

THE FORESTRY INDUSTRY IN PERU

Introduction

The forests of Latin America constitute the world's largest lumber reserves, with about one third of the evergreens and hardwoods combined, and more than half of the estimated world figure for growing hardwoods. However, yields from this vast potential stand at less than 4% of world lumber production, making the region a net importer of forestry products. Peru has also in the last few years become a net importer of forestry products. In addition, the forestry sector's share of the Gross National Product of Latin American countries, bears little relation to the large economic potential it represents.

Of the 830 million hectares of forest in South America, Peru has about 74 million, of which 60% are considered to be available for production. This area is estimated to contain over 6,000 million cubic metres of lumber. Assuming that each hectare of forest produces an annual increase of 6 cubic metres of round wood, and considering only harvestable forests (44.4 million hectares), the maximum usable and sustainable harvest volume would be in the order of 2667 million cubic metres a year.

The Peruvian forestry industry has not played an important role in the past nor has it been given a great deal of attention by government authorities. Generally, the trend has been to produce consumer and intermediate goods while logging operations have barely exploited the tropical forests. Production has not even met the needs of the domestic market. This has been the direct result of the lack of concrete policies which have restricted a balanced development in the use and processing of forest resources, among which would be a wider and better use of different species, increase in productivity, reforestation, rationalization of production, training, investment and promotion.

As a result of a study financed by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in 1985, the Peruvian government has for the first time a long term Forestry Development Program (Programa de Acción Forestal 1988 - 2000). This Program has helped the Peruvian government to become aware of most problems of its forestry sector and has begun to develop and implement policies to obtain a rational use of its forest resources. The national development plans include a number of objectives to ensure improved exploitation, on the premise that forests are a renewable resource which must be carefully managed so as to achieve increasing and sustainable production, and to supply the products required by the consumer in the most economical way possible. In spite of this one of the major problems still outstanding is reforestation. Peru is losing 3% of its forest annually. There are few nurseries, either private or government sponsored to supply seedlings in Peru. The main source of seedling is the jungle itself thus complicating this essential portion of forestry development.