



Facts and Figures About Armenia's Environment

Armenia is a mountain country where by official information only 11% of its territory is covered by forests. According to the evaluation of some experts this number is even lower – 8-9%.

-- National Councils for Sustainable Development

Since 1993, over 100,000 hectares of Armenia's forests have been lost due to unregulated cutting. Only 8%, or roughly 240,000 hectares, of Armenia's land is now covered with forest. If the current rate of deforestation continues, Armenia will have no forests left by the year 2030.

-- Jason Kauffeld, Deputy Country Director, Armenia Tree Project

From 1996 to 2002, about 6 million cubic meters of wood was cut down in an area of about 30,000 hectares. The total forest area in Armenia is 334,199 hectares.

-- National Councils for Sustainable Development

According to official data, the forestry service [in Armenia] is expected to cut from 3,000 to 5,000 cubic meters of wood every year. On paper, the forestry service can't accomplish this task. But in reality, 10 times this volume of wood is cut every year. According to the Ministry of Ecology, not more than 71,000 to 75,000 cubic meters of wood has been cut since 1991.

-- Hrachia Papinyan, Hetq Online

The expert assessment shows that every year, about 0.5 million cubic meters of wood is burned in the country [Armenia], of which only 10-12% is reported. Illegal human activities have not only reduced the volume of forests in the country, but have also created a change in the structure and areas of tree types: high value trees such as beech, oak, pine, and ash have been replaced with low efficiency species (such as fennels).

-- United Nations Common Country Assessment of Armenia

According to recent computer data, about 24,353 sq. km (81.9%) of the territory of the country (excluding the surface areas of Lake Sevan and dams) has been subject to desertification to different extents. Extremely affected areas take up 26.8% of the territory of the country, strongly affected areas are 26.4%, average desertification covers 19.8%, and weak desertification is 8.8%.

-- United Nations Common Country Assessment of Armenia



Facts and Figures About Armenia's Environment (cont'd)

According to the Customs Department and the Statistical Office of Armenia, the volume of wood exported from Armenia has risen sharply over the last four years. During the Soviet era, the republic imported rather than exported wood. Today the nearly forestless Armenia exports not only wood products but raw timber as well. These are the volumes (in metric tons) of wood exported from Armenia from 1999-2002:

Item	1999	2000	2001	2002
Longitudinally cut timber	107.0	1839.7	1484.6	2291.6
Raw timber	484.9	977.0	483.0	2158.2
Single-layer boards	133.7	46.0	112.0	243.0
Wooden building materials, parquetry	79.1	148.3	186.7	25.9

The main export is raw timber, which goes to Iran, France, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, Germany, and Russia.

-- *Edik Baghdasaryan and Armine Petrosyan, Hetq Online*

The National Environmental Action Program estimates the cost of priority environmental investments in the Republic of Armenia to be about \$50 million. The activities required to support the Lake Sevan Protection Program are alone estimated to cost about \$30 million. It is obvious that without immediate investments to protect the environment, degradation will continue and could reach a critical level quickly.

-- *Dr. Nune Darbinyan and Hrach Ashikyan, The Role Of Environmental Enforcement In The Republic Of Armenia – Steps Toward Sustainable Development*

Due to intensive forest utilization in the past 10 years, some 26.2% of beech forest became converted to coppice forest, and currently only 10.3% of beech forest is reported to have high density. In the most critical conditions are oak forests represented by mature and over-mature trees for 31.3%. Also, the age structure of forests (the average age being 90 years, pre-mature trees amounting to 6.5% of total) has a negative impact on future development of forest resources in the country.

-- *State of the Environment Report for Armenia, 2000, Environmental Conservation and Research Center, American University of Armenia*



Facts and Figures About Armenia's Environment (cont'd)

Today, forests cover less than 10% of the land surface of Armenia. Forests are now concentrated in the northeast of the country, and in some areas, such as the Ararat valley, Vayk, and Sevan regions, only small, scattered patches of forest remain. These isolated patches are prevented from regenerating due to the pressure of uncontrolled felling and their use as pasture land. Further forest declines in some areas (such as Vayk and Sevan) have resulted from increases in forest pests and changes in the hydrological regime of forests.

-- Biodiversity of Armenia

Soil erosion and landslides have reached catastrophic proportions: more than 80% of agricultural lands in different extent are undergoing erosion, and land deterioration continues...

Armenian forests mainly serve the protective purpose of climate regulation, anti-erosion and water conservation. Due to the 1992 energy crisis chaotic mass tree cutting began. According to expert estimates, between 1992-1994, about 1 million cubic meters of wood was cut annually, 4,000 hectares of forest were totally wiped out, and about 20,000 hectares were damaged. Due to lack of funding, no steps have been taken to stop forest poachers.

--Human Development Report Armenia 1999, UNDP

An estimated 70% of wood cut in Armenia is used for heating and cooking purposes. Reducing the demand for wood fuel is central to protecting Armenia's forests, but replacing wood with natural gas or other energy sources for heating requires an up-front investment that most families cannot afford.

The three main components of woodcutting include official cutting, illegal cutting by business operations, and individual, private cutting. Therefore, forest destruction continues to be driven by a combination of the high demand for cheap fuel and a lack of enforcement of forest protection standards. Corruption, illegal cutting, and inadequate forest policies must be addressed.

-- Armenian Forests NGO