

Burning the forest in our house?

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Napjainkban számos tévhit kering az erdőgazdálkodással kapcsolatban, miszerint az egyre növekvő fakitermelés veszélyezteti a hazai erdőállomány nagyságát. Ezt a hiedelmet kívánom megcáfolni szakirodalmakra, statisztikai adatokra és saját számításaimra támaszkodva.

Kulcsszavak: erdőgazdálkodás, fakitermelés, energia-ellátás

Nowadays a lot of myths are circulating regarding the management of forests saying that the increasing rate of logging endangers the size of the forests in our country. I would like to disprove the above-mentioned belief based on literature, statistical data and my own calculations.

Key words: management of forest, logging, energy supply



Picture 1: Logging in a Hungarian forest

Source: www.apromix.hu

In the early 1990's several households ensured their energy supply from natural gas through the pipelines owing to the natural gas program. The number of households using this source of energy has grown significantly in the recent years. This fact leads to the conclusion that even those households started to use natural gas which earlier used coal and wood for heating.

Figure 1 shows that the rate of coal and oil drastically reduced in the studied period while the share of natural gas multiplied.

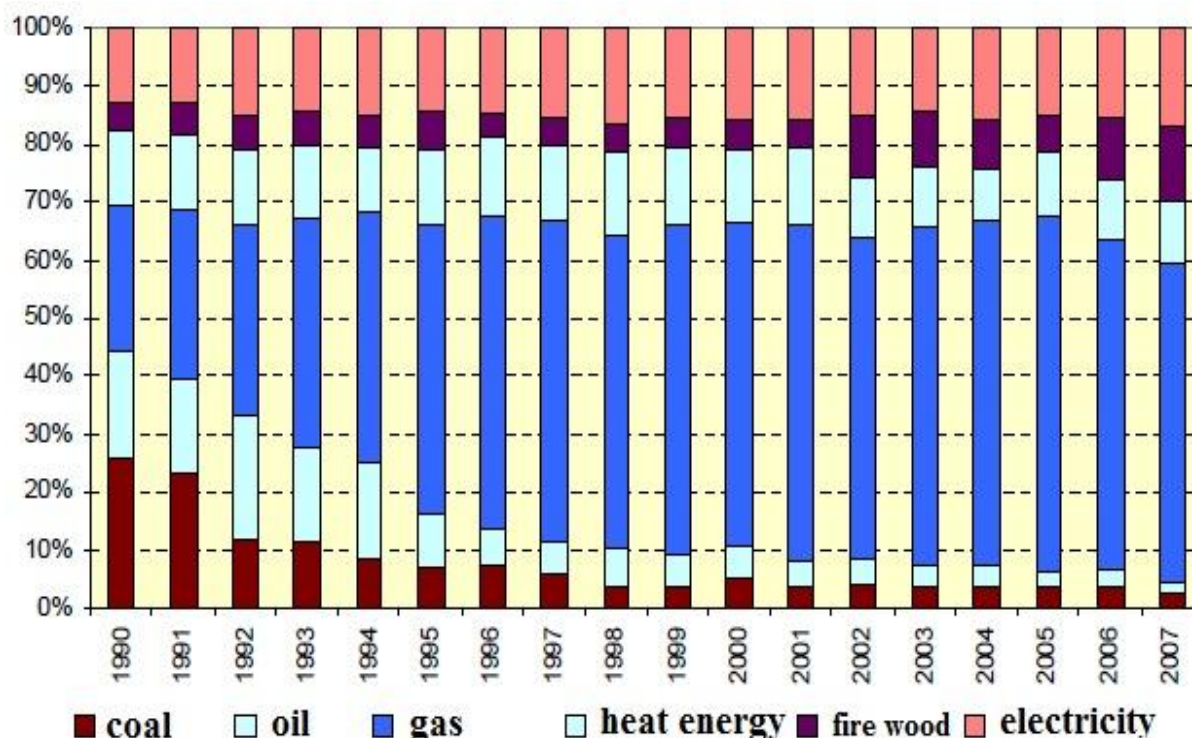


Figure 1: The domestic energy consumption as energy sources
Source: Energiaközpont Nonprofit Kft, 2009 (www.eh.gov.hu)

This trend was enhanced by the rising price of domestic fuel oil and also by the favourable and state-supported price of natural gas at that time.

The most commonly used source of energy is the natural gas, the second one is the electricity which is followed by the biomass.

However, due to the gradual reduction of social subsidies from 2005 on a restructuring began in the energy market: the popularity of natural gas seems to be broken and there is a decreasing tendency in its use because of being expensive. At the same time the use of biomass - wood and electricity produced from biomass – started to increase thanks to not only the consumption of power plants, but also to that of the households.

