

## Fully mechanized logging in Bulgaria – first steps and prospects

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Snow and wind calamities have many times given impetus to higher mechanized logging in Germany. Now, something like that seems to happen in Bulgaria. An early snow in the western part of the Balkan mountain damaged in December 2007 beech stands with a growing stock of more than 300 000 m<sup>3</sup> in the forest district Vitinya and its surroundings. Some 100 000 m<sup>3</sup> of sawlogs have to be harvested before summer or they will become fuel wood and be sold at half price. The price of 42 €/m<sup>3</sup> for beech sawlogs in Bulgaria is high enough to pay contractors from abroad to harvest them, if it's possible to do this by harvester-forwarder-systems. But the stands with higher inclination as about 35-40 % are numerous. For higher mechanized cable crane systems is missing a real system of forest roads.

Of course, snow and wind calamities are an extraordinary case. For ordinary cuts, harvester-and-forwarder teams from abroad are not yet competitive in Bulgaria. The costs of full mechanized logging have to be diminished 2 times in order to make it competitive against the logging technology with chain saws and tractors or animals. Our preliminary calculations show that modern machinery, operated by Bulgarian teams, might become competitive in the near future.