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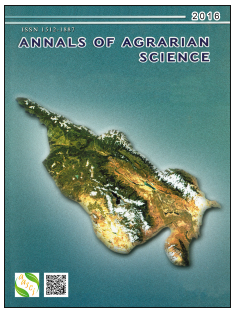

Beech forests of Azerbaijan: the modern condition, age structure and regeneration

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Abstract

Azerbaijan is a country with low forest cover, only 11.8% of the territory is covered with forests. All forests perform important water-soil-protection functions. In forests, naturally grow 107species of trees and 328 shrubs species. Despite the fact that there are many species in dendroflora, only 10 tree species have economic value for the forest sector of the country. Beech (31.68%), oak (27.40%) and hornbeam (26.01%) are growing in 85.09% of forested areas. Beech forests are spread on 327 thousand hectares from 989,5 of total forest lands of he Republic. Beech forests are a source of high-quality wood and beech nuts. All beech forests grow in mountains at heights of 600-800 and 1600-1800 m above the sea level and performing important ecological functions. Until recently there were no problems with natural renewal of the beech forests, but now the regeneration of beech forests is alarming. In recent years, the productivity and density of beech forests decreased substantially, the natural regeneration proceeds unsatisfactorily and, consequently, reduction of beech forests takes place. We have researched 33,8 thousand hectares of beech forests of the Lesser Caucasus, their natural regeneration and made analysis of age structure of forests.

Keywords: *Fagus orientalis*, Beech forests, Silviculture, Natural regeneration, Age class

1. Introduction

National development strategy of forests of Azerbaijan provides for increase of the forest area by creation of silviculture and activities for natural regeneration of valuable (main) tree species. Annually in Azerbaijan produced silviculture on the area of 2.5-3.0 thousand hectares and promotion for natural regeneration on 7.0-7.5 thousand hectares. Every year 10 thousand hectares of young forest stands are transferred into wooded area. Among transferred forest lands the natural young plants 2.5-3.0 time exceeds the forest plantations produced artificially [2,3]. The natural regeneration requires less works, material, and financial resources. Secondly, natural regeneration is more productive and resistant to external