

Focus on Castile and León, Spain

Background

Castile and León is the largest autonomous region of Spain, with a total surface area of 94,226 km² (INE, 2014). With 2.5 million inhabitants, it is one of the less densely populated regions in Europe.

Forests and other wooded areas cover around 4.8 million hectares (about 51% of the total surface area). During the past 20 years, the forest area has increased by 41%, due to natural regeneration in less pressed grazing areas, and afforestation programmes.

The main tree species are broadleaved (*Quercus ilex* L. and *Quercus pyrenaica* Willd), and conifers (*Pinus pinaster* Ait. and *Pinus sylvestris* L.).

Ownership of forest or wooded land

State/Regional Administration	2.4%
Municipalities	47.9%
Private owners	49.7%

Private forest holdings are small and fragmented, mostly held by private individuals, while public forests are mainly over 100 ha.

In terms of growing stock, this is the most important region in Spain with 153.7 M m³. In the past five years, the average annual felling of wood and firewood was 1.4 M m³. The extraction rate in the region's forests (balance between felling and increment) is about 20%.

SIMWOOD's work in the region

Within the Castile and León region, the SIMWOOD project has been focusing on two very different territories, looking at the barriers and opportunities for mobilisation of wood. One is the area of **Urbion Model Forest**, in the provinces of Burgos and Soria, in the east of the region, and another is the "**Páramos y Valles**" in Palencia, in the north-central area of the region.

Urbion is a forest area with a long history of timber harvesting and a very developed timber

industry, but with difficulties in maintaining the economic activity of traditional enterprises. The Páramos y Valles area has a relatively young forest and recently began to exploit its resources.



Map of location of study areas in Castilla y León region

We carried out a stakeholder analysis in each area to identify key stakeholders and analyse their roles and responsibilities in the mobilisation of wood. We then held the first two meetings of our Regional Learning Laboratory to interact with stakeholders and understand their perspectives on each area's situation, obstacles and potential solutions (including measures or suggestions to address social, economic, technical, political and ecological issues).

Regional Learning Labs

We had the first Regional Learning Lab - an "analysis day" - in Urbion Model Forest on 10 March at the Casa de la Madera in the province of Burgos, and another in Páramos y Valles on 24 March in Saldaña in the province of Palencia.

Participants included representatives of public organizations, private companies and individuals who deal with forest management, rural development, environmental conservation and harvesting activities on forest resources. The discussions enabled the project to step from the regional level to the local reality, and find out what was happening on the ground.

Urbion Model Forest

There are strong roots and involvement of the surrounding communities with forests, this can play for but often against various forestry activities (i.e, early thinning in pinewoods, use of machinery), especially when there is lack of knowledge, poorly defined competitions and lack of consensus among different stakeholders.



Photo: Pilar Valbuena

The forest has high potential for generation of direct and indirect benefits such as timber (with various types of quality), fuelwood, mushrooms, tourism, hunting, jobs, etc. but it is necessary to provide facilities and create appropriate spaces to achieve better use of this resource.

Laws, regulations and ordinances should be better adapted to the current local situation of the forest sector, as they often prove to be excessive and in other cases correspond to royal mandates (often obsolete) hampering harvesting processes, disposal of property, etc.

Páramos y Valles

Some conditions in the area favour the use and/or management of the forest such as few slopes and wide surface, as well as easy access and proximity to towns and production centres.

There is a lack of adequate technical support in both qualifications and numbers for forest management.

Given the lack of involvement of local people with the forest, it is important to promote awareness (from schools to industry) regarding

the role of forests for local development.



Photo: Pilar Valbuena

In both areas, stakeholders pointed out the importance of environmental education and better communication, as well as revaluation and the potential of the forest to provide various benefits. There is a need for coordinated sustainable management.

Pilot projects

We envisage two pilot projects for Castile and León. One concentrates on thinning operations in mixed stands (*Pinus sylvestris* and *Quercus pyrenaica*) to obtain knowledge on the impact of thinning in mixed forests and to transfer the results to operational forestry. The second focuses on enhancing wood mobilisation in young pine forests by trying to convert non-commercial silvicultural operations (pre-commercial thinnings) into commercial thinnings.

A study will also be conducted by the end of 2015, consisting of a social experiment regarding tree selection during thinning operations and the impact of tree selection criteria on timber production and quality.

Who to contact in the region

The SIMWOOD local team includes staff from the Universidad de Valladolid.

To get involved in SIMWOOD's activities, please contact:

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The Forestry Sector Mobilisation Programme of Castilla y León, 2014-2022 (Spain)

Castilla y León is one of the largest autonomous regions in the UE context, and its forestry sector is one of the most important in Spain. This relevance is remarkable in several items: as ecological value, macroeconomic magnitudes, different stakeholders balance, productive area, variety of wood and non-wood products, and current and potential production. The main production is related to coniferous and poplar woods (mainly for building, furniture and packaging industries), pine nuts, rosin and mushrooms.

The Forest Plan of Castilla y León, approved in 2002, already indicated the need for mobilizing forest resources, but it did not specify a comprehensive programme of detailed actions.

Globalization and economic depression (2010-2014) have impacted on the Spanish economy and particularly on the forestry sector; it affected it in terms of shortage of resources, business difficulties and changes in the current management model. Moved by the need to fight against recession and explore new ways to revitalize the socioeconomic tissue and industrial fabric, the Regional Government of Castilla y León has elaborated and approved in 2014 a mobilisation programme for the entire forestry sector. This programme puts forward an instrument to stimulate employment and economic growth and the forest management in the new economic context. Simultaneously, forestry was declared to be one of three strategic sectors in the long-term to contribute firmly to the socioeconomic development of the region.

The programme implemented a process of stakeholder participation that aims to detect the changes or measures that are required, and its viability from the point of view of the beneficiaries and from the decision-making levels. The main objective is to create employment in the region, both in forestry rural

areas as in the primary and secondary processing industry.

Ten resource areas were detected to be analyzed in terms of current and potential production, problems and bottlenecks for its development, and attempts to solve them. These subsectors are: timber extraction, pine wood and sewing industry, bioenergy, poplar wood, high quality hardwoods, carpentry and furniture industry, pine nut, chestnut, rosin gums, and mushrooms. Five strategic measures were identified in order to solve the main structural limitations of each subsector, and other five general measures were pointed out to strengthen the whole sector. As a result, 55 measures involving administrative agreements were detailed for the period 2014-2022.

Javier Ezquerro Boticario, Regional Government of Castilla y León

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[Programa de Movilización de Recursos Forestales 2014-2022](#)