



STATEMENT

of the materials for participation in a competition for occupation of academic position "Associate Professor" in scientific field 6. Agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine, professional direction 6.5. Forestry, scientific specialty „Forest Melioration, Forest Protection and Special Forest Uses“, subject "Non-timber forest resources", announced by University of Forestry in State Gazette No 102 of December 8, 2023, code of the procedure: FOR-AsP-1123-114.

Applicant to participate in the competition: Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Slavcho Asenov Savev

Prepared the statement: Prof. Dr. Maria Grozeva Sokolovska from the Forest Research Institute - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, in scientific field 6. „Agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine“, professional direction 6.1 „Crop science“, scientific specialty "Soil Science", appointed as a member of the scientific jury by order No. ZPS-24 /23.01.2024 by the Rector of the University of Forestry

1. Short biography of the applicant

Chief assistant professor Dr. Slavcho Asenov Savev, was born on August 19, 1969 in the town of Pernik. He completed his higher education at the University of Forestry in 1994, majoring in "Forestry", acquiring the professional qualification "Forestry Engineer", corresponding to Master's degree (Law for Higher Education), as well as a specialization in "Protection of Natural Environment". In the period 1995-1998, he was a full-time doctoral student and part-time assistant in "Botany" at the Faculty of Forestry of the University of Forestry. After a competition in 1998, he became an assistant in the Department of Silviculture, since 2001 he has been a senior assistant, and since 2004 he has been the chief assistant professor at the same department. In 2003, he successfully defended a dissertation on the topic: "Study of non-wood forest-plant resources in the Petrokhan region - Western Stara Planina with a view to their rational use", with which obtained Educational and scientific degree „Doctor“ (diploma No. 28783 dated 08.01.2004).

Chief assistant professor Dr. Slavcho Asenov Savev is a member of: Bulgarian Botanical Society; International Plant Propagators Society (IPPS). He passed an international training course on "Sustainable Use of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) for Financial Support of Protected Areas in South-Eastern Europe" in Germany (2002) (certificate attached). His professional activities include participation in working groups on the preparation of normative documents, expert evaluations and opinions on various problems in forests, departmental committees, reviews, etc.

2. Compliance of the submitted documents and materials of the applicant with those required under the Regulations for Development of Academic Staff at the University of Forestry (RDASUF)

The documents and materials submitted by the applicant are in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and those specified in Art. 60, Para. 4, as well as in Para. 5 and paragraph 7 of the Regulations for Development of Academic Staff at the University of Forestry (RDASUF) According to the submitted certificate of compliance with the minimum scientific requirements for the academic position "Associate Professor", Chief assistant professor Savev meets these professional requirements, and in some cases exceeds them. The sum of the points for the indicator groups is 522.16 with a required minimum of 400 points. He submitted a published habilitation work-monograph, in accordance with art. 24, para. 1, item 3 of LDASRB, as a separate material

with the title "Cultivation of tall American blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) in forest areas". The topic of the monographic work is in accordance with the competition and I accept it to fulfill the requirement under indicator B3 (art. 2a, para. 1 of the RDASUF). In this monograph, based on many years of experimental experience, the possibilities of creating industrial plantations of tall American blueberry in the forest territories, the selection criteria for creating these plantations, the selection of suitable varieties and their productive capabilities under different conditions are described. The prospects for the use of the high blueberry in our country and the regionalization of its cultivation depending on the climatic and soil conditions in Bulgaria are outlined. The monograph is written at a high scientific level and proves the erudition of the candidate.

The candidate has submitted copies of the documents specified in the list of publications for participation in the competition and of the documents required under this procedure.

