



Sectoral and Cross-Sectoral Integration of Biodiversity in Turkey

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1. Introduction

Turkey reported¹ on integration of biodiversity into policy, legislation and plans, such as the Constitution, nature conservation policies, strategies, plans and programmes, development plans; sectoral policy.

Integration of Biodiversity into Policy, Legislation and Plans

2. The Constitution

Article 63 of the Constitution states that the State shall protect historical, cultural and natural assets and take supporting measures for this purpose. This Article also provides for the conservation of species in their natural environments. In addition, even if they are not directly intended for the conservation of biological diversity, there are the provisions for environmental protection in Article 56, the limitation introduced by Article 35 on the exercise of private ownership in view of public benefit and the provisions in Article 44 concerning the efficient use of land, in Article 45 concerning the prevention of the use of agricultural land, meadows and pastures for other purposes and in Article 169 concerning the conservation and development of forests, thereby securing the conservation of biological diversity through legal sanctions. The fact that Turkey is party to international conventions aimed at the conservation of biological diversity is a reflection of its nature conservation policy.

3. Nature Conservation Policies, Strategies, Plans and Programmes

Importance has been attached to the conservation of the natural environment since the early years of the Republic. The designation of the first National Park in 1958, when environmental problems were not yet intensive in Turkey, reflects a well-established approach to nature conservation. In the 1970s when human pressure on the environment was beginning to rise in the world and in Turkey, environmental conservation policies started to become institutional in Turkey. The General Directorate of Environment, established in 1984 as a body affiliated to the Prime Ministry, was converted in 1989 into the Undersecretariat of the Environment and later replaced by the Ministry of the Environment in 1991. In 2003, the Ministry of the Environment was merged with the Ministry of Forestry and renamed as the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

It is the responsibility of the MEF and its affiliated organizations to formulate the policies concerning the conservation and sustainable use of the environment and biological diversity, to designate and manage protected areas under various statuses, to develop and implement plans and programmes, to carry out activities in this scope and to ensure coordination among different institutions. These duties and responsibilities are performed through the central and provincial units of the Ministry and its affiliated organizations.

¹ Turkey (2009). UN Convention of Biological Diversity Fourth National Report, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 30/06/2009, 74 pp.

The Ministry's unit with primary authority and responsibility for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity is the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks, which is also the CBD focal point.

The institutional structure and relevant legislation concerning biological diversity is given in Annex I. National environmental strategies, plans and programmes are as follows:

- National Environmental Action Plan (1998)
- National Plan for In-Situ Conservation of Plant Genetic Diversity (1998)
- National Biological diversity Strategy and Action Plan (2001)
- National Agenda 21 Programme (2001)
- National Wetland Strategy (2003)
- Turkish National Forestry Programme (2004)
- National Science and Technology Policies 2003-2023 Strategy Document (2004)
- Turkish National Action Programme Against Desertification (2005)
- National Environmental Strategy (2006)
- National Rural Development Strategy (2006)

4. Development Plans

Starting from the Fifth 5-Year Development Plan, which covered the years 1985 to 1989, the environmental sector was included in national programmes as part of development plans. The subsequent Development Plans and Annual Programmes have included issues of biological diversity in the environmental and agricultural sectors, set forth policies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and for the augmentation of its economic value, and specified the necessary measures. The Ninth Development Plan, covering the years 2007 to 2013, determines as a priority to carry out activities for the conservation and development of and the addition of economic value to the biological diversity that Turkey has. The Plan states in point 459 that "the activities for the investigation, conservation and evaluation of and the addition of economic value to the biological diversity and genetic resources of Turkey will be accelerated" and in point 508 that "the aim is to protect the natural forest ecosystem effectively against various threats, especially fires and pests, and to manage it in a multipurpose and effective fashion, considering the conservation-utilization balance, biological diversity, gene resources, forest health, and the development of non-wood products and services and eco-tourism".

