

Focus on Nordeste Transmontano, Portugal

Background

Nordeste is located in northeastern Portugal, and has a total surface area of 527 705 ha. There has been a decrease in population in recent years, due to a reduction in births, and emigration to other countries or the Portuguese coast. Forests cover around 29% of the region, some 150 532 ha (National Forest Inventory, 2005-2006).

There are no public forests (state or local government) in this region, but around 11.5% of forests are in communal areas. Woodlands are often small and dispersed, with an average area of 0.7 ha. The number of forest owners in the region is unknown, but it is likely to be very large given the very small average size of property.



Pyrenean oak (Quercus pyrenaica) woodlands in the Serra da Nogueira. Photo: Carlos Aguiar

Forestry has no tradition in the area since most forests, particularly softwoods, were planted after the 1960's and the sector is not seen as particularly relevant, neither socially nor economically. The level of forest management is low, the only exceptions are sweet chestnut orchards/agroforestry systems.

Sweet chestnut systems are a significant source of income for land owners, based on the

commercialization of chestnuts (fruit) with a relatively high price and high national and international demand.



Mixed woodland in the Vinhais municipality. Photo: Carlos Aguiar

Other forest activities are related to firewood, an important source of energy (for example, more than 45% of households in Bragança use firewood for heating) and with the collection and commercialization of wild mushrooms.

SIMWOOD's work in the region

This involves a number of Regional Learning Laboratory initiatives, including a Regional Forest Council, informal groups of experts, and a community of owners and users involved in forest decision making.

These initiatives are supporting the development of regional focus studies and a pilot project. The regional focus studies look at:

- the forestry context
- forest logistics
- tools for growth modelling
- forest owners and the role of forest associations
- forest inventory
- analysing trade-offs in forest usage

The **Nordeste Regional Forest Council** gathers together individuals representing the major interest groups related to the forest sector in the region: chestnut producers, forest administration, forest associations, municipalities, forestry research, environmental NGOs and the forest tourism sector. The aim of the Council is to support forest mobilisation and to enhance the role of forestry in local development, and in particular subsectors of activity such as energy, manufacturing industry, and services.

The Council met for the first time in April 2015 (it will meet once a year, on average).



Photos: Fernando Pérez-Rodríguez

Participants were able to learn about and contribute to SIMWOOD's workflow and the plans for regional focus studies and pilot projects. They were able to contribute to the identification of obstacles and opportunities for the sector from their perspectives, and, more importantly, to indicate possible solutions for some of the constraints.

Developing practical tools

Informal groups of experts from the fields of forestry, environmental sciences and social sciences will support several of the practical tools under development by the local team, as and when needed. In particular, it's planned that they will help with the development of software, called 'AppTitude', which looks at the suitability of the landscape for different forest uses.

The regional team has already finished an application to calculate distances, fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions in truck transportation; and is currently working on an

application for forest management. This is a practical application which will allow the estimation of stand growth and production according to particular management schemes, giving you total wood removed (by size class) and value, and the structure of the remaining stand.

Pilot project

The Nordeste Pilot Project involves the establishment of a Decision Support System in the ZIF (Zona de Intervenção Florestal) of Lomba, to integrate stakeholders' perspectives and willingness into forest management. This Decision Support System (DSS) takes into account all possible factors of the complex forest systems and their relationship with the social, economic and environmental domains.

It aims at getting the highest wood mobilisation in the best circumstances, keeping a sustainable balance among ecosystem services, forest functions and wood and non-wood forest products. Work will start on this in mid-2015, and as part of this a Pilot Project Forest Owners Community will be created.

Who to contact in the region

The SIMWOOD local team includes staff from the Instituto Politécnico de Bragança and ARBOREA (Associação Agro-Florestal e Ambiental da Terra Fria Transmontana).

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

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