

THE EFFECTS OF AFFORESTATION PROGRAMS IN HEVES COUNTY BETWEEN 2007 AND 2013

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The forest is one of the most complex natural ecosystems that is one of the basic living conditions of the healthy human life due to its effects on the environment. According to their functions forests can fill security, economic, social, health, tourism, and education as well as research roles.

After the end of World War I the level of forest cover decreased to 11.8% in Hungary. At this time, Hungary was Europe's fourth poorest country in forest and tree. The increasing of forest cover was an important objective in each of the eras since then.

The location and the size of the afforested area ultimately will be appointed by the landowners' intentions. The state can support the success of the afforestation program by various devices, and promote effectively the enforcement of public interest. The New Hungary Rural Development Programme (2007-2013) envisaged the deployment of 69,000 hectares of new forest, of which 70% were implemented. Under the measure support was granted for the first afforestation of areas withdrawn from agricultural cultivation.

Despite the above average extent of forest covers in Heves County (24.5% in 2006), further opportunities were opened to increase the forest area. In afforestation terms the high priority regions includes the poor quality arable lands of feet of Mátra and Bükk mountains and the reclamation areas of Visonta open-cast lignite mine in Heves County.

During the research, we worked on secondary databases with a view to examine how regional differences there are in within Heves County in the case of location of forest areas and implemented forest plantations. On the one hand, we used the data of Forestry Directorate of the National Food Chain Safety Office, on the other hand we worked up the statistics of Agricultural and Rural Development Agency about afforestation subsidies supported in the framework of New Hungary Rural Development Programme (2007-2013).

There are significant differences among the districts of Heves County regarding the extent of forest cover between upland and lowland areas. While Pétervására and Bélapátfalva districts were characterized by 61% and 59% forest cover in 2006, at the same time in Füzesabony, Heves and Hatvan districts the same value was slightly higher than 4%. In the period between 2006 and 2015 the rate of forestation increased in all districts of the County at least by 0.2 percent. The growth rate was more than one percent in Pétervására and Gyöngyös districts. Therefore, a significant expanse of land that is less suitable for agricultural cultivation has given a new function.