

Marginal and peripheral forests: a key genetic resource for enhancing the resilience of forests to global change

On 20 July 2016, a side-event was held during the 23rd Session of the [Committee on Forestry](#) at FAO headquarters on “[Strengthening conservation: a key issue for adaptation of marginal/peripheral populations of forest tree to climate change in Europe \(MaP-FGR\)](#)”. This event aimed at discussing strategies to promote and protect the forest genetic resources provided by Marginal and Peripheral (MaP) populations in the context of climate change. MaP forest populations are at the edges of species ranges where conditions are less suitable for survival. The effects of climate change are likely to be stronger and more rapid in marginal and peripheral populations of forest trees than elsewhere. Also, human pressure is likely to be stronger there, particularly at rear edges. As acknowledged by the FAO Global Plan of Action for forest genetic resources (FGR), studying adaptive processes in these populations is crucial and of mutual interest for European and neighboring countries for understanding the evolution of species, developing gene pool conservation and promoting management strategies and networks to cope with global changes. MaP tree populations constitute valuable FGR for enhancing the resilience of European forests. The unique genetic resources provided by MaP populations could be used to help European forests adapt to the 21st century challenges. This event identified several areas where the results of the MaP-FGR project could have significant implications. Conservation, restoration, and climate change are major areas where awareness on MaP populations should be raised. Firstly, conservation policies should take MaP populations into account. FGR are to be conserved not only *per se*, but also because they are a major part of the solution for adaptation to climate change. *In situ* and *ex situ* conservation programs should more prominently consider MaP populations. MaP populations should also be considered when defining habitat conservation networks. The identification of high conservation value forests should therefore consider MaP populations as a selection criteria. Second, the ongoing initiatives on restoration should consider MaP populations as part of the solution to provide seeds that are adapted to different and contrasted environments. Third, FGR are essential for adaptation to climate change and MaP populations should be significantly addressed in the current debate on climate change. Common garden tests should be used to prove the adaptation capacity of populations, and MaP populations should be included in those



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tests. The response of MaP populations to dieback and pests in this context should be further addressed. At the Mediterranean level, a recommendation is to extend the techniques used in the COST Action to other countries where similar questions regarding FGR are addressed (e.g. Iran). In countries where little has been done for the conservation of FGR, a recommendation of the project would be to pay special attention to MaP populations and prioritize them in the conservation actions. Core populations are still important as the heart of the genetic diversity, but MaP populations should be more intensely conserved than core populations. Beyond MaP populations, the recognition of genetic diversity as an inherent component of the biodiversity has been a slow process but some results from research are now reaching the arena of decision and policy makers with some implications for forest management. For instance, rules for collecting seeds have now integrated knowledge on genetic diversity. A lot remains to be done. For instance, the [Forest Stewardship Council](#) and the Pan-European Forest Certification Council should integrate genetic diversity in their labelling criteria. The tools developed by the project regarding ecological or geographical marginality should be included in the toolboxes for forest monitoring and reporting and, more generally, genetics should enter the monitoring and reporting categories. There are different ways to capitalize on the results of the COST Action project. Databases and tools developed by the project could be handed over to [EUFORGEN](#) for further use and dissemination. The [State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources](#) could also take advantage of the clarification of the concepts of marginality and of the data brought by the project. A follow up of the project is already ongoing with the [GenTree project](#) funded under [EU Horizon 2020](#) that will eventually bring a clearer picture on these questions at a broader scale. Finally, [the working group of Silva Mediterranea on FGR](#) could disseminate the tools developed by the project to countries where FGR are less well conserved.

Extraordinary session of the Committee of *Silva Mediterranea*

The extraordinary session of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea* took place on Friday, 22 July 2016, during the 23rd session of the Committee on Forestry. The purpose of this meeting was to review and discuss the current activities of the Committee. During his welcome address, René Castro Salazar, FAO Assistant Director-General for Forestry, highlighted the importance of the climate change issue for the Mediterranean region and the support of FAO for a regional initiative on restoration. He advised *Silva Mediterranea* to develop a regional program dealing with issues like forest fires or immigration, which could be developed with a regional development bank.



