

Book reviews

Forest Policy for Private Forestry: Global and Regional Challenges. Edited by Lawrence Teeter, Benjamin Cashore and Daowei Zhang. CABI Publishing. Xvii + 307 pp. Price Stg. £65.

The chapters in this book were selected from papers presented at a conference on *Global Initiatives and Public Policy: First International Conference on Private Forestry in the 21st Century*, organised by the Forest Policy Centre of Auburn University in 2001. While a serious attempt is made to deliver on the global aspects of private forestry policy there is a considerable emphasis on private forestry in the United States. The papers were edited by the staff or adjunct staff of Auburn University with the assistance of Benjamin Cashore of Yale University.

The book is well laid out with brief notes on the authors and a subject index. For those who have access to the Internet all the papers are available at: www.auburn.edu/academic/forestry_wildlife/forest_policy.

The publication's tone is set in the Preface where the editors write "forests are no longer seen solely as economic development engines, but also as important protectors of ecosystems, watersheds, endangered and threatened species, and homes for endangered cultures and rural communities. As a result, much more attention needs to be placed on developing policies governing private forestry, and the impacts they might have on economic, social and environmental goals."

The papers address key issues in private forestry with experience and examples from around the world. The book is in four parts: Part 1 Changing philosophies of forest management, Part 2 Designing and implementing policies for private forestry, Part 3 Sustainable forestry economics and Part 4 Perspectives on forest certification. It is not a book to read from cover to cover but one to use as a research tool and as a pointer to a series of references, which extend far beyond the normal remit of CAB Forestry Abstracts. It is all the more refreshing for that as it looks at forestry and private forest policy from many different viewpoints. In this sense it adopts a truly postmodern approach.

Part 1 contains one of the most interesting papers by John Schelhas, which directly addresses the question of whether there really is a postmodern attitudes to forest management. His paper is entitled "New trends in forest policy and management: an emerging postmodern approach?" Perhaps as equally interesting as the content of this paper is the fact that the author is a member of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Criminology and Social Work at Auburn University and has recently been elected a Fellow of the Society for Applied Anthropology. The book is worth accessing just for this paper alone.

Part 2 deals with designing and implementing forest policies for private forestry. The major paper in this Part - from a European point-of-view - is by Jacek Siry dealing with the future of private forestry in Central and Eastern Europe. In most of these former centralised economies - now moving to free market systems - there has been some restoration of forest lands (which had been nationalised or centralised under Communism) to their original owners. This has proved to be a mixed blessing as those who travelled in Romania on the Society's recent tour experienced. Not all of these countries have returned all forest land - Poland being a notable example, retaining most forest land in state ownership and issuing privatisation bonds against other state industries which were being privatised. Siry points

to the fact that while the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has favoured larger scale industrial forest holdings the situation in the EU more is that half the harvest comes from small-scale forest holdings. This has led to the development of an alternative certification scheme – the Pan European Forest Certification Council (PEFC Council) which is being developed by organisations which represents the twelve million private forest owners in Europe. It seems that the FSC process is driven by NGOs while the PEFC certification process is being driven by owners.

George Weyerhaeuser gives an interesting overview of how a family firm responds to outside pressures. He indicates that it is not clear to him that the current institutions and policy framework are ready to meet complex international challenges like those now arising. He indicates that “society is going to expect different outcomes from private forest management than those that our policy frameworks were designed to deliver”.

Sustainable forest economics are dealt with in Part 3, where there are a number of thought provoking papers. Birger Solberg, of the Department of Forest Science, Agricultural University of Norway, who has contributed to many European Forest Institute (EFI) publications in this field, gives a brief overview of the situation in Europe through summaries of various studies which have been carried out. Anyone wishing to pursue this area would do well to follow up these studies at the EFI website www.efi.fi. A paper by Peter Ince and Alexander Moiseyev indicates that it would be wise for the forest industry to keep a close eye on developments in other related land use industries, such as agriculture, and in particular the area of short rotation forestry or biomass production.

The final Part 4 of the book deals with the rise of forest certification and how it affects the forest industry. Erika Sasser gives details of the increasing participation and power of NGOs in the development of forest certification. Since 1993 he has identified at least 23 such organisations – mostly national but some like the FSC increasingly national. He mainly deals with the situation in the US as do most of the other papers in this section.

Many of the arguments, discussions, contentions situations, approaches etc. found in this book have their echoes in developments which are ongoing in the Irish forest industry today. In the Irish case it could be argued that the development of policy for private forestry was in the hands of those with a state forestry ethos and that hard lessons were learned and still need to be learned in the management of neophyte private farm foresters. The major problem is the passage of time, while policies are put in place. We are always trying to catch up. As George Weyerhaeuser points out it takes so long for a policy to be agreed that it may be obsolete before it ever comes to fruition. However we still need a policy framework.

No one size fits all but this book offers a spectrum of ideas, and potential policy options, which are immensely valuable for all students of private forestry.

Mike Bulfin

(Mike Bulfin is Head of Forest Research in Teagasc, the national farm research and advisory board, and is current Vice-President of the Society of Irish Foresters.)