

FOREST MANAGEMENT

FFH 14

Forest management plans¹ are a guide for the work of foresters. In particular, they help foresters avoid overexploitation and ensure the multifunctionality of forests. Imposed by the Forestry Code² from 2008 onwards for all forests subjected to the forestry regime with a surface area greater than 20 ha in one holding, their implementation is also one of the pillars of the Progress Plan for Forest Management (*Plan de progrès pour la gestion forestière*)³, aimed at sustainable management of Walloon forests.

A target for each plot

Based on an in-depth analysis of the environment, forest management plans set out the main guidelines (objectives, constraints) for sustainable forest management. The multifunctional nature of the forest is the central component of the management plan, with respect for a balance between the various functions. In addition to the ecological function, which is a prerequisite for the other functions, and the economic function which extends throughout the whole property, other functions can be attributed to plots: social, cultural, recreational, hunting, etc. As part of the drafting of forest management plans, the biodiversity circular⁴ imposes a target of 5% of the surface area for core conservation areas, 30% for biodiversity development areas and 65% for "other areas". These different areas form the forest ecological network and correspond to different levels of integration of biodiversity conservation into forest management. At the end of 2016, according to the EFOR database of the Nature and Forests Department (*Département de la nature et des Forêts-DNF*), 6% of the forest subjected to the forestry regime was classified as core conservation areas, 16% as biodiversity development areas and 78% as "other areas".

Diversification, adaptation and dynamic forestry

In the face of climate change, the adaptation of species to the station⁵ and the development of natural associations are particularly encouraged. In general, management plans provide for the diversification of species, both coniferous trees and deciduous trees. Coniferous stands outside the station are generally replaced by deciduous trees. In other cases, Douglas fir and to a lesser extent larch are gradually integrated into spruce stands to produce mixed stands. Where conditions are met, the replacement of deciduous

stands with coniferous stands may be considered. Dynamic forestry aimed at producing high-quality wood is fostered in order to favour the penetration of light: wide-spaced plantations, early thinning, tree-objective forestry⁶, etc.

Non-compliance

While the day-to-day management of forests benefiting from the forestry regime is ensured by the DNF, incorporating all regulatory changes, a recent management plan (in conformity with the Forestry Code (*Code forestier*)) was only available for 36% of the 270,582 ha covered by forest management plans in 2016. Since these plans have an average life span of 24 years, almost 11,300 ha should be reviewed each year. However, between 2007 and 2016, revisions were an average of 4,947 ha/year. The external audit carried out in June 2016 as part of the PEFC⁷ forest certification process placed the DNF in non-compliance as regards the production of management plans. The DNF has been asked to take the necessary measures, under penalty of losing the PEFC forest certification for all public forests. An action plan was recently submitted and approved by the external auditor. The Forestry Code now requires that each management plan must be accompanied by an environmental impact assessment, which makes the procedure for adopting plans more complex.

^[1] Circular No 2619 on forest management in forests subject to the forestry regime | ^[2] Decree of 15/07/2008 | ^[3] PEFC, 2016 | ^[4] Supplement to Circular No 2619 (SPW-DG03, 2010) | ^[5] Based on the ecological tree species register and the afforestation guide, revised in 2017 | ^[6] Attention paid to the most beautiful trees selected within a young stand | ^[7] → FFH 13

Fig. FFH 14-1 Area and progress of forest management plans in Wallonia (2016)