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The main activities of the [working groups](#) (WG) since 2012 and their working plan for 2016-2017 were presented during this meeting. It was agreed that the WGs should be evaluated on the basis of their efficiency and that the [Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests](#) (SFMF) could be a tool to monitor progress in their activities. Based on the strategy of *Silva Mediterranea*, the terms of reference of the WGs should be revised and updated. Based on the recommendations of the 2013 evaluation of *Silva Mediterranea*, a set of 38 decisions had been adopted by the Committee at its extraordinary session in March 2015 in Barcelona during the [4th Mediterranean Forest Week](#). Several of the decisions deal with the WG activities of *Silva Mediterranea*.

Better communication should be made on the activities of *Silva Mediterranea*. Mediterranean forests should be present at the [UNFCCC COP 22](#). Countries from the former Yugoslavia, not yet members of *Silva Mediterranea*, could be invited as observers to the next session of the Committee, with the possibility to become members in the future. Countries with Mediterranean ecosystems in other regions of the world (California, Chile, Australia,

South Africa) could also be invited to share their experience on topic of interest for the Mediterranean. However, the Committee has to remain focused on pan-Mediterranean cooperation and limit the risk of geographical dispersion. The Committee should refocus on its initial mandate that is a platform for high level political dialogue. The 2013 evaluation of *Silva Mediterranea* highlighted the necessity for the Committee to have its own strategy with several decisions:

- Decision 2: to elaborate a common view and its own strategy based on the identification of priority areas among the recommendations of the SFMF.
- Decision 3: to elaborate an action programme based on this new strategy of *Silva Mediterranea*.
- Decision 28: to promote targeted themes for which FAO Forestry Department has experts and at the very least to continue its work around forest fire issues, biodiversity and forest genetic resources, non-wood forest products (NWFP), urban and periurban forests (UPF) and the fight against desertification/restoration of degraded lands and forests.

This strategy should use the SFMF as a starting point. Moreover, the added value of *Silva Mediterranea* should be to address more efficiently issues that are not already addressed by other institutions or partners. As a preliminary step towards a specific strategy for *Silva Mediterranea*, an analysis was made to prioritize the topics of the SFMF and come up with 6 strategic lines:

1. Improve sustainable production of goods and services by Mediterranean forests;
2. Enhance the role of Mediterranean forests in rural development;
3. Develop urban and peri-urban forestry to make cities more resilient;
4. Promote wildfire prevention in the context of global changes;
5. Manage Forest Genetic Resources and biodiversity to enhance adaptation;
6. Restore degraded Mediterranean forest landscapes.

This approach should also include priority topics that are currently not addressed by the WG of *Silva Mediterranea*. Moreover, the strategy must be formulated as a strategy for the Committee. Communication should be an integral part of the strategy.

An overview of the regional [FFEM-funded project "Maximize the production of goods and services of Mediterranean forest ecosystems in the context of global changes"](#) and its components was presented.

The project is now in its final phase and the results of this activity have brought to the following recommendations:

- Improve forest management tools;
- Integrate the economic valuations of goods and services and participative approaches (including co-management) in public policies;
- Reinforce the knowledge on Mediterranean wooded land that is currently insufficient;
- Reinforce the financial, technical and operational capacity of the countries regarding woodland management for the benefit of local populations, users and institutions;
- Improve trans-boundary cooperation regarding the prevention of and the combat against forest fires;
- Reinforce the capacity of the forest personnel.

A second phase of this project could potentially be developed conditionally on its evaluation.