A sharp increase could be observed regarding the volume of logged timber from 2001 to 2002. It means that the proportion of wood purchased by factories was 14 per cent higher than before.

The size of forest area did not decrease, it even increased by 1.1%

The Hungarian bio-power plants used up 25.313 TJ of solid biomass in 2008 which equals approx. 2-2.5 million m³ of logged timber. The quantity of logged timber was 4,5 million m³ in 2008 (Büki et al, 2010).

Figure 2 shows detailed information on the experience of the past few years regarding the forest area and logging. The size of the Hungarian forests increased by 6,31 per cent compared to the data of 2000.

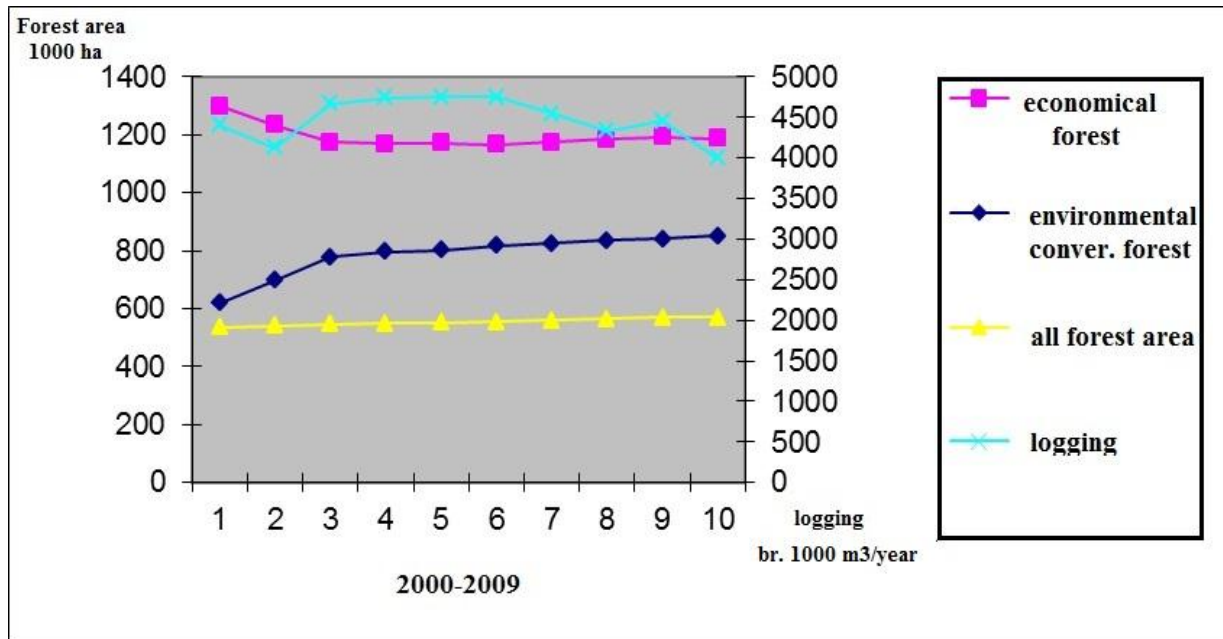


Figure 2: The Hungarian forest area and the volume of logging
Source: own calculate

While the economic forest area decreased by 10 per cent, the area of other environmental forests increased in spite of the growing rate of logging. This statement is confirmed by the correlation value which is – 0,89.

My trend analysis for 2011, which is based on 2000 to 2009 data, indicates that the Hungarian forest area will be 2,069,000 ha – which means 2 per cent growing compared to the data of 2008 – while the annual logging will be a gross amount of 4,337,000 m³, which means 3 per cent reduction compared to the data of 2008 year.

The previously presented correlation and trend analysis clearly demonstrate that increasing forest area is not the consequence of the increased logging therefore **the Hungarian state-owned forest resources will not disappear**, the area and the share of nature conservation forests may even increase. The demand on the part of the power plants and the population can still be ensured without any danger of extreme logging even in spite of the unfortunately existing and substantial illegal logging.

EXPLANATION

- ❖ Earlier it was not worth logging even the available amount due to the much less demand and the lower prices. This wood quantity stayed in the forests, threatening not only the operation of the forestries but also the safety of the environment and those walking in the forests as well.
- ❖ The current price of natural gas makes the use of wood chips and firewood more justifiable but **it does not threaten the size of the Hungarian forests**. It means that its use can be more concentrated and more efficient.

Sources:

(1) Büki G. (szerk.) : Megújuló energiák hasznosítása. Köztisztületi Stratégiai Programok. ISBN 978 963 508 599 6. MTA, Budapest, 2010. (2) SZŰCS I. (2002): Alkalmazott statisztika. Agroinform kiadó, Budapest, 235.p. (3) www.eh.gov.hu