

## **SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY TRAINING FOREST ENTERPRISE - HISTORY, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The article describes the circumstances of establishment of the Training Forest Enterprise belonging to the Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry Brno, and with its mission in the educational system of the university in the past and present. The first professors of the Faculty of Forestry who were at the establishment of the Training Forest Enterprise were called to pedagogical activity from forestry practice, which was at that time already affected by ideas of sustained production and even-flow yield. At the Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology and in the Training Forest Enterprise, this idea was gradually transformed into sustainable forest management and multiple-use forestry. The students that go through most of their practical training in the Training Forest Enterprise therefore absorb the vision of professional forest property management during their studies. Due to the fact that the Training Forest Enterprise was established on an area devastated by harvesting of fuel wood and wood for charcoal production, it is a valuable example showing that in three generations it is possible to change non-stocked land into a forest fulfilling both production and social functions. The system of forestry education on ecosystem basis and practical demonstrations of sustainable forest management attract more and more foreign students to forestry studies in Brno; after graduation they assert themselves in management positions in forestry as well as in nature protection. This is the best evidence of the fact that multiple-use forestry and sustainable forest management are not in opposition to nature protection.

**Keywords:** educational system, practical training, forestry, sustainable forest management, wood processing industry

## **HISTORY**

The Agricultural University in Brno, as the predecessor of Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry, was established by the Law no. 460 Coll. of the former Czechoslovak Republic from 24 July 1919 after the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The mission of this school was to educate specialists in agriculture and forestry at university level and in their mother tongue (Czech). Later, these two branches were supplemented with horticulture, wood processing, economics, landscaping and food products processing.

At the time the Faculty of Forestry in Brno was established, the philosophy of sustained production and even-flow yield from forest had been applied in central Europe for approx. 150 years. Although nowadays some authors claim that the present concept of sustainable forest management is broader than the concept of sustained production and even-flow yield from forest in the past, it is indisputable that the basic principles of sustainable forest management were developed at that time. It is true that the original philosophy pursued mostly the sustainability of production of wood and non-wood products, while today's sustainable forest management aims at the sustainability of all forest functions; still, it is evident that if the forest management of that time had lead to disturbance of ecological balance in forests, it would also have caused uncertainty and therefore uneven flow of yield.

The teachers of forestry disciplines that were called to teach at the former Faculty of Forestry were all outstanding representatives of forestry practice of that time, mostly managers of large forest properties. Therefore, it is natural that they brought the idea of sustainable forest management with them from forests to classrooms. Without hesitation it is possible to say that the Faculty of Forestry in Brno is a school that adopted sustainable forest management from its very beginning.

The first professors realised that forestry is a field which can not be taught without practical training in the forests; that is why they strived for establishment of a Training Forest Enterprise that would not only facilitate practical training, but where, during the whole time of their studies, the students could see an example of forest management that they would later apply in practice.

T.G. Masaryk, the first President of the Czechoslovak Republic, fulfilled the wish of the professors, ordered to buy out 10.000 hectares of forests immediately neighbouring with Brno and assigned them to the University as its Training Forest Enterprise. Since then, as an expression of gratitude for this statesmanlike act, the University has been using for the Training Forest Enterprise the honorary title "Masaryk Forest".

## **THE PRESENT**

Today's Training Forest Enterprise "Masaryk Forest" is a living example of functional sustainable forest management and a demonstration of the results that can be

achieved through forestry management of a landscape. Three centuries ago the area of the present Training Forest Enterprise was practically without forests as they had to give way to fuel wood harvesting for the town of Brno and charcoal burning for ironworks in Josefov and engineering works in Adamov. The effort of several generations of foresters has resulted in development of mixed forests with dominant beech situated in the Protected Landscape Area "Moravian Karst" (nearly 10% of the TFE's area are nature reserves) that not only fulfil all the production functions of a forest property, but also serve as a field workplace for students, a research laboratory for teachers and as a recreation space for an agglomeration of almost 400 thousand inhabitants.

The Training Forest Enterprise responded to the introduction of the new study programmes focusing on wood processing and landscaping. The sawmill and joinery plants were modernized and the students of landscaping began to participate in the design of technical and aesthetical works in the landscape continuing the 80 year long tradition of forest glades, tablets, springs and monuments included in the so called "Forest Pantheon".

The Training Forest Enterprise "Masaryk Forest" is an example of a multiple-use forest property where sustainable forest management is being applied; therefore it is not by coincidence that it became a sought-after destination of professional excursions from our country as well as from abroad. That is why our Faculty has earned a good reputation of a place where forestry is being understood and taught on ecosystem basis. This approach attracts more and more foreign students who want to carry out at least a part of their studies at our Faculty. There also were quite a few students who had decided to do the whole study programme at our Faculty and for this reason they learned the Czech language. Over 200 foreign students have successfully graduated and we are proud to say that a number of them found positions on the level of ministers in their countries, for example at ministry of utilization of natural resources or ministry of environment. What could be a better proof of the fact that there is no discrepancy between multiple-use forestry and nature protection?

## **THE FUTURE**

As people often say, the only sure thing about the future is that nothing will happen as we expect. However, closer to my heart and hearts of my colleagues at the Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology, Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry in Brno, is the quote of Antoine de Saint - Exupéry: As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it.

This is the reason why we do not wait to see what the future will bring, but we educate forest engineers so that they became environmentalists from the bottom of their hearts, but with the minds of managers, technicians and economists. Only such balanced personalities can professionally manage multiple-use forests through sustainable forest management.

As the only criterion of truthfulness of a theory is the practice, the role of the

Training Forest Enterprise as a workplace for practical training of students and a reference workplace of forestry practice is irreplaceable. At this enterprise we will continue in further processing of wood, not only for educational purposes, but also because we do not want to sell wood as a raw material bringing profit to somebody else, but we want to sell maximum of final products with the highest added value possible.

Finally I would like to express my firm conviction that the Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology, Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry in Brno, as the oldest university of this specialization in the Czech Republic, not only has a remarkable history and promising present, but it will also have a bright future.