

A short overview of the programme for the socio-economic reactivation of the Spanish forest sector

by José María SOLANO LÓPEZ

During the session “Tools and initiatives for forest development” of the 4th Mediterranean Forest Week in Barcelona, two national strategies allowed to show how these tools and initiatives can be incorporated in national forest policy orientations. The first example is that of Spain, which adopted its program in 2014.

The Programme for the Socio-economic reactivation of the Spanish forest sector was presented during a session of the Mediterranean Forest Week dedicated to some tools or instruments for Mediterranean forests, and more concretely those tools at national level.

As a preliminary basic idea, it should be noted that, although this Programme is intended to the whole forest sector, and given that 88% of Spanish forest area can be classified as Mediterranean, we can say that this Programme is to be applied mainly to Mediterranean forests.

The situation from which we are starting is a forest sector with some difficulties that we want to overcome:

- The Spanish forest area is highly fragmented in terms of property, and there is neither tradition nor incidence of any associative formula.
- There is a very low percentage of forest with a management instrument.
- The legal framework is very diverse and heterogeneous.
- Forest products have a high exploitation costs, a very high foreign competence and not sufficient internal demand.

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This panorama is giving a set of forest with no profitability, so they are simply abandoned. And in Spain, if the man does not manage the forests, fire will do it for him.

In this situation, the Government of Spain approved in January last year the Programme for the Socio-economic reactivation of the Spanish forest sector, in the framework of the revision of the 2002 Spanish Forest Plan that is taking place in these days. It has the following objectives:

- Improve the incomes of forest farms and related enterprises.
- Increase the number of managed forests.
- Enlarge the dimension of the forest units, with a view to obtain areas economically efficient.
- Increase the number of jobs.
- Raise the forest products demand.
- Increase the forest products added value.
- Contribute to rural economy diversification.
- Improve life quality in rural areas.

To this end, the approved Programme shows up to 85 measures in total, that we do not have time now to describe. Within them, those related to commit a minimum of European Agriculture Fund for Rural

Development (EAFRD) to forest measures, defining them in the sense that fit to these objectives are considered of high priority. In particular those dedicated to energetic use of forest biomass, those that try to foster forest owners and managers associations and producers' organisations and lastly those that support transformation, differentiation and use diversification of forest goods and services.

And a great part of the actions address the Administration entities, currently disconnected and only partially coordinated, which is a problem from the citizen's view, in areas like:

- Design properly the different Rural Development Programmes.
- Develop normative and establish guidance (a good example is the new forest act, today in the Parliament).
- Foster common managing of different forest properties.
- Forest planning and sustainable management.
- Fostering associations among owners and managers, as well as the related industries.
- Improve coordination and cooperation among all Administrations involved, and also with stakeholders organisations.
- Reinforce information gathering and dissemination, as well as human resources education and training.
- Improve the quality of the forests statistics.

Finally, to finish this short description of the Programme, just to say that a monitoring committee to follow its implementation is foreseen, which will be integrated by representatives of the different Administrations and also by representatives of the stakeholders, mainly owners, and the industries of the first use of forest products.

The Programme is designed for implementation from 2014 to 2020, in order to meet the same time period of the EAFRD application, an intermediate evaluation should be made after the third year, which means in 2017, and the final balance of implementation will be done after the last year, in 2021.

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Picture 1:
The session «Tools and initiatives for forest development» during the IVth MFW in Barcelona.
Photo D.A.