The idea of a Mediterranean regional initiative on restoration has been proposed to give greater visibility to the efforts already committed by Mediterranean countries at their national level. Targets on restoration have been defined at the global level ([Sustainable Development goal 15.3](#), [CBD Aichi target 15](#), [UNCCD zero net land degradation](#)), with global ([Bonn Challenge](#)) and regional commitments ([Initiative 20 x 20](#), [AFR100](#)) already taken by countries to reach these targets. The SFMF has stressed the importance of restoration for the Mediterranean region, which is the central topic of the [WG 8](#) of *Silva Mediterranea*. The Mediterranean initiative on restoration would be defined as the combination of:

1. A commitment by Mediterranean countries to a quantitative objective of restoration of degraded lands in the Mediterranean area based on their national efforts already set in their respective national policies or in their precedent international commitments.
2. A commitment by the main technical partners active in the Mediterranean area to act together and in a coordinated manner to support restoration efforts in countries in the region.
3. The implementation of an alliance between financial partners (both bilateral and multilateral) ready to contribute to those efforts of restorations in degraded Mediterranean territories.

A letter has been sent by FAO to the members of *Silva Mediterranea* to get their feedback on this idea. The next steps towards this initiative will be a dedicated event during UNFCCC COP 22 in Morocco and the Fifth Mediterranean Forest Week. Moreover, a survey on past

and ongoing initiatives, programmes and projects that include restoration of degraded land and forests within the Mediterranean region has been initiated. So far, 40 initiatives/programmes/projects have been identified.



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Decisions taken after the 2013 evaluation of *Silva Mediterranea* have requested the regular organization of the Mediterranean Forest Weeks (MFW). [The Fifth Mediterranean Forest Week](#) will be dedicated to the restoration of Mediterranean forests and landscapes. See article on the MFW.

The decision n. 8 taken after the 2013 evaluation of *Silva Mediterranea* have requested to regularly update the [State of Mediterranean Forest](#) (SoMF). The second edition of the SoMF will be a co-publication FAO and [Plan Bleu](#) based on voluntary contributions. It will deal with topics that are geographically and/or thematically more focused, yet with a regional interest. A better balance in terms of authorship between northern and southern-eastern Mediterranean will be sought. A provisional table of contents for the second edition of the SoMF has been defined during a meeting on 7 April 2016 in Rome. The first draft of the publication will be presented in Morocco during the Fifth Mediterranean Forest Week. As a complement to the SoMF, the project for a second publication named the Mediterranean Agro-silvo-pastoral Memento has been developed. A survey will be compiled to assess the interest of partners in the Memento.

All members of the Committee thank Turkey for its remarkable achievements as Chair of *Silva Mediterranea* since 2012. The term of the current [President of *Silva Mediterranea*](#), Ismail Belen, will expire at the 22nd session of the Committee in March 2017 and the Committee has requested to member countries if there was an interest in carrying the next presidency. Spain has expressed its interest conditionally on political agreement from its future government.

Resilience of Mediterranean forests to climate change

A side event was organised on 20 July 2016 during COFO 23 in Rome, on the following theme “Resilience of Mediterranean forests to climate change”.

Mediterranean countries have a forest area of 85 million hectares, of which nearly 20 million hectares are Mediterranean type. These forests are often not well known and they often suffer their structure and function not benefiting the same status of temperate and tropical forests, even at the international level. Yet, Mediterranean forests provide a multitude of goods and services to local people and to all countries: firewood essential for cooking and heating, animal fodder, many non-timber forest products such as cork, mushrooms, honey, aromatic and medicinal plants, pine nuts, acorns, etc. as well as recreation and hunting areas. Furthermore, they also contribute significantly to carbon storage (including soil), protection of soil and the preservation of water quality. Today a major challenge arises, as these woodlands are fragile and threatened by climate change and by a very strong anthropogenic pressure, even if they are sources of goods and income needed for local populations survival. To this regard, the regional project “Maximize the production of goods and services of Mediterranean forest ecosystems in the context of global changes” has produced a number of interesting results. Tools for a better resilience to global change, in terms of ecosystems vulnerability, economic and social assessments of goods and services, participatory governance and methods of evaluation for the mitigation potential to climate change in five target countries (Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey).



Side event Resilience of Med. forests - 2016
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Representatives from the Forestry General Directorates of the countries involved in the project were at this side event together with the FAO sub regional office for North Africa, research institutes ([CFTC](#), [University of Louvain](#)),

forestry experts, the [International Association for Mediterranean Forests](#), the [FAO team of the Global Environment Facility \(GEF\)](#), and donors such as the French Ministry of forests.



