

# 2012-18 ADDING VALUE TO FRENCH FORESTRY



*With more than 25 million hectares of wooded area, of which 16m is in mainland France and 9m in the overseas regions (8m in French Guiana alone consisting to a large extent of primary forests), France is the 3rd most forested country in the European Union. Today covering more than one third of the national territory, publicly and privately owned forests constitute a considerable asset through their many roles and functions, in accordance with the principle of multi-functionality reaffirmed by the law.*

**F**irst and foremost, the forest provides wood, which is used in various ways: construction, furniture, everyday or art objects, paper, panels and packaging, heating and biomass... At the same time, provided that it is being used in a sustainable way, it actively contributes to the preservation of ecological balances, ecosystems and biodiversity since it stores carbon, purifies water, enriches soil and provides habitats which are conducive to fauna and flora. Finally it gives rise to a wide range of activities: touristic, hunting, sporting, scientific... and produces, in addition to wood and mushrooms, berries, lichens used in pharmacology.

**«A trading deficit of €6 billion, 2nd place after energy»**

However, in spite of its great potential, this sector is today faced with significant difficulties resulting in a large trading deficit. In fact, private forests are very fragmented and as a result are often under-exploited because 3/4 of the owners have less than 4 hectares.

French timber, mostly originating from hardwood, does not always correspond to current market requirements.

Sawmills, which are nonetheless strategic links in the supply chain, are in sharp decline because they are not competitive at a European level as a result of inadequate investment in modernisation, particularly by companies in the craft industry.

More and more engineered or processed wood is being imported, because it generates the greatest added value.

Furthermore, the sector is not properly structured and will have to face up to radical changes.

The increasing reliance on wood, particularly for energy production