



## **Better forest management could offer Armenia Sustainable Economic Future**

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Better management of forests could offer Armenia significant economic returns and position the country as a champion of conservation and climate change adaptation, according to a new World Bank report, developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment of Armenia and released at a launch event today. It adds that more awareness among everyday Armenians of the value of forests would help the country realize these returns.

The report Armenia: Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) Note (in English and in Armenian) assesses landscape restoration opportunities in Armenia's forestry sector and offers a detailed overview of the sector's potential. For example, on average, each hectare of forest is estimated to deliver on average \$417 per year in total value from a number of ecosystem services (or \$138 million annually).

The report was developed through a consultative process to inform national and international stakeholders about the current status of the forest sector, opportunities for improvement, and existing and potential benefits of landscape restoration measures.

The report provides recommendations that would support the government of Armenia in landscape and forest restoration efforts, while ensuring sustainable economic activities and creating jobs and livelihoods in rural communities.

Armenia, known for its rich biodiversity, faces a unique challenge as it is a forest-poor country, with only 11.2 percent of its territory covered by forests, concentrated mainly in Tavush, Lori, and Syunik marzes. The predominant forest type is naturally grown broad-leaved mountain forest with a small area of pine forest. The report highlights the potential of Armenia's forestry sector to contribute significantly to the country's social, economic, and cultural well-being.

The report also identifies barriers which must be overcome, such as the drivers of forest degradation, climate change impacts, and the lack of awareness among the general population about the importance of sustainable forest management. The report offers potential actions Armenia could undertake to support increased Forest Landscape Restoration

The report suggests prioritizing the:

formalization and adoption a national strategy for landscape restoration,

establishment of a comprehensive National Forest Monitoring System,

building institutional capacity through information and communication technologies.

Additionally, it recommends addressing energy issues, particularly fuel poverty in rural areas, to reduce the reliance on forests as a heating fuel source.

"Armenia faces a unique challenge as it is a forest-poor country. We have to embrace this challenge as an opportunity and join forces for the realization of the country's landscape restoration potential," said Carolin Geginat, World Bank Country Manager for Armenia. "What is needed is to address financial, policy and knowledge barriers. The World Bank is here to work with Armenia to address all three barriers not only with the knowledge contained in this report, but also with investment, and policy support."

The report's findings and recommendations have contributed to the preparation of the Armenia Integrated Resilient Landscape (RESILAND) Improvement Project, a part of the regional RESILAND South Caucasus project, which was also presented at the meeting. The project, supported by Global Environment Facility (GEF) and co-financed by the Government of Sweden aims to strengthen community engagement and improve the management of forests, wetlands, and protected areas in select locations in Armenia.

"Forests make up 11 percent of our country, and it is obvious that this number is not enough for us. Increasing the forested area is not an end in itself, it is of strategic importance for the sustainable socio-economic development of the country," noted Deputy Minister of Environment, Aram Meymaryan. "Conservation and use of the forest should be separated from each other, as each component has its own characteristics. The RA Government realizes the need for effective management of the sector and takes appropriate steps in the form of strategy development and implementation of cooperative programs in the sector. Any program that is based on evidence and data analysis and includes participatory consultation with a wide range of stakeholders has the potential to succeed. I welcome our local and international partners and wish everyone success in the implementation phase."

The report presentation was followed by an expert panel discussion by invited speakers from the Ministry of Environment of Armenia, Forest Alliance of Armenia, and American University of Armenia.

The meeting was part of broader set of sustained joint efforts of the World Bank and the government of Armenia in supporting the country's sustainable development goals and green economic transition. A Country Climate and Development Report, currently under development by the World Bank jointly with Government of Armenia, as well as GREEN Armenia Platform, and Armenia Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development Policy Operation are among the cooperative efforts to promote green transition, reduce GHG emissions, and boost climate adaptation.

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