5. Sectoral Policy

The first 4 items of the final declaration of the 2nd Agricultural Council, which took place in 2004 under the coordination of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, urged the preparation of a natural resources inventory, taking measures to prevent erosion, pollution and unsustainable use of natural resources, the conservation of genetic resources and biological diversity, and the completion of meadow rehabilitation work. The final declaration proved that the themes of conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biological diversity and steppe ecosystems have been incorporated in the plans and policies of the agricultural sector.

The National Rural Development Plan has mentioned of biological diversity conservation objectives. The Decree-Law on the Establishment and Functions of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (the Decree-Law 441 of 07/08/1991) provides a general outline for the protection and improvement of farmlands. The Pasture Law of 1998 (the Law 4342 of 25/10/1998) has been an important step for the protection of meadows and pastures. The Law on Soil Protection and Land Use (the Law 5403 of 03/07/2005) establishes procedures and requirements for soil protection and improvement by preventing soil erosion and loss of soil features originating from either natural or artificial reasons and for ensuring a planned land usage pursuant to sustainable development principle with the priority given to the environment. In addition, the Regulation on Protection and Usage of Farmlands, which was issued to ensure protection of farmlands and the usage of them as dedicated to purpose, is one of the regulations that contribute to the sustainability of agricultural biological diversity. The Agricultural Law of 2006 (the Law 5488 of 18/04/2006) provides for the conservation and improvement of natural and biological resources as well as conducting researches on the conservation and improvement of genetic resources and ecosystems. The Organic Farming Law (the Law 5262 of 01/11/2004), together with the Regulation on Organic Farming and the Regulation on Good Agricultural Practices, urge environment-friendly agricultural activities. The Regulation on Uprooting, Production and Trading of Natural Bulbs (Official Journal No. 25563 of 24/08/2004), which establishes requirements for uprooting, production, growing, storing, and domestic and foreign trading of seeds, bulbs or other parts of them without giving harm to and destroying perpetuation of their species, contributes to the conservation of the country's flora, including steppe ecosystems.

The Instructions on Field Trials of the Transgenic Cultivated Plants (TGD/TOH-032), which were issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs on 14 May 1998, made it mandatory to make risk assessments of the transgenic seeds, with respect to agricultural production and the health and safety of humans, animals, plants and to the environmental health and safety, in particular.

A number of studies are being conducted on the conservation of mountain ecosystems, as in other ecosystems. In particular, the National Parks, Natural Parks and Nature Conservation Zones, which are designated under the Law 2873 on National Parks, contain forest and mountain ecosystems.

The Forest Law 6831 specifies forest management requirements, e.g. forest planning, administration and conservation. Conservation forests, gene protection forests and seed stands are designated as provided for in the said Law.

In order to implement the ecosystem approach to forest administration and management, the Forest Management Regulation was redrafted in 2006. The research, conservation, sustainable use, management and monitoring of forest ecosystems are achieved under the scope of this Regulation.

The Law on National Mobilization for Afforestation and Erosion Control (the Law 4122 of 23/07/1995) specifies requirements and procedures concerning the activities of afforestation and erosion control to be undertaken by governmental agencies and real and legal persons in order to enhance the forest area and forest wealth, to restore and improve the balance between soil, water and plants, and to protect environmental values. The Afforestation Regulation specifies requirements concerning the activities of afforestation, erosion control, pasture improvement, tree improvement, seed production, nursery and energy forest establishment, development and restoration to be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the Forest Law 6381.

The 2004 National Forestry Programme had the following objectives:

- To address forestry issues from a broad viewpoint within the framework of sustainable development;
- To plan and carry out forestry activities paying the required attention to changes and developments both in the society and in multi-dimensional expectations from forests;
- To build appropriate capacities and mechanisms to enable the preparation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and development in a participatory manner of development policies and strategies for the forestry sector;
- To promote a positive relationship between forests and people and make it widespread;
- To promote harmony and relations between the forestry and other sectors;
- To raise awareness and strengthen interest, involvement, contribution and support of both the community and the interest groups to achieve a forest management, conservation as well as sustainable development of forests with a view to carry out a balanced and sustainable development;
- To improve and strengthen the living conditions of the actually poor and forest dependent forest villagers living either in or around forests and therefore achieve a multi-sided benefit from forests by way of enhancing a multi-functional and participatory forest resources management; and
- To achieve maximum use of both local and foreign financing sources for the forestry activities.

