takes into account the requirements of the conservation of biodiversity and environmental values of forests, including forests of high conservation value and intact forest landscapes;
- defining the consolidated position of business, nongovernmental organizations, federal and regional authorities and other stakeholders on the new model of forestry, conservation of valuable forests and sustainability and environmental friendliness of production, procurement and consumption of wood products;
- ensuring the effective forest restoration and conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem functions, integrity of forest landscapes as well as social and cultural values in in effectively managed forests through science-based zoning and regulation of activities;
- distribution of developed positions and submission of the recommendations to public authorities and forest managing organs for the further cooperation in achieving stated goals.

The format of Boreal forest platform

- It is a platform for a discussion in the form of regular round tables in which representatives of public authorities and forest managing organs, logging and wood processing companies, timber dealers,

publishers, forest products consumers, nongovernmental organizations, media and other stakeholders can participate.

- It is a platform for educational cooperation and consultancy support in the form of seminars and field trips for sharing best practices of effective forestry and corporate environmental and social responsibility of companies in Russia and abroad.

- it is a platform for informational cooperation through the demonstration of the best examples of effective sustainable forestry management and corporate environmental responsibility of companies on the web site of the Boreal Forest Platform, through systematization and publication of the results of scientific research and practical experience.

Appendix

Feedback from the participants of the meeting on May 19, where the Boreal forest platform was established

- it is necessary to get regional forest managing bodies interested in the project and to ensure their active participation in the work of the platform;

- it is necessary to create an expert group for handling an expertise of forestry standards in order to correct them and to sum up the results of different studies and expert opinions on the subject of effective sustainable forestry;

- it is essential to come to a common understanding of effective and sustainable forestry, taking into account the importance of the process economics (because now forest industry is completely disconnected from forest management)

- equal conditions for business and public institutions should be guaranteed within the concept of the platform;

- the goal of the effective model of forestry is not to substitute traditional extensive model of forestry but to supplement it;

- the updating of the data about Russian forests is the key for successful introduction of the new model of forestry;

- Boreal forest platform can become an effective instrument for informational and analytical support of Russian Federal Forestry Agency and Russian Government within the limits of national systems of technological forecast and strategic planning;

- during the process of transition to the new model special attention must be paid to environmental aspects such as conservation of intact forest landscapes, protection forests and other forests of high conservation value;

- mechanisms of voluntary forest certification are an important instrument that should be used for the transition to effective forestry;

- Boreal forest platform should be an open and public platform;

- it is important to avoid an overly global approach in the transition to effective forestry, the priorities and the geography of the transition should be defined for the next few years, and it is necessary to focus on the areas of secondary exploitation forests), instead of trying to introduce the new model all over the place;

- instead of directly introducing effective forestry, we need to focus on providing appropriate conditions for such transition, especially in the field of regulatory changes;
- private business and state authorities should use the same approaches in order to introduce the new model successfully;
- promotion of sustainable effective forestry should be carried out in simple and informative way, on the web site of the platform should be created a forum for a discussion of different problems related to the transition to this model;
- we need to popularize best practices of sustainable effective forestry: in model forests or in such companies as Forest Alternative, Mondi and Ilim Group;
- it is necessary to take an inventory and to create a database of existing demonstration sites, existing methods of effective forestry, training programs, examples of the use of a low-grade wood, etc;
- it is important to take advantage of regional educational potential for example of Komi Forest Academy;
- it is necessary to consider all aspects of effective sustainable forestry, including land use, carbon absorption in effectively managed forests, potential of the voluntary carbon market, etc.

Further steps

- June 2015 – to adopt the declaration for starting the Boreal forest platform, taking into account suggestions from the participants of the round table;
- June-July 2015 – to make up a plan of BFP activities (round tables, seminars, study tours) for 2015-2016, to discuss the form of payment for the participation in the activities of the platform;
- Until the end of 2015 – the accession of companies and organizations to the platform on the basis of written statements;
- Creation of an expert group attached to the platform;
- July- August 2015 – creation of the web site for Boreal Forest Platform.