SUMAL 2.0 – A MODERN TRACEABILITY TOOL

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In the last years the digitalization of the forest sector increased in Romania and traceability tools are present than ever due to the demand of transparency from state authorities and civil society. Also, the means to fight illegal logging diversified in order to comply with the directives and regulations of the European Union. However, besides legal requirements also certification schemes can support responsible forestry management and can guarantee that the certified entities are providing goods from a responsibly managed forest. The electronic wood tracking system, SUMAL 2.0 is a modern tool for traceability of harvesting sites, timber transports and natural protected areas. It complies with the requirements of the national legislation in force but also the European legislation such as the European Union Timber Regulation and the efficiency of the system was proven in the following months after its launch. The number of interrogations by NGO's and citizens in the system grew constantly.

In this research article an analysis of the features of the SUMAL 2.0 were made in order to highlight the impact on the transparency of the forestry sector. The public version of the application is presented resulting in an overview analysis of capabilities and functions of the tool. After 6 months of its launch in March 2021, Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests communicated an official release statement. In this interval, 64.000 users are registered in SUMAL 2.0 that had issued 2.2 million delivery notes with a total transported volume of 21 million cubic meters. For this volume, 858.000 checks were made in the application by civil society showing the interest for the legality of wood. This checks also generated 3.468 calls at the unique emergency number „112" where suspicious transports were reported. Furthermore, after the checks were made by police and forest structures with control attributions it proved out that from the initial number, 754 transports raised suspicions and 123 were confirmed as being illegal.

Even though such tools offer to the public information that was never possible in the past, with positive effects, it requires that the end-user should have certain knowledge about the forestry system. Poor knowledge, even though the user is well intended it can trigger false alarms. This can act as a burden to police or specialized control authorities that are spending valuable time to investigate alerts that at the end turned out to be unfounded.

Keywords: digitalization, illegal logging, governance, legislation, traceability.