

management. World practice in forest use calls for felling to be done at the right time and in volumes ensuring equalisation of the age structure of forest resources. This is in order to achieve an optimal ratio between areas occupied by young, middle aged, maturing and mature forests.

In manifesting concern over the fate of our forests, the Soviet public is only dimly aware that agricultural lands are being rapidly encroached upon by forests. This applies in particular to the most valuable of these: the arable lands.

It was for this reason that in 1975, in the course of an inventory of the lands in the non-chernozem zone of the RSFSR, 300,000 hectares of arable land were written off. But more realistic assessments of the land balance during the period 1987 - 1989 showed that in the RSFSR alone 1.4 million hectares of arable land had been lost.

The lands which our grandfathers reclaimed from the forests in past eras and which are yielding at best 12 to 15 centners per hectare in the non-chernozem zone, we are returning to the forest element, obtaining annually from a hectare about one and a half cubic metres of what is usually low-grade timber. This is because the ploughlands are being taken over, predominately by alder, aspen or scrub. Obviously our grandfathers were cleverer than we.

We are paying more attention to woodlands than to farmlands. If only this were sensible! The decree of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dated November 27, 1989 "On Urgent Action to Achieve Ecological Improvements Nationwide" foresees a number of radical measures aimed at the regulation of forest use. These are both unexpected and far from incontrovertible in the view of the vast majority of specialists, both in the logging industry and forestry.

This applies first and foremost to the lumping together under the jurisdiction of Goskomles SSSR of all of the forests except those managed by collective farms, in order that they may be made available for use under leasehold. While there is no objection to the second part