

## **AssiDomän's view of forestry certification**

**Summary of the speech delivered by Mr Lennart Ahlgren, Chief Executive, AssiDomän AB at the World Wildlife Fund Seminar on Forests for Life '96 in Brussels Wednesday 12th June, 1996**

AssiDomän AB, based in Sweden, is one of the leading forest owners in the world, with forest holdings of around 7 million acres. The company is a major producer of sawn timber, corrugated packing, sack paper, sacks, kraftliner and carton for packaging.

Commenting on the company's forest assets, Mr Ahlgren said: "We view our forest assets as a substantial strategic resource in a world where high-quality raw fibre materials produced in a cost-effective and environmentally acceptable way are becoming more and more scarce". He commented on the importance of operations being strongly based on a renewable resource cycle and went on to say, "Raw forest materials will probably be required for a good many uses in addition to those which we currently produce and use. He possibilities for wood fibre are exceptionally great in this context. At the same time, the global forest is perhaps our most important environmental resource, as carbon binder and the habitat of a large proportion of the biological diversity".

To ensure the continuing success of developing products from the forest, Mr Ahlgren emphasised the need to use the forest in a responsible and ecologically correct manner and confirmed that AssiDomän sees taking such responsibility as a matter of course, in part, to meet customers environmental requirements on forestry operations.

Mr Ahlgren referred to examples of industry progress as a result of Sweden's continuous and lively environmental debate, one of the most recent being the establishment of a national Forest Stewardship Council to develop forest certification. In addition, "over the last 15 years, emission levels have fallen dramatically and several companies are currently in the process of eliminating practically all emissions into surrounding water", Mr Ahlgren added.

He also commented on the fact that increasing levels of awareness relating to the importance of differentiated forestry have led to agreement on the need to address problems that such forestry creates for biodiversity.

AssiDomän itself is making substantial changes to its forestry operation methods which are more suited to the environment. Plans are in place to improve the felling pattern so that it is better adapted to the landscape; nature conservation is planned before each felling and comprehensive ecological landscape planning, including an inventory of endangered species, will be established at all forest holdings.

To protect reserves and as an investment strategy to enhance the company's long-term competitiveness, Mr Ahlgren explained that "approximately 40,000 hectares of AssiDomän's productive forest land have been formally set aside as company reserves. We have also agreed with the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency to designate 367 of these reserved areas as legally-protected nature reserves. Altogether, we estimate that approximately 15% of AssiDomän's productive forest area is exempt from normal forestry for reasons of nature conservation, which is equivalent to around 10% of our yearly timber volume".

"AssiDomän has also been the first company to produce ecological accounts of the forestry operations in order to clarify our efforts and monitor how successful our internal work has been. Future forestry certification should mean additional possibilities for everyone to channel their expectations into environmentally-oriented forestry".

In Mr Ahlgren's opinion, to maintain credibility of forestry certification, standards must be drawn up in dialogue and co-operation with various interested parties, particularly environmental organisations, otherwise consensus will be difficult to achieve.

Mr Ahlgren also pointed out that attention must be paid to how the Forest Stewardship Council stands in relation to internationally-established environmental management systems such as ISO and EMAS, especially as "it is vital for the whole of our industry to coordinate the environmental work".

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