Report on past seasons’ activities and prospects for the future 2022/2023

Austria

Belgium

***Market situation forest nursery trees***

The market can generally be compared to the situation in 2019. Turnover is lower than in the peak years 2020 and 2021. Compared to 2019, the sector is still performing above average in 2022. The market situation stays generally quite good with regard to public green spaces. The autumn turnover was characterized by more orders from parties with lower volumes. As a result, turnover was maintained. The turnover potential for this spring was great, because there were still many varieties in big volumes available. In the end it was quite a difficult season with a normal start but with a more falling demand at the end. Prices have generally risen slightly but were under pressure at the end of the season.

***Weather conditions***

Production in 2022 suffered a lot from dry weather conditions during springtime and summer. Irrigation was necessary to keep the plants growing. From September we had a normal autumn with sufficient precipitation. During the marketing season, the harvesting of the trees usually took place in normal conditions. The weather during the winter was favorable with only a small period of light frost, only a few days it was not possible to work on the fields.

***Seeds***

Due to the exceptionally dry and hot springs and summers of recent years, there are structurally fewer seeds available. Due to lack of seeds and seedlings, production values were smaller.

***Raw materials***

Fertilizer prices hit record highs in mid-2022. Prices are now normalizing. Fuel prices are evolving in the same direction. The price increases for machines, crop protection and raw materials increased structurally and will be maintained.

***Seasonal workers***

Due to the rapidly rising standard of living in Poland, there are clearly fewer seasonal workers available from this country. Seasonal workers are still available from Romania and Bulgaria. There are an increasing number of seasonal workers from Ukraine working in our sector.

***Employees***

It is very difficult to find motivated Belgian employees to work in (forest) tree nurseries. We carried out specific actions to motivate Belgian young people to work in the tree nursery sector.

Czech Republic

**Situation in Czech forest nurseries**

Artificial reforestation after the bark beetle calamity is still ongoing. The price for wood was very good, and the support of artificial reforestation from public sources is still continuing, so forest owners were in no way forced to limit artificial reforestation.

The demand for planting stocks was again very good in the autumn 2022, as well as in the spring 2023. Most forest nurseries must be satisfied with the 2022/2023 season. In 2022, there was a strong harvest of forest tree seeds in the Czech Republic, so forest nurseries used this situation for new sowing and pre-stocking. In general, there was a slight shortage of conifers on the market, unlike broadleaf tree species - there was a surplus and not all production was able to be used on the market.

**Future prospects**

For the following year, we are expecting the volume of artificial reforestation will be decreasing. Our estimates are about 10% and the decline will be continuing in following years, until the volume of artificial reforestation reaches pre-calamity figures. Together with this, we feel uncertain about the further support of artificial reforestation from public sources because new savings are being sought in the state budget.

Denmark

The growing conditions for 2022 was very fin for production of forest plants, without any frost damage. From middle of January until end February it was rain every day so the spring delivery of plants started later than normal, but a very cold spring until now, where the delivery still is going on, give us a god long season.

Most species for this season are sold out and coming season looks good as well.

But for coming season we will have problem with to lees seed (Larix, Quercus, Fagus)

Another big challenge will be herbicides and pesticides a lot of will not be legal to use and if the will be legal to use the tax to the state will be so high that it is not relevant to use

France

Germany

We report on our general situation in Germany for the season 2022 / 2023. Due to the extremely good weather conditions, we rate the delivery period of the plants in autumn 2022 and especially spring 2023 very positively. However, we had to wait a very long time for some assortments to begin harvesting (November/December 2022) due to the ever longer growing seasons till December partly. Spring 2023 then brought us a lot of rain in large parts of Germany, so that we were faced with considerable delays and even lost orders due to the fact that many areas were not assessable for harvesting the plants. On the other hand, we hardly had no frost this winter and we were able to deliver plants from the beginning of January into May. Due to a lack of seed supply during the last years, the supply situation was tense in some origins, but good to very good quality was available. Only the prevailing uncertainty about which species and assortments will be needed in the future due to climate change still causes us great concern. Unfortunately, long-term planning is not possible at all. The demand for forest plants varied greatly. The demand was very different: In areas, affected by former storms and last drought, the demand was brisk, whereas in other areas, the demand was significantly reduced. Tree species: The extreme concentration of demand on a few unavailable assortments of a few tree species meant that many plants of other tree species were left over in the end. The whole situation remains challenging.

Hungary

The autumn, for several years now, has been mild and rainy, which is why the planting- and so the lifting - season could star later, because the leaves have not fallen. Most of the seedlings have been used up, and the market for oaks has been uncertain due to the afforestation with acorns. Mixed species are still sought, of which there can sometimes be a shortage, especially at the end of the season. Spring has started early and exports have been completed so far. The domestic market also tended to look for mixed species, which were in short supply towards the end of the season. Generally, there is a short in seeds especially in Pinus spec., and Quercus acorns in all spec.

Ireland

Lifting of bare-root plants began in late November and continued to the end of March. Lifting conditions were mixed, with February drier than usual, but March wetter than normal. This delayed the completion of field lifting. April and May have generally been in line with long term averages but cool at times.

Sowing has just been completed, with some Quercus sown last autumn and in February thanks to favourable field conditions. No spring frost damage to nursery crops this year.

Demand for plants in the private afforestation market remains very poor. Landowners are holding off planting until a new payment scheme is opened for applications. This has had a very negative impact on planting this season resulting in surplus nursery planting stock. Confidence in the sector remains low. Replanting harvested sites by the state forestry company is beginning to reduce as planters catch up with harvesting operation. Tighter regulations also continue to impact on forestry operations with many believing them to be too burdensome.

Labour pressures remain strong with companies finding it increasingly difficult to employ and retain labour in the forestry sector. This is particularly an issue with tree planters. Planting of bare root stock will continue in July subject to suitable weather conditions.

Production costs remain a challenge due to continued high input costs e.g., fertilizer, plant protection products, fuel, energy etc.

Netherlands

The summer was okay for growth. We had some dry periods we had to irrigate but generally the growth was good. Summer orders for the season were taken with more caution than previous years. The promises that are being made to plant lots of forestry bring very little certainty for the growers. In fact, the big orders just don’t seem to be there so demand is lower than production volumes on lots of items.

Autumn weather is good for lifting, transporting, and planting. This results in most orders being delivered as planned. Where most prices are good volumes are smaller than previous years. Especially demand for hedging plants is poor.

The spring season is comparable to the autumn. There is no real frost so lifting and planting can go on through January and February. March brings quite a lot of rain. Unless the weather conditions were good in April and May the season have ended early again. And like the autumn season spring was okay, but lower volumes than previous years are sold. This resulted in quite some unsold stock.

Although there was more seed available, the availability of seed with the good provenance is still short on demand. The market for Dutch autochthonous plant material is growing.

For the next season we are moderately positive. The planting challenges in Europe are still there and budgets are available. Growers are increasingly working on environmentally friendly production and more customers are willing to pay extra for it.

Worries for next season, besides the extreme weather conditions that can hit us any time, are there too. What will the demand be? Prices have gone up last years but will they stay at this level? Costs have gone up rapidly. Salaries have been raised over 8% this year, not to speak about energy costs and the costs for alternatives to banned chemical pesticides and environmentally friendly production.

Portugal

Sweden

For all of Sweden 422 million seedlings were sold during 2022. 96% of the seedlings were Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and Norway spruce (*Picea abies*). For the last years more pine seedlings than spruce seedlings have been sold. 84% of the seed used comes from seed orchards.

(South)

The growing season of 2022 was normal but lifting of plants in the autumn was difficult due to frost and rain. Fortunately, we could work some weeks in February before the frost and rains started again in March.

Lifting and planting could start again in the beginning of April, and from there on we have had dry and windy weather with very little rain, making the window for lifting rather narrow.

Market was more or less normal but Picea abies is still decreasing a bit, and other conifers (mainly Pinus sylvestris) and broad leaves are increasing. By the time of writing this report, it is very dry and still planting in the forest must go on for a month, so we really wish for rain.

This year is also the last year that we are allowed to use insecticides for protection against pine-weevil, from next season all protection will be mechanical. For FSC forest only mechanical protection have been allowed for several years already.

Challenges for the coming years are shortage of seed for some species and shortage of plant-protection products

(Middle)

The weather of 2022 was for the large part normal and for productions of seedling it was a good year. The first part of the winter has been warmer with less snow than normal with problems with large amount of ice at some at the nurseries. The end of the winter was colder with more snow than usual leading to a later spring with postponed start of the planting season. Up to two weeks late in certain geographies. The cold spring has also been a problem in the nurseries that are using the outside for production early in the spring. The latter part of the spring has been warmer and dryer then normal. There are also problems 2023 with some shortage of manual labor in the silviculture in some areas.

(North)

In the north the weather of 2022 has been normal from seedling production point of view. The winter have been cold with more snow than usual. The spring has been warm but due to large amount of snow present the planting season is starting as normal. In the north there are larger problems with shortage of manual labor than further south. Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) is the dominant species in the north but there might be a small increase of Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) in areas with better growth potential due to different factors.

Increasing cost and inflation have been a burden for nurseries all over Sweden during the last year.

United Kingdom

The 22/23 planting season saw very strong demand for trees, as expected, for both broadleaves and conifers. The labor situation was a little easier, but still difficult.

A cold spring, especially in Scotland, has helped to extend the planting season.

Government Planting targets are high in the UK, especially in Scotland, and grant funding remains available to support the targets. Nurseries have experienced some last-minute cancellations of plant orders by customers due to Grant approvals not being completed as expected in time for planting this spring.

There is strong demand for environmental plantings. Carbon offsetting also brings new customers into the tree planting marketplace. The Farm hedging market is strong.

There is very little carryover of Broadleaf stock, but there will be some commercial conifer carryover. Demand for next plan

ting season is expected to be strong.

Biosecurity remains a high priority in the UK and the Plant Healthy accreditation scheme is driving an awareness of plant health and biosecurity within the industry.

The increased demand for trees is putting added pressure on the Seed Supply industry. The seed industry, like the nursery sector, has to grow to meet the extra demand for trees. We are seeing many new, small nurseries being set up, but we are yet to see new seed suppliers. All existing and new nurseries are competing for scarce seed within the UK and abroad.

A very wet spring has seen sowings being later than expected. Most germinations appear to have been good so far.