



National Federation of Communal
Forests and Pastures of Albania

MEMO

Addressed to: His Excellency Prof. Dr. Sali Berisha, Albanian Prime Minister
From: National Federation of Communal Forest and Pasture
Subject: On further Development of Communal Forest in Albania.

In the framework of policies regarding the decentralization of natural resources governance and country's integration to the European Union, the Albanian Government lately has undertaken important steps to transfer 900,000 hectares of public forest and pasture into the ownership of communes and municipalities, followed by their further transfer in use to villages and rural families.

The Albanian experience in this transfer is unique compared to other countries, as it is based on the tradition in the use of forests and pastures located nearby villages in a collective way of use by villagers or families for their own needs. Thus, the transfer process is considered as a return to tradition, respecting the sustainable and long term management rules of the nature's wealth.

In fact currently the transfer process has reached the commune and municipality level, but not yet the traditional use (village, rural family). We consider that this phase of communal forest and pasture transfer into commune is simply the starting point to the long term process for a sustainable management of these resources, process that will be accomplished with the participation of communities and a decentralized administration by the local government.

Transfer of rights and responsibilities on forest and pasture management to LGU and further more to users (village and rural families) is one of the most important aspects of forest and pasture reform.

The experience so far has strengthen the conviction that transfer of forest and pasture management responsibilities to the LGU and further to traditional users based on the old tradition and customs, is a beneficiary and successful process from which are benefiting rural families comprising half of the population as well as the entire society.

Based on Your instructions provided during the International Conference of the International Land Coalition, organized in Tirana during May 24-27, 2011, as well as considering the discussions in the Regional Federations of Communal Forest and Pasture Users, the staff of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Water Administration, the LGU and the interested stakeholders, following we are presenting some proposals for further decentralization on forest and pasture governance and approximation to EU practices as part of the integration process.

1. Local government units in cooperation with Forest Service Directorate at District level should review the transferred communal forest and pasture areas, and should propose the transfer and ownership to communes and municipalities of all treeless and un productive lands, pastures, areas of forest land and shrubs, and those forests that are under the

administration of the Forestry Service, that is more beneficiary to be transferred into communal use of the village and rural families with the exception of: national parks and protected areas, forestry missives of national importance, the forest belt that protects the lowland area from Vlore to Velipojë, protected forests of watercatchments of hydropower's, protected forests of the river side land, lakes and irrigation reservoirs, belts on the motor and rail way sides, as well as any other forest that is considered of a national importance.

2. To define, approve and legalize the communal forest and pasture boundaries among LGU, villages, and users. Communal forest and pasture plots should be given officially in use to the user (village, rural families), implementing the traditional rights, based on a contract among the head of commune/municipality and the user, a simple management plan for the user, as well as their registration in the registration office of the immovable properties. Registration expenditures in the Immoveable Property Registration Office for the forest and pasture given to users should be paid by the government.
3. Communal users (village, rural families) should have exclusive user rights on forests and pastures given in use, have the rights to sell timber and non timber products that derive from the forest and pasture given in use, as well as from the state forest and pastures given for exploitation according to criteria and rules in power, in order to alleviate the poverty and increase the incomes especially in the poor rural areas.
4. Communes/municipalities should establish the communal forest and pasture management units recruiting qualified forest specialists or should delegate the competences to other neighboring units that have the qualified specialists.
5. Communal forest and pasture users associations and Federations should be technically and financially supported by the government on community qualification and awareness, to prepare and implement sustainable communal forest and pasture management plans.
6. There is a need to prepare a new forestry law, with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and competences on the state forest managements, communal forest management and private forest management.
7. As the agriculture land, forest and pastures have always been together, the basis for life conditions of farmers and aiming a better governance of natural resources, it is proposed that the forestry and pasture sector should return under the responsibility if the Ministry of Agriculture, where needs to be established and functional the General Directorate of Forest and Pastures, as a special structure under direct responsibility of the Minister.
8. The Strategy of Forest and Pasture Development needs to be revised in light to the latest changes and should be part of the Rural Development Strategy , as it is recommended in the European policies and conventions.

The National Federation of Communal forest and Pasture (engaged in the implementation of forest and pasture reforms, as well as activities on the Forest International Year), hopes in Your full support to continue the reforms on the decentralization of forest and pasture governance, their placement closer to the user, aiming to increase the well being especially in the poor rural areas and a better protection of environment in our country.

Respectfully,

On behalf of the National Federation of Communal Forest and Pastures

Chairman

Rexhep Ndreu