The principles and measures for the conservation of forest biological diversity as specified by the National Forestry Programme are as follows:

- i. To raise awareness and interest and achieve the support of forest administration, society, and interest groups concerning the value of biological diversity and its conservation; To strengthen the forest administration's capacity in this area;

- ii. To extend the conservation zone network to represent the biological diversity of the country's forests. To design and implement appropriate participatory planning and management systems for the above areas;
- iii. For the conservation of biological diversity in the forests other than those under conservation: To achieve integration with forest resources inventory, planning and evaluation system and applications in an appropriate manner. To give priority on the natural renewal and rehabilitation of forests, and take due care for the conservation of biological diversity during afforestation and other forest development activities;
- iv. To promote research studies concerning forests biological diversity. To this end, to enhance dialogue and cooperation among forest administration, universities and research institutions;
- v. To give priority on promoting rural development activities in local rural communities having pressure on the natural resources in the conservation zones of special importance.

Within the scope of the National Wetlands Strategy (2003-2008), the following objectives were set and approved by the National Wetlands Committee:

1. To build an inventory of all the wetlands of Turkey, monitor and utilize them;
2. To identify policies and laws, including an impact assessment of wetlands;
3. To integrate the rational use of wetlands with sustainable development;
4. To achieve the restoration and rehabilitation of wetlands;
5. To control the invasive alien species in wetlands and prevent their occurrence in wetlands;
6. To encourage both people and the private sector for active involvement for the wetlands protection;
7. To achieve efficient communication, training and awareness-raising concerning wetlands at the national level;
8. To designate new RAMSAR zones, prepare and follow up RAMSAR zones management plans; and
9. To increase the institutional capacity.

All planning activities which will entail wetlands will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of both the Ramsar Convention and the Regulation on Wetlands Protection.

Pursuant to the Regulation, both the conservation of natural structure and ecological character of wetlands and all the land take and water utilization plans must be designed to protect the functions and values of wetlands. Activities entailing wetlands such as drying up and filling, water take, sand borrowing, peat extraction, reed cutting, gathering wild flora and catching wild fauna, afforestation, and wastewater discharge should be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Regulation.

Furthermore, fishing in inland waters is regulated by the Communiques issued under the Fisheries Law.

There are various regulations that aim to prevent the pollution of the seas. The Fisheries Law 1380 is the main regulatory tool with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity. Under the Fisheries Regulation, associated with the Law 1380, two separate circulars are issued biannually to regulate commercial and recreational fishing activities both in seas and inland waters. The fisheries cooperatives, universities and all the relevant institutions and organizations are consulted when drafting the circular. The draft circular is submitted to the Fisheries Advisory Committee for approval. This committee consists of Ministries, universities, nongovernmental organizations and fisheries unions. In Turkey, fishing regulation comprises four main elements:

- 1, Regulations concerning the use of fishing gear;
2. Regulations by species and length;
- 3, Regulations by area and location;
- 4, Seasonal regulations,

The Decree-law 383 on the Establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency for Special Areas allows the designation of coastal and marine protected areas. Under the cited Decree law, the Environmental Protection Agency for Special Areas (EPASA) is authorized to take all the measures to protect the environmental values and resolve the existing environmental problems of the areas either already designated or to be designated as Special Environmental Conservation Zones, establish the requirements for the conservation and use of those areas, design their development plans, revise their existing plans of any scale and plan decisions and approve such ex officio. The Council of Ministers is the body to designate Special Environmental Conservation Zones in accordance with the cited Decree-law.