

France's regional forestry policy

Summary

by David DEVYNCK

In France, while forestry policy is in the hands of central Government, local and regional authorities and local stakeholders in the forestry and wood industries have three further tools available as additional back-up for the governance of defined areas: the Forestry Charter, the Supply Plan, both for a Defined Area, and the Development Plan for a Mountain Zone. Designed to foster a new approach to forests, these tools are particularly well adapted to the multi-purpose nature of Mediterranean forests and woodlands.

While forestry policy in France remains the reserve of the country's national government, the series of laws on decentralisation in the 2000s (the Voynet Act, the framework Act on Forestry) gave local and regional elected representatives the possibility of coming up with a new outlook on forests and woodlands. This approach involves integrating forests and woodlands into regional development policy by taking into account their economic, social and environmental functions. In other words, accepting the "multi-purpose" nature of forests.

In this perspective, the regional and local elected authorities and others involved in the forest and wood sector have put into place a genuine framework scheme for forestry development that is local and sustainable. The basis for this model is composed of three complementary tools for regional governance: the Forestry Charter for Defined Areas (in French CFT), the Defined Area Supply Plan (in French PAT) and the Massif Development Plan (in French PDM). These tools, each with its own different purpose and areas of intervention, have met with real success in the Mediterranean regions of France: 23 CFTs, 8 PATs are under way in the two Regions of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur and Languedoc-Roussillon.

Forestry Charter for Defined Areas (CFT)

This is a voluntary undertaking whose aim is to bring about a commonly-held forestry policy shared by all the users of the forests and woodlands living or involved in an effectively cohesive area. It is the result of a collective reflection about the needs and challenges of the forestry economy of the given area but, also, about the relationships between forests and tourism, the water resource, biodiversity, agriculture... the CFT has concrete expression through the implementation of a pluri-annual programme of action which each person involved in the defined area responds to and adopts in the light of individual skills and know-how. Insofar as the CFT is a framework guaranteeing the coherence and effective interplay of forestry projects in the whole area, it ideally constitutes the point of departure for the other tools of regional governance referred to above.

Defined Area Supply Plan (PAT)

The PAT is a tool for assistance in decision-making, as back-up for elected representatives in structuring both the fuel wood sector and the timber and saw wood trade for local and regional sales. It marshals the supply and demand for wood in a defined area, identifying the costs for exploiting the resource and deducing the level of invest-

ments required to optimise the development of the sector through a body for governance.

This undertaking associates the stakeholders and others involved in the forest and wood industry sector in the defined area with elected government councillors and the financial backers of the project. In doing so, it enhances reflection and thought, validates the conclusions emerging from work done and ensures the link with territorial development policy which may take the form of a CFT.

Development Plan for a Mountain Zone (PDM)

The PDM is a tool designed for private forest landowners. On the basis of an analysis of the potential strengths of a forested mountain zone (4,000 ha roughly), it defines an action plan for mobilising the wood resource and reviving the management of private holdings. This work is carried out by a body for governance bringing together forestry stakeholders, elected representatives and the financiers of the operation. The PDM can take form independently or via CFT or PAT action programmes whenever these other tools have identified a particular need for help with a dynamic and leadership.

This model for territorial development in a defined area, based on the interlocking of complementary tools for regional governance, finds concrete justification in the emergence of a "wood hub". This takes the form of a high-technology unit for the transformation of wood (sorting facility, drying workshop, mechanical classification unit, planing workshop...) resulting from public / private partnerships between local and regional elected governments and professionals in the forest and wood industries. These wood hubs represent the tangible stamp of success of France's local and regional forestry policies.

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Fig. 1 :
Framework scheme for
forestry development in
France

