



Ifrane Model Forest, Morocco

The Mediterranean Model Forest Network

Development of a Regional Model Forest Network in the Mediterranean Basin

The Mediterranean landscape is characterized by high population density, major human impacts over the past 2 000 years and a high proportion of privately owned lands over publicly owned lands, particularly on the northern rim. Sustainable forest management in the region must therefore address such factors as the relevance of regional and local governments in forest management, the reality of impacts caused by climate change and the importance to the region of such critical issues as non-timber forest products and services.

The Urbión Model Forest was established in 2006 in Spain's Castile and León region. While the Model Forest initially became a member of the Ibero-American Model Forest Network, there was also a vision to expand Model Forest development throughout the Mediterranean region with its unique forests and landscapes. Since the 2008 establishment of the Mediterranean Model Forest Network, 13 regions and countries have joined and are in the process of developing Model Forests. Since 2010, two Model Forests – Ifrane in Morocco and Yalova in Turkey – have been accepted by the International Model Forest Network (IMFN) as Candidate Model Forests.



Left: Atlas Cedars,
Ifrane Model Forest, Morocco

Right: Ifrane Model Forest,
Morocco

Model Forest Activities and Regional Priorities

The central focus of the Mediterranean Model Forest Network has been initiating activities to support the principles of effective, low-cost decentralization, cooperation, solidarity and equity among participants.

The EU-funded Project MED Forêt Modèle, initiated in January 2009, is aimed at developing a Model Forest in each participating European region. The project involves:

- Illustrating how the Model Forest concept can be applied in the socio-economic and ecological context of the Mediterranean region
- Developing a strategy for the Mediterranean Model Forest Network to promote Model Forests as an innovative and original tool for territorial governance of forest-dominated landscapes, and to integrate this tool into European regional policies

Looking Forward

During the 2010 regional Model Forest network meeting (Medforum), climate change and cork oak production and marketing were identified as two key thematic programming areas for Model Forests in the region.

Climate Change

In addition to developing links with existing adaptation and mitigation strategies underway in the Mediterranean region, the following priorities were identified:

- Strengthening the technical and financial capacities of Mediterranean Model Forest Network members, focusing on climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies
- Putting in place a common approach to silviculture, taking into account conservation of water resources
- Establishing an arboretum network to preserve genetic resources in the Mediterranean basin
- Promoting the inclusion of biotic and abiotic factors in research on ecosystem dynamics
- Monitoring of biodiversity and landscape conditions

Members of the Mediterranean Model Forest Network:

- Region of Castile and León (Spain)
- Region of Murcia (Spain)
- Region of Corsica (France)
- Region of Provence-Alps-Costa de Azul (France)
- Region of Sardinia (Italy)
- Region of Tuscany (Italy)
- Region of Istria (Croatia)
- Prefecture of Magnesia (Greece)
- Region of Western Macedonia (Greece)
- Turkey
- Tunisia
- Morocco

Cork Oak

A working group has been established to build partnerships between cork producers in Model Forests of the region. The working group is addressing several areas of common concern in cork production and marketing, focusing on:

- Building capacity through technology transfer (e.g., new efficient cork harvesting techniques) and promotion of best practices
- Improving management and production of cork operations
- Implementing adaptation in response to climate change
- Developing a common marketing strategy
- Establishing a databank of information about cork oak forests
- Researching new cork applications and uses
- Promoting a Mediterranean alliance among all stakeholders involved: forestry departments, regions, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and research experts

Milestones

- 2006** Urbión Model Forest established in the Castile and León region, Spain
- 2008** Mediterranean Model Forest Network (MMFN) launched
- 2009** MMFN and the Mediterranean Regional Office of the European Forest Institute sign a Memorandum of Understanding on developing Model Forests in the region
- 2010** Ifrane Model Forest, Morocco, accepted as candidate Model Forest
MMFN joins the Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests, along with United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's Sylva Mediterranea and other major governmental and non-governmental organizations in the region
- 2011** Yalova Model Forest, Turkey, accepted as candidate Model Forest

Left: Cork trees in Tunisia

Right: Making wine bottle corks from cork bark in Tunisia



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THE INTERNATIONAL MODEL FOREST NETWORK



Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*)
in Urbión Model Forest, Spain

Urbión Model Forest, Spain

The Urbión Model Forest, located in the region of Castile and León, Spain, was created in 2006 in one of the most extensive continuous wooded areas on the Iberian Peninsula. The forests of Urbión have provided well over half of its inhabitants with employment for centuries. Timber from the native Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) of the area is harvested and processed, and edible mushrooms and other non-timber forest products are gathered. These activities, along with woodland recreation, form the basis for the sustainable development of this forested landscape.

The Model Forest has created an online information system to help local municipalities improve the sale of wood from sustainably managed forests. Information is now available that shows the location of woodlots, the tracks and roads used to transport wood, and various distribution plans. This information system simplifies the registration process for companies that bid on lumber at municipal auctions, which in turn facilitates the marketing of wood within the Model Forest.

Yalova Model Forest, Turkey

The Yalova Model Forest in Turkey was accepted as a candidate by the IMFN in February 2011. Encompassing a region that has a high capacity for tourism and non-timber forest product development (e.g., mushrooms, honey, medicinal and aromatic plants and fruit

production), this Model Forest's goal is to work towards sustainable management of the landscape while promoting the development of timber and non-timber forest products and tourism.



Women harvesting lavender
in Ifrane Model Forest

Ifrane Model Forest, Morocco

Ifrane is the first Model Forest to be identified in Morocco. The Ifrane Model Forest was accepted as a candidate by the IMFN in July 2010. Situated in a unique and fragile ecosystem in the Middle Atlas region, the Model Forest has the following objectives:

- Support sustainable development of natural resources and landscapes
- Conserve and valorize of biodiversity and natural ecosystems
- Contribute to improving local socio-economic conditions
- Create value from natural resources
- Raise awareness through education on the environment and sustainable development