

One of the many reasons behind the unstable operation of pulp and paper mills is the deteriorating timber supply situation. A particularly bleak picture is emerging this year. So far, the executive committees of the local Soviets have failed to hand over approximately 12 million cubic metres of the allowable cut. Just recently I received a visit from the General Manager of the "Irkutsklesprom" Association. He told me that the situation has reached the point of virtual racketeering on the part of local authorities. For example the Kirensk regional executive committee demanded that in exchange for writing off the allowable cut the Association supply it with 100 tons of meat, 1,000 cubic metres of sawn timber to be sold abroad and 600,000 rubles to meet the needs of the region.

The situation is made even more complicated by the fact that according to the decree of the USSR Supreme Soviet of November 27, 1989, no overfelling of designated coupes will be allowed beginning in 1991. This means that the logging volume will drop by 12 million cubic metres...

Of course one can criticize both the work of the industry's enterprises and the Ministry as well for failing to satisfy the growing demands of the national economy and the population for timber and paper products. And indeed, we really do have quite a few shortcomings in this area. However for the sake of objectivity I would like to point out that despite all the difficulties, there has not been any decrease in the growth of newsprint in the country.

Nevertheless, this year's newsprint shortage exceeds 100,000 tons. The point is that in determining the resources for 1990 the USSR Gosplan (State Planning Committee) based its decisions on the assumption that the country's publishing houses would receive not only 95 percent of the paper envisaged by the State order but also the remaining 5 percent which was left for the pulp and paper mills to sell as they pleased. However taking into