3. Assessment of the applicant's educational activities

The teaching activity of the Chief assistant professor Slavcho Savev started already during his regular doctoral studies as a part-time assistant in "Botany" at the Faculty of Forestry (FF) of the University of Forestry. At present, he has over 25 years of teaching experience (Official Note No. ЧР-679/31.01.2024). He conducted classes and practices in the disciplines: "Management of non-wood resources in protected sites", "Forest non-wood resources", "Cultivation of mushrooms and herbs" and "Multifunctional forest management" for Educational and Qualification Degree (EQD) "Bachelor" and Educational and Qualification Degree "Master", Forestry major, in full-time and part-time studies, which are in line with his competences and with the scientific major. He participated as an author in the development and updating of four curricula for EQD "Bachelor" (compulsory and optional subjects) for full-time students from specialty "Forestry" and co-author of two other programs for the Master's degree program (Official note FF-807/07.02.2024). He has developed electronic courses in the University of Forestry's e-learning systems (elearn.ltu.bg and on the Microsoft Teams platform) on the disciplines "Forest non-wood resources", "Cultivation of mushrooms and herbs", "Management of non-wood resources in protected sites" and "Multifunctional forest management". He is the co-author of training materials such as: a practical guide to cultivating oyster mushrooms with a volume of 88 pages; a manual of exercises on "Forest non-wood resources" electronic edition with a volume of 400 pages. He participated in the teams that developed a manual for starting your own business and forestry entrepreneur's handbook.

Chief assistant professor Savev actively assists in tutoring of graduates in the department - in the period 2012-2024 he supervised 18 graduates who successfully defended their diplomas, and between 1996-2024 he prepared 16 reviews of diploma theses of students majoring in "Forestry", EQD „Bachelor“ and EQD "Master". This shows his commitment to guiding students during the training, as well as the presence of pedagogical maturity in terms of his further successful development. The candidate supports the scientific work of Ph.D students in the department through consultations.

4. Assessment of the applicant's scientific, applied and publication activities

4.1. Participation in scientific, applied science, infrastructure and educational projects

Chief assistant professor Dr. Savev has presented information on participation in 22 scientific, scientific-applied and educational projects and topics, of which 8 are internationally funded. He was the leader of six of the implemented projects and two of the developed topics. The references and certificates for scientific-applied and expert activity attached in the documents show that the candidate is sought after in practice as an expert-specialist with extremely extensive experience in the specialty. He participated in the creation and equipment of a complex scientific laboratory in the department.

4.2. Characteristics of published scientific results

The publication activity of Dr. Savev is in accordance with the scientific specialty and competitive discipline - forest non-wood resources. He participated in the competition with 20 published materials (not including the doctoral dissertation). Of these, 16 are scientific publications, 1 independent monograph, 1 book based on a defended dissertation and 2 chapters of collective monographs. Seven of the publications are referenced in global databases with scientific information (Web of Science and Scopus). Nine publications are in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals and proceedings of various forums. Publications in a foreign language prevail - 12 (60%). Five of the publications (incl. B3.1 and G6.1) are independent, 4 with one, 3 with two and 8 with more co-authors. Of the joint materials, the candidate is leading on five.

In addition, the materials present information on participation in 13 national and international forums published popular science brochures in the field of forestry. This proves that Dr. Savev is well represented and valued in the field of his specialty at home and abroad.

4.3. Reflection of the applicant's scientific activity in the literature (citations)

Information is provided for 8 of the candidate's publications. A total of 18 positive citations were noted, distributed as follows: citations in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases (D13) - 8; citations in non-refereed journals with scientific review (D15) - 10. Citations in English-language publications predominate. It is established that the total number of points for this group of indicators exceeds three times the required minimum of 50 points according to the minimum requirements. The specified characteristic shows the relevance and significance of the conducted research, as well as that the scientific output of Chief assistant professor Dr. Slavcho Savev is well known by the scientific community in the country and beyond.

4.4. Contributions in the applicant's work (scientific, applied)

Contributions in Dr. Savev's scientific works are classified as scientific, scientific-applied and applied. They have an interdisciplinary nature, due to the direction of scientific research related to the topic of the discipline "Forest non-wood resources", covering both part of the material products extracted in forests and ecosystem services from them. In terms of quantity and quality, they fully meet the requirements for the academic position "associate professor".

Additionally, the scientific contributions are summarized in 4 directions, which I accept. A detailed review of the publications is not necessary for the purposes of this opinion, but we will only point out the more significant contributions. *In the first direction*, related to studies of non-timber forest resources, inventory studies were carried out in parallel with their resource assessment. A number of new horological studies related to the flora and subterranean mycota in forest areas have been carried out. The population and conservation status of some high mountain medicinal plants (*Rhodiola rosea*, *Gentiana lutea*, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) in Pirin and Rila mountains are characterized. Ecological studies of subterranean ectomycorrhizal mycota (mainly truffles) and host plants were conducted, and the determining role of the genera *Carpinus* and *Quercus* was established. Regimes have been developed for the protection and sustainable use of non-wood resources (medicinal plants and pastures). It has been established that 176 species of the dendroflora are used as industrial, medicinal and essential oils, of which 113 species are included in Annex 1 of the Law on Medicinal Plants in Bulgaria (2000). The pharmacological features (mauritanin content) of medicinal plants of the genus *Astragalus* have been studied. The contributions *from the second direction* are related to the methodical guidance on the creation, maintenance and variety testing of fields and plantations of tall American blueberry and chokeberry on the territories of the Training and Experimental Forest Range "Petrohan" and the Training and

Experimental Forest Range "Yundola" and free areas in forest nurseries from different parts of the country. Contributions *in the third direction* are related to propagation and reintroduction of some rare and protected plant species (*Salix pentandra* L., *Galanthus elwesii* Hook., *Taxus baccata*). *In the fourth direction*, the biological diversity in the old forests of the "Strandja" National Park and the regimes of their management and protection in order to maintain a favorable environmental condition were studied.

A positive aspect of the candidate's overall scientific activity is the use of the complex approach and multidisciplinary in his research. This creates certain difficulties in distinguishing the contributions in the individual categories, from scientific to applied. The rest of the contributions are classified broadly in the fields of applied botany and applied mycology. The influence of the structure of the tree stand and the intensity of different types of felling in beech forests on the distribution and productivity of medicinal plants and forest fruit species has been established. The ecological parameters of the regions in Bulgaria suitable for the creation of plantations with common summer truffle (*T. aestivum*) have been established. Schemes of planting the tall American bilberry in different cultivation areas have been determined depending on the altitude, the exposure, the slope and the possibilities for mechanization in tillage and the individual characteristics of the varieties used. The requirements regarding the microclimatic and edaphic factors during the reintroduction of yew in the territories of "Strandja" National Park and "Vitosha" National Park and their introduction into natural conditions have been defined.

I highly appreciate the scientific activity of the candidate, which is a prerequisite for conducting independent scientific work and scientific guidance of graduates, doctoral students and research projects in the field of non-wood forest resources.

5. Assessment of the applicant's personal contribution

The presented scientific production, as well as the formulated conclusions, recommendations and contributions are a personal work and/or with the significant participation of Chief assistant professor Savev. The large number of joint publications testifies to his ability to work in a team. The candidate has not presented separation protocols for the share of his participation in them, therefore I consider this participation to be equal and I am convinced that there is a specific personal contribution in them.

6. Critical notes and recommendations

I have no significant critical comments on the candidate's scientific works. Some inaccuracies of a stylistic, editorial or technical nature have been found, which do not diminish my positive assessment of his scholarly output. I recommend to Chief assistant professor Slavcho Savev to focus on independent publications in refereed international publications, in order to find wider recognition for his developments.

7. Personal impressions

I know the candidate as a thorough researcher and I have positive personal impressions of him as a teacher and colleague with a broad contemporary view of plant ecology and forestry, with a pronounced interest in research and experimentation, as well as great potential for independent work as a scientist

8. Conclusion

The documents submitted for participation in the competition show that Dr. Savev's teaching, research, publication and applied scientific activities meet the requirements of the legislation of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Forestry (RDASUF).

Based on a comprehensive assessment of the qualities and the results presented by the applicant I PROPOSE the applicant **Chief assistant professor Dr. Slavcho Asenov Savev** to take the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the subject "Non-timber forest resources" in professional direction 6.5. Forestry.

Author of the statement:

(Prof. Dr. Maria Sokolovska)

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