

The Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests

by Christophe BESACIER

In Avignon, France, during the 2nd edition of the Mediterranean Forest Week, the members of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions Silva Mediterranea formulated for the first time their request for a Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests. The first version of this framework was presented two years later in Tlemcen. It revolves around three main objectives and nine strategic lines. The 3rd Mediterranean Forest Week was an opportunity to discuss the modalities of implementation of these strategic lines in the countries of the Mediterranean Rim.

The Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions-Silva Mediterranea organized the third Mediterranean Forest Week (III MFW) in Tlemcen (Algeria) from 17 to 21 March 2013. This III MFW was held with the support of the Algerian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and several other key members of the Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests. This event, entitled « Mediterranean forests for sustainable development of territories: strategies of mitigation and adaptation to global change? », will remain a milestone in the history of the regional cooperation on Mediterranean forest ecosystems with the following main results:

- The launch of the first edition of the State of Mediterranean Forests (SoMF);
- The organization of a high level segment, chaired by the Algerian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, to endorse a new Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests (SFMF) and to adopt the Tlemcen Declaration;
- The celebration of the first International Day of Forests on March 21, 2013. This tree planting ceremony was an excellent opportunity to highlight the importance of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands for Mediterranean landscapes.

The agenda was built in order to provide relevant answers on the following key challenges:

– Forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean contribute significantly to rural development, poverty alleviation and food security of Mediterranean landscapes ;

– Forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean are both sources of wood, cork, energy, food, incomes and many other goods and services (biodiversity conservation, soils and water protection, recreational areas, significant potential for carbon storage) often crucial for many economic sectors (food and agriculture, soils and water conservation, drinking water supply, tourism, energy and forest industry);

– Global changes that affect today the Mediterranean region heavily mortgaging the future of these forest ecosystems and other wooded land (loss of biodiversity, increasing risk of forest fires and other biotic disturbances, watershed degradation and desertification processes) and, therefore, jeopardizing the sustainable provision of these multiple goods and services to populations.

– Combatting the already on going desertification in Mediterranean landscapes should be a key priority in all regional/national forest and environmental policies.

A relevant response to those key challenges could be the implementation of the Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests (SFMF) adopted in Tlemcen. This SFMF is the result of a long regional dynamic initiated in April 2011 in Avignon, France, during the Second Mediterranean Forest Week (II SFM). It was on this occasion that the member States of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions-Silva Mediterranea formulated for the first time their request for the preparation of a new Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests.

In September 2012 in Chania, Greece, an expert workshop was organized to prepare the first draft of this strategic document which aims to provide common policy orientations for the integrated management of Mediterranean forest ecosystems.

The SFMF has been structured as follows:

– a rationale focused on the situation of Mediterranean forests on the basis of infor-

mation available in the State of Mediterranean Forests (SoMF);

– three main objectives:

1.– Developing and promoting goods and services provided by forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean region;

2.– Promoting the resilience of these forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean to face global changes;

3.– Enhancing capacity of stakeholders and the resources mobilization necessary for the sustainable management of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean.

Each of the three main objectives propose the implementation of three key strategic lines with expected results and concrete recommendations addressed to decision makers for the sustainable management of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean:

1.– Developing and promoting goods and services provided by forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean through implementation of the following strategic lines:

– Improve sustainable production of goods and services by Mediterranean forests;

– Enhance the role of Mediterranean forests in rural development;

– Promote forest governance and land tenure reform in Mediterranean landscapes;

2.– Promoting resilience of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean to face global changes through the implementation of the following strategic lines:

– Promote wildfire prevention by integrating the increasing risks associated to ongoing climate change in the Mediterranean;

– Manage forest genetic resources and biodiversity to enhance adaptation of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands to climate change in the Mediterranean ;

– Restore degraded Mediterranean forest landscapes.

3.– Enhancing capacity of stakeholders and the resources mobilization necessary for the sustainable management of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean through the implementation of the following strategic lines:

- Develop knowledge, training and communication on Mediterranean forests;
- Reinforce international cooperation on Mediterranean forests;
- Adapt existing financing schemes and develop innovative mechanisms to support implementation of forest policies and programs on Mediterranean forests.

The document was shared with foresters throughout the Mediterranean region during a long process of consultation which ended in Tlemcen in Algeria with the presentation of the final document during a session of the Third Mediterranean Forest Week (III MFW) and the final adoption by the high-level segment chaired by the Algerian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development on March 21, 2013.

At the end of its session, the high-level segment adopted, the Tlemcen Declaration (see p. 377), which calls for an increased focus on the sustainable development of Mediterranean landscapes. This Tlemcen Declaration calls the political and administrative authorities at national, regional and local level and all other stakeholders involved in the management of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean (private or public managers and civil society) to develop and, if necessary, adapt their strategies and policies, including governance, for sustainable development of Mediterranean landscapes.

It request from forest managers, experts and scientific community of the forestry sector to develop and implement, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, innovative and sustainable management practices of landscapes to be disseminated and shared in the Mediterranean region.

This Tlemcen Declaration requests the implementation of the main recommendations proposed in the Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests: policy orientations for integrated management of forest ecosystems in Mediterranean landscapes taking into account characteristics and needs of each country.

This new Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests adopted in Tlemcen should become an efficient tool in order to:

- Improve the visibility of the forest sector and promote the mobilization of financial and human resources in the coming years;

- Provide a consensual framework to improve intersectoral coordination and fostering partnerships between the various stakeholders involved in the management of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in countries of the region after its integration in national policies (public / private);
- Contribute to a better coordination for development and implementation of sub-regional and intersectoral programs and / or projects;
- Facilitate identification and promotion of common positions on Mediterranean forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in international fora;
- Provide a common vision and roadmap to the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions-Silva Mediterranea.

C.B.

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Webography

Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/silvamed/en/>

The State of Mediterranean Forests
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/silvamed/en/>

Tlemcen Declaration
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/silvamed/en/>

Picture 1:

The IIIrd Mediterranean Forest Week was held in Tlemcen (Algeria). In the center of the platform : Christophe Besacier.
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