

# Entrepreneurship in Mediterranean landscapes

## *Success stories based on Mediterranean forests products and services*

### *Introduction*

by Camille EVARD

***One of the recommendations  
formulated within the Strategic  
Framework on Mediterranean  
Forests that is to say the need  
of « valorising processing market  
chain values of woods  
and non-wood forest products  
(cork, honey, mushrooms...)»  
while preserving Mediterranean  
forest resources ».***

***In the session «Entrepreneurship  
in Mediterranean landscapes» of  
the 4<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Forest Week  
in Barcelona, inspiring cases and  
success stories of entrepreneur-  
ship based on Mediterranean  
forests products and services  
were presented.***

### **Introduction**

Mediterranean forests are characterized as being relatively fragile and rare ecosystems which are also known to have a low productivity. Currently, there are really few productions or services defined by strong value chains. This explains, in part, the abandonment of forest lands. The direct consequences of this abandonment are the raise in forest fire risks in the North of the Mediterranean and the loss of value of forest lands in southern Mediterranean regions. This particularity in the South might have created a high dependence of local populations towards natural resources and as a result, this has led to an overexploitation and changes in land uses.

Based on this observation and in accordance with the main focus of the IV<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Forest Week, that is to say the role of forest value chains in a green economy, the session on « Entrepreneurship in Mediterranean landscapes » proposed different portraits of today's and tomorrow's entrepreneurs; the ones who defend innovative or local solutions aiming at giving back to forests the economic, environmental and social value that they deserve.

1 - Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forest approved during the III<sup>rd</sup> Mediterranean Forest Week in Tlemcen (Algeria).  
See *Forêt Méditerranéenne*, T. XXXIV, n°4, dec. 2013.

Through the five records from the northern Mediterranean entrepreneurs (three are presented in this issue), this sessions aimed at highlighting entrepreneurial success stories which reaffirm once again the recommendations formulated within the Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests that is to say the need of « *valorising processing market chain values of woods and non-wood forest products (cork, honey, mushrooms...) while preserving Mediterranean forest resources* ».

Thus, the five entrepreneurial success stories were focused on:

- the case of the Portuguese world leader in cork and products processed with cork, AMORIM (see p.191),
- the case of the Innovation and Economic and Social-Oriented Development Pole of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (France) for chemical valorisation of wood (see p.201),
- the Autonomous University of Barcelona in order to detail the potentials and applications of biomass,
- the GAIATA Association dedicated to reclaiming economic and social values linked to the relationship between livestock in mountains and forests (see p.209),
- and finally, the case of the CESEFOR, a foundation governed by representatives of forests and which acts as a service provider to the rural forest sector.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Francisco Carvalho introduced us to a brand new AMORIM initiative aiming at encouraging business ventures creation in the field of cork production and processing thanks to the opening of business risk funds to be used for business incubators. As for Patricia Guiraudie (Economic and Social-Oriented Development Pole of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur), she explained the state of the art of a biorefinery cluster project as an example of chemical transformation of wood. This project was made possible thanks to, among other things, the private-public partnership and the promotion made by a regional innovation pole. Jordi Bartrolí

(Autonomous University of Barcelona) presented in an exhaustive way the potential of wood exploitation and use with biomass and through different techniques. Edu Balsells (GAIATA Association) detailed a singular example of a rural development initiative focused on the use of sylvopastoralism in order to be able to maintain and manage forest with high probabilities of fires. On one hand, this enables dignify shepherds' work and boosts job creation at the local level. On the other hand, it guarantees an efficient and sustainable forest management with the aim of reducing forest fire risks. Finally, Rodrigo Gomez (CESEFOR) emphasized the huge potential of Internet in terms speeding up the access of local populations to forest goods. He illustrated through the creation of a virtual platform enabling local hunters and forest landowners to interact with electronic hunting auctions.

This diversity of innovative experiences promoted by private or public institutions, research centres, universities, companies or local associations should inspire the Mediterranean forest community and rise their awareness on the existing solutions aiming at creating products and services which give added value to the forests. This diversity is also synonym of diversity of social and economic contexts which should be taken into account when starting business ventures, in order to fall within a clear and sustainable approach.

The emphasis was put on the need of innovation, being technical and/or social and the importance also of building strong partnerships between companies and the research and more in general, between public and private. The emphasis was put on the need to work with high quality raw products and to guarantee regular supplies and yields without affecting at any time the balance of forest ecosystems.

Finally, the decisions made in the fields of forest innovations and forest laws by policy makers are at high stake and will have to be tracked in order to enhance the opportunities for forest landowners and companies to carry on innovative projects.

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