

Towards Coordinated Forest Management and Utilization in the Mediterranean Region

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The Mediterranean basin has always been a meeting place of different races and cultures and it is the cradle of civilizations which have shaped the evolution of African and European Continents. From a forestry point of view, the Mediterranean area also represents a hinge between the temperate forests and the tropical ones, showing peculiarities and specific characteristics of both with regard to vegetation and to the risks it is subjected to, including soil erosion, desertification and wildfires.

The importance of Mediterranean forests

Mediterranean forests and woodlands play a key role in the welfare of urban and rural Mediterranean communities and therefore require special attention. They provide highly appreciated marketed goods as well as a range of high-value but non-market services such as landscape quality, fodder, soil protection, water regulation, recreation possibilities, micro-climate amelioration, etc. In terms of biological diversity they constitute a unique world natural heritage offering a high degree of tree richness and endemism of an extraordinary genetic diversity. Their conservation and management affects the soil and water resources, both being key strategic resources for Mediterranean societies. In this situation, a coordinated approach throughout the Mediterranean basin is needed to develop reliable information and tools based on sound science in order to improve forest management and utilization.

Workshop on forestry utilization

At the IUFRO 3.06.00 "Workshop on forestry utilization in Mediterranean countries with particular respect to sloping areas" held from June 17-19, 2009 in Reggio Calabria, Italy in the frame of the 33rd CIOSTA CIGR Conference 2009, participants looked at the forest-related, social and economic characteristics of the Mediterranean region and at how they affect the forest management and the forest utilization systems. Visit <http://www.ciosta.unirc.it>

Key issues of forest management in the region

The workshop offered an opportunity to exchange experiences and share information on the state-of-knowledge for the improvement of forestry utilization in Mediterranean countries with respect to new trends in harvesting and wood transport. The event built a



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bridge between advanced scientific methods with modern information technologies and practical engineering and operations. Key issues included forest management under Mediterranean conditions and constraints; forest operations performed in Mediterranean forests; forest assessment, modeling and management; machine efficiency and ergonomics under mountainous conditions; and energy from forest biomass, including assessment of potential revenue from Mediterranean forests and analysis of working time requirement.

Future networking project

During the workshop the potential of a scientific network between Mediterranean countries regarding the main topics of IUFRO Unit 3.06.00 was evaluated. The participants agreed on such a proposal and decided to establish a focal point at Reggio Calabria University, operating under the umbrella of the IUFRO Unit 3.06.00 coordination. This focal point shall start to build up contacts with the research institutions operating in the Mediterranean area in order to develop an effective network which could be the seed for further development. The network, once established, could meet for the first time on the occasion of the FORMEC 2010 at the University of Padova in July 2010.