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Tools to face climate and anthropogenic pressures

This event was the occasion to show the key outcomes of the project through its four main components with particular emphasis on tangible results to be immediately employed by countries. Some of these tools now available to countries are the following:

- maps to see accurately the main areas of vulnerability to climate change in the sites studied in the period 2030 - 2050;
- economic data which give a clear idea of the economic value of certain goods and services produced by forests in the pilot sites;
- two practical guides for the Maâmora forest and the Maghreb, proposing “win-win” agreements between forestry administration and local communities, involving these populations in forest management in order to improve their forest practices, reduce degradations, sometimes occurring, while allowing them to obtain an income or to benefit from forest goods;
- a [Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions \(NAMA\)](#) proposal in Lebanon and also a Project Idea Note for a mitigation project in Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey.

More generally, this project enabled country ownership of a certain number of methodologies so far unused or little-known but also to discover possibilities in terms of international funding currently available to improve management practices for a more resilient forest and face challenges.

Lessons learned and key recommendations

Among the key recommendations obtained by the project, we can underline: the importance of strengthening the systematic collection of data on Mediterranean forest ecosystems to better estimate the vulnerability of Mediterranean forests to climate change; the need

to adapt institutional and legal frameworks and enable cross-sectoral approaches; the integration of participatory approaches and socio-economic analysis systematically driven in the development plans of woodlands and strengthening the skills of professional and technical staff to achieve this goal; the need to strengthen the organisation of local stakeholders and value chains as well as the forest sector financing capacity by boosting cooperation among Mediterranean countries that share common issues.

Next steps of the project

All the participants agreed on the significance of these results and their importance for countries, stressing the need to capitalise the results for their own interest but also in the context of other regional projects or initiatives. For example, the project [MEDFORVAL, "Network of forested areas of High ecological value"](#), whose objective is to enhance collaboration between practitioners and decision-makers from different sectors in the Mediterranean region on concrete actions to protect, manage or restore the ecological values of the forest sites, through networking, could include some results obtained in the FFEM project. The importance in networking dynamic forces and stakeholders around the Mediterranean was emphasised, not forgetting the private sector advantage and the corporate world, as a potential source of job creation for people, with the double objective of better manage and protect woodlands.

The idea of funding a concrete action in response to this project was also discussed with the aim to move towards a Mediterranean regional program approach, in the framework of the [Global Environment Facility](#) (GEF 7), but more generally, also prospecting the opportunities offered by climate finance while having in mind the importance for countries to mobilise themselves strategically and financially in these future projects.

Magali Maire
Forestry Officer, FAO

The organization of the Fifth Mediterranean Forest Week (V MFW)

The Fifth Mediterranean Forest Week will be held from 20 to 24 March 2017 on the topic of **the restoration of Mediterranean forests and landscapes**. The Second meeting of the Organizing Committee (OC) of the Fifth Mediterranean Forest Week (V MFW) was held on 21 July 2016 at FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy with the purpose to clarify the content of the sessions of the Week, dis-

cuss budgeting and report on actions taken to prepare the Mediterranean initiative on restoration.

Morocco has confirmed Agadir as the venue of the V MFW. It is an easily accessible location with high biodiversity (in particular endemic argan trees). In addition, a forest ecosystem in need of restoration located nearby can be visited by the participants of the week.

The Secretariat of the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) has agreed to hold its capacity-building workshop on the restoration of forest and other ecosystems to support the achievement of the [Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#) during the V MFW. Joining these two events will be a unique opportunity to make stakeholders from different horizons to



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benefit from shared knowledge on forest and landscape restoration in the Mediterranean.

Participants agreed on the following title for the event: "Towards an enhanced regional cooperation to restore Mediterranean landscapes: improving resilience for the benefit of people and environment".

The visual image and the leaflet of the event were confirmed with some changes.

The OC of the V MFW has validated the option to let the International Association for Mediterranean Forests (AIFM) create a web site with a new domain name. The link to the new web site is www.5.medforestweek.org. The page has been developed in English and French and a link to the [HCEFLCD](#) web site will be included. The Organizing Committee recommends that the HCEFLCD creates a web page dedicated to the V MFW that will link back to the web site of the MFW.

