

LEGISLATION ON CONSERVATION OF FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES IN LITHUANIA

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Lithuania has signed up the international Rio Biodiversity Convention by 1992 and is carrying the obligations on conservation of national forest genetic resources (FGR). A broad network of gene conservation units for the main commercial tree species was established during the period from 1972 to 1998. Lithuania is an active participant in the EUFORGEN programme initiated in 1994 to facilitate conservation of FGR in Europe. To establish a well-functioning and sustainable gene conservation programme, especially, in the economies under transition, an appropriate legal basis is needed. Objective of this presentation is to describe the currently existing legal acts concerning gene conservation and to present functional subdivision of forests in Lithuania.

1. National Law on Protected Areas (from 1993, complemented in 2000) foresees two types of reserves: reserves of type 1 designated to (a) preserve landscape ecosystems and the existing biota, (b) constitute material for research, (c) to promote natural and cultural values; reserves of type 2, including the genetic reserves, designated to (a) preserve natural resources and national heritage, (b) to preserve biodiversity, genetic diversity and to maintain ecological balance, (c) constitute material for research, (d) serve for recreation.

2. National Forest Law (from 1994): foresees (1) exceptional State ownership rights on forests which include genetic reserves, (2) the State Forest Service is responsible for conservation of FGR and tree breeding.

3. National Law on Wild Plants (from 1999) covers (1) conservation of wild plants on species and genotype level, (2) responsibilities to conduct monitoring of wild plant species.

4. National Law on Protection of Plant Cultivars and Seed Procurement covers (1) rules for export and import of plant cultivars, (2) control of breeding and protection of cultivars will be carried out by the State.

5. The main principles of National Law on Plant Genetic Resources (from 2000, not adopted yet) are the following: (1) the State is responsible for management of plant genetic resources (PGR) through the corresponding governmental institutions, (2) the main principles for conservation of PGR are set, (3) national scientific institutions will be responsible for evaluation and selection,

(4) PGR may be conserved *in situ*, *ex situ* and *inter situ*, (5) conservation *in situ* includes reserves and tree groups or single trees, (6) conservation *ex situ* includes field collections and gene banks, (7) use of PGR will not result in reduction of bio- and genetic diversity, (8) rights and responsibilities of the users as well as the associated control and international co-operation are discussed.

6. National Regulations on Forest Seed (from 1997) contain the following main sections: seed supply network, classification of seed lots depending on the origin and breeding value, rules for seed processing and management, control of origin of forest reproductive material and certification.

7. National Regulations on Forest Genetic Reserves (from 2000) contain the following main sections: criteria for selection of genetic reserves, the procedure of their establishment and abolition, protection, management and use of genetic reserves, the procedure of inventories to assess condition of genetic reserves and collect information on genetic reserves.

Functional subdivision of forests in Lithuania.

Forest category	Area, ha	%
I group. Reserve forests, total	34.992	1.6
1) State reserves	23.760	
2) Reserves of state parks	11.070	
3) Small reserve zones	162	
II group. Special purpose forests, total	279.061	13.0
1) Ecosystem protection forests, total	190.110	8.9
-protected forests (2 group protection regime)	155.804	
-forests with protected nature monuments	2.419	
-forests preventing soil erosion	18.109	
-genetic reserves	290	
-experimental plots	216	
-forests stands of high productivity	667	
-forests containing sites with protected natural resources	1.320	
-protective forests along coastal lines of Baltic sea and Curonian Lagoon (a belt of 1 km wide)	8.675	
2) Recreational forests	88.951	4.1
-city forests	10.863	
-forest parks	51.523	
-recreational zones in state parks	9.717	
-resort forests	3.734	
-recreational forests and sites	13.114	
III group. Protective forests, total	300.206	14.0
1) Protected forests (3 group protection regime)	50.718	
2) Forests for buffer zones in state parks	10.905	
3) Forests for protective zones in state parks	60.530	
4) Resort forests (3 group protection regime)	19.164	
5) Forests for open field protection	11.624	
6) Forests of recreational value near roads	621	
7) Forests as protective zones for water bodies	142.706	
8) Forests around factories	3785	
9) Seed collection areas (seed reserves)	153	
IV group Commercial forests, total	1.535.363	71.4
1) Commercial forests in state parks	89.960	
2) Commercial forests	1.445.406	
Total	2.149.622	100