

# The forest and matches

The actual socio-economic reality, the cause and effect relations which it is based on are much broader and more complex than any of our bravest ideas and hypotheses. But sometimes the simplest phenomena and processes help us grasp the very profound bases we used to overlook. The history of science and real practice are full of scientific strokes of insight – from the Newton's apple to a log of Siberian larch on the shore of Greenland<sup>1</sup>.

Some works of classic literature may serve to illustrate this idea perfectly as they bring out the images of the world around us in all the complexity of interpenetrating causes and effects. Concerning the current topical collection in ECO it seems opportune to recall the story by A.P. Chekhov 'The Swedish match (a criminal chronicle)'. One of its characters, as we know, found a clue that helped to unravel a mystery. "... I have a Swedish match the use of which local peasants are not aware of. Such matches are used only by landlords and not all of them at that..." A match here served as means of revealing the cause and effect relationship and also helped to locate the main character that turned out to be safe and sound. "Durkovsky struck a match and lit up the dressing room..."<sup>2</sup>.

In the latest hot summer of 2019 Siberian forests were in flames like that very Swedish match from Chekhov's pages. The forest fires have lit up many of the dark nooks and corners of the actual forest complex of our country that are hard to see and even harder to comprehend in our daily life.

This reality is not limited to material resources and cannot be described exclusively in terms of existing accounting and management system. It is rather an intricate complex of closely

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<sup>1</sup> This find helped Fridtjof Nansen formulate the hypothesis on the circular current in the Arctic sea. See F. Nansen "Fram" in the polar sea, M.: The state publisher of geographical literature, 1956. V. 1. P. 50–51.

<sup>2</sup> A.P. Chekhov "The Swedish match (a criminal chronicle)"// Full edition in 12 volumes, M.: The state publisher of fiction. 1957. V. 2. P. 33–36.

tied and interdependent processes that shape up and determine the role of forest in our country's socio-economic system.

The modern imperative to understand forest problems has little to do with primitive 'cost-calculation' approach applied to analyze and appraise forestry projects based on marginal efficiency of extraction and processing another cubic meter of timber. Forest is first of all the health of our citizens, an opportunity to implement initiatives of creating friendly living environment for the living as well as future generations.

Forest fires in the summer of 2019 cast a harsh light on the drawbacks of the reigning utilitarian attitude to forest. This attitude does not consider persons, their needs and aspirations, the right to lead a dignified life and ensure the same for their children.

The latest, let us call it a 'match' approach, is not just accounting of current costs (operational and related to investments in 'timber deposits') but also the lack of attention towards restoration and life cycle of forested land, simplicity and false transparency of administration and management of forest resources, neglect of information support of forestry industry, scarce involvement of local self-government bodies in forest-related decision making process, etc. What we have as the result is fiscal orientation of highly fragmented and dispersed environment of forest use. No wonder the forest is burning like a Swedish match.

That is the reason why the subject matter of the current issue of 'ECO' is the scrutiny of steps and measures aimed at changing the established model of forest use.

As far as forest fires are concerned it is emphasized that the gravity of the problem demands its resolution on the Federal level in a systematic way involving major institutional changes (the paper by B.N. Porfiriev). At the same time, the analysis and review of current forest protection and fire fighting measures require correction from the point of view of saving (and prolongation) of human lives.

As point out our authors, exploration and use of forest resources must take into proper consideration the life and work mode of the population in those forest settlements. Applying the mechanism of priority investment projects ended up in allotting vast forestry plots to large companies without bypassing an auction. This led to squeezing medium and small enterprises out of the e forestry business (the paper of Yu. S. Blum and L. V. Mashkina).

Justified and efficient socially oriented forest management is unthinkable without forest engineering (in explored and productive forests, rented and given for permanent use) and state stocktaking (all over the country). Until now, however, the information support of forestry leaves much to be desired despite the fact that modern methods of remote monitoring open up huge opportunities.

Russian (and Siberian) forests are an inseparable part of our planet's lungs. As our authors (the paper by A. I. Pyzhev and Ye. A. Vaganov) put it: "The Paris agreement gives the participant countries freedom to formulate the national contribution in solving the problem... Such polycentric decision making allows separate countries to lead an independent policy of control over greenhouse gas emissions with account of their individual political and economic structures".

The historic experience of forestry problem solving (many a scientific school in this field have Russian origins) discloses unique opportunities of integration and cooperation on the global scale. However, this experience and opportunities remain unclaimed in the country leading the world in export of unprocessed timber.

Forest is an inseparable part of our cultural identity. Its preservation and augmentation requires consolidated efforts and interested dialogue between all parties – from managers and experts to representatives of local communities and rank-and-file citizens of our country. Our common duty is formulating the role and place of forest in the Russian life for years to come. We are inviting all interested colleagues and readers to

participate in the discussion of these complex problems and issues. We wish to believe this can be done without resorting to “Swedish matches” (i.e. forest fires).

Editor-in-chief of ECO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V.A. Kryukov', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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