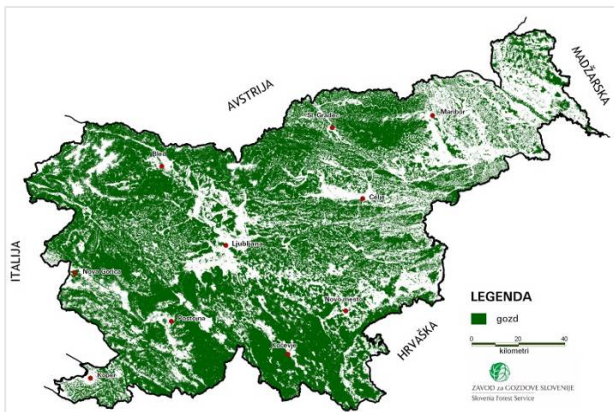


Focus on Slovenia

Background

Slovenia is situated in southern Central Europe between the Adriatic coast, Alps and Pannonian lowlands. It covers 20,273 km² and has a population of 2.06 million inhabitants. The territory is mostly mountainous with a mixture of continental, Mediterranean and Alpine climate. This reflects in a significant biological diversity and wide variety of habitats which also influence forests.



Forest cover in Slovenia
Source: Slovenia Forest Service

Slovenia is the third most forested country in Europe. In 2014, approximately 58.3% of land was covered by forests.

Land covered by forests	1,181,943 ha
Productive forests	1,073,495 ha
Protection forests	98,947 ha
Forest reserves	9,501 ha

75% of forests in Slovenia are privately owned by more than 300,000 forest owners, 22% of forests are public - owned by the state - and 3% are owned by local communities.

Most Slovenian forests are located within areas of beech, fir-beech and beech-oak sites (70%), which have a relatively high production capacity.

According to the data from forest management plans, average growing stock in forests has reached 293 m³/ha in 2014 and yearly increment has been estimated to 7.27 m³/ha/year

SIMWOOD's work in the region

The work in SIMWOOD focuses on the main barriers to mobilisation of the private forest sector in Slovenia:

- fragmented ownership;
- lack of professional organisation and cooperation of forest owners;
- weak forest-based industry;
- high production costs in private forests.

Forests are a large unused natural resource in Slovenia - actual felling in Slovenian forests in the period 2008–2013 was only around 70% of allowable cut prescribed with forest management plans.

The Slovenian focus study and pilot project are aiming to enhance forest owner cooperation, to improve forest data availability for final users and to engage forest owner associations / networks in wood mobilisation issues.



Focus study

The objective of our focus study was a social network analysis of 25 forest owner associations in Slovenia (FOAs). The focus study has been carried out in cooperation with the Bavarian State Institute of Forestry. We aimed to identify the main actors and their roles in FOA networks,

investigate FOA's preferences in forest management / use and recognize potential facilitators, together with appropriate instruments for wood mobilisation from private forests in Slovenia.

The most important actors in Slovenia's FOAs are the Slovenia Forest Service (SFS), National Forest Owners Association, Municipalities and Agricultural and Forestry Chamber. The most important goals for FOAs have been recognized education and awareness of members, and active advocacy for members' interests in the formulation of forestry and hunting policy.

Only at a lower level are goals such as the joint appearance on the markets, informal socializing of members and networking to introduce new technologies recognized. Joint forest management, combining several estates, and caring for nature protection receive least attention.

Potential for improvements is seen by FOAs in:

- improving internal organisational structures;
- the professionalization of their representatives and the education of forest owners;
- strengthening joint forest management and appearance on the market;
- raising the engagement of forest owners.

Externally, improvements mentioned include better cooperation and communication with other actors, for instance with the SFS for joint forest management in a certain area, with the public, also with neighbouring FOAs or for joint training at a higher level.

The focus study has also pointed out the main facilitators of solutions to future forest problems and what instruments would work best. This information will be very important for the development of the Slovenian pilot project and for SIMWOOD outcomes in general.



Pilot project

The Slovenian pilot project is called **“Improvement of forest owners associations capacities for mobilisation of wood from private forests”**. Its main aim is to improve the performance, efficiency, outputs and internal organisation of already established and newly established local associations of forest owners.

The focus study results will be improved with analysis of past activities of FOAs, analysis of current barriers to wood mobilisation on the forest owner's side in Slovenia (from Regional Learning Lab results) and experiences from the forestry sector response to the 2014 ice-break and consequent bark beetle outbreak in Slovenia.

As a result of the pilot project, model information and a communication internet platform will be developed with solutions (regarding governance, motivation, production cost optimization and forest management planning) adapted to FOA members and forest owners in Slovenia. In addition, we will produce a Handbook for internal organisation of FOAs and other forest owner's cooperation initiatives.

Recent natural disasters in Slovenian forests and their consequences

In February 2014 a huge ice-break occurred in Slovenia, a natural disaster which damaged more than 9 million m³ of wood and affected over 50% of Slovenian forests (600,000 ha). 15,000 km of forest roads were blocked and 14,000 ha of

forests were destroyed to that extent that they have to be re-established. Financial damage in forests was estimated at 214 million EUR. In 2015 a bark-beetle outbreak started in Slovenia due to the large amount of damaged spruce trees in forests, and rather warm and dry weather in summer 2015. Till the end of 2015 2.5 million m³ of bark beetle infested spruce have been marked for felling after the ice-break.



Those disasters revealed some important mobilisation issues. The SIMWOOD team tried to document and discuss these with stakeholders to benefit from the situation. Slovenia has a very undeveloped wood market and depends on the export of timber after natural disasters.

In addition, the market for forestry services is not transparent and not efficient. The weakest links in the chain are the capacities for concentration of wood on the market and a rigid domestic wood processing industry, which cannot create higher demand. The level of private forest owner organisation/cooperation is low and cannot be improved in a few months, despite strong state intervention.

The ice-break also accelerated activities across the whole forestry sector (governance, forestry services, wood production, wood market, import and export of services / wood) which gave us other opportunities to learn about how to progress when the salvation logging is finished.

Quality wood auction – a promising practice for better wood mobilisation



Slovenian auctions of valuable wood have been held every February for 10 years in the town of Slovenj Gradec. They are an established way of selling valuable timber, organized by local forest owners association Mislinjska dolina, the National Forest Owners Association and Slovenia Forest Service. In the 2016 auction valuable logs have been offered by 401 forest owners amounting to 2,532 m³ of wood. 25 customers participated in the auction, from Slovenia (8), Austria (8) Germany (5), Italy (3) and Croatia (1). The highest price was reached by a log of sycamore maple - € 7,555 per m³.

The auction attracts a lot of attention from forest owners and the public especially on an “Open Door Day”, when all the logs can be seen and prices compared. It also expands the timber marketing options of forest owners, promotes planned forest management and contributes to the improvement of silvicultural work in forests.

Who to contact in the region

The SIMWOOD local team includes staff from Slovenian Forest Institute and Slovenia Forest Service.

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