The Mediterranean regional initiative on restoration will be an outcome of the V MFW and the focal points of *Silva Mediterranea* were involved to obtain a non-legally binding commitment based on the efforts committed at the national level, to give a better visibility to these efforts at the regional level. Positive feedbacks have been received from Albania, Israel and Portugal. Support to this initiative has also been given by Turkey and Lebanon.

MEDITERRANEAN NEWS

EFIMED Week: Smart Mediterranean Forestry, bioeconomy, climate adaptation & social integration

07-09 November 2016 - Maierato, Italy

www.efimed.efi.int/portal/events/annual_meeting/efimed_week_2016/

Forest action of the UNFCCC COP 22; presentation of the AFMS Initiative

08 November 2016 - Marrakech, Morocco

Third meeting of the Organizing Committee of the Fifth Mediterranean Forest Week

06-07 December 2016 - Agadir, Morocco

Different types of commitments could be accounted in this initiative, including productive reforestation. A survey should be sent to the Ministries of Agriculture and to the Ministries of Environment of the different Mediterranean countries to get consistent data on their national commitments.

The interpretation service will be provided during the plenary sessions and the field trip in French, English and Arabic.

The sessions of the week were discussed in terms of contents and speaker. The following sessions were confirmed:

- Session 1: Opening ceremony (Monday 20, 11:00-13:00)
- Session 2: Context, Global initiatives and regional dynamics – Evaluation of forest degradation (Monday 20, 14:30-16:30)
- Session 3: Ceremony for the International Day of Forests (Tuesday 21, 09:00-11:00)
- Session 4: State of play; success stories; Mediterranean restoration baseline (Tuesday 21, 11:00-13:00)
- Session 5: Identification of opportunities for restoration (methods and concrete cases) (Tuesday 21, 14:30-16:30)
- Session 6: Local governance (Tuesday 21, 14:30-16:30)
- Session 7: Parallel sessions and scientific sessions (Wednesday 22, 14:30-16:30)
- Session 8: Monitoring, evaluation of impacts (Thursday 23, 09:00-11:00)
- Session 9: Perspectives and obstacles to the funding of restoration (Thursday 23, 11:00-18:00)

The field trip will be organized on Wednesday 22 March for half a day. A detailed proposition will be made by the HCEFLCD. Possibilities of field trip include ecological restoration and argan forests. Participants will make this choice at the moment of the registration. Side events will be organized in the slot from 16:30 to 18:00 and they do not have to be related to the topic of restoration. One side event every day will be dedicated to the CBD capacity-building sessions. The exact number of side events will be clarified depending on the number of meeting rooms available. Member of the Organizing Committee should submit proposals for side events.

Posters will be selected based on an open call. The terms of reference for the call will be communicated on the website. The selection committee for the posters will be composed of a person from the HCEFLCD, one from [EFIMED](#), and one from FAO or AIFM. All selected posters will be finally validated by the HCEFLCD.

The draft budget elaborated at the 1st meeting of the Organizing Committee of the V MFW was clarified. However, costs have to be estimated more precisely according to quotations for meeting rooms, lunch and coffee breaks, gala dinner, interpretation. Proposals for sharing costs among partners will then be submitted to all partners. Background papers will be made available to participants on the web site of the Week and distributed on the USB drive given to participants. Proceedings of the Mediterranean Forest Week will be published as a special issue of the journal [Forêt Méditerranéenne](#).

A contribution to finance carbon compensation measures will be integrated in the registration fees and clearly mentioned in the website.

Possible private sponsors should be contacted to mobilize funds for communication. Other communication activities (media coverage, press conferences, and interviews) will be implemented depending on the budget mobilized through private sponsoring.

The next meeting of the Organizing Committee is planned on 6-7 December 2016 in Agadir.

For more information related to the newsletter of *Silva Mediterranea* please contact Nicolas Picard (Nicolas.Picard@fao.org) or Caterina Marchetta (Caterina.Marchetta@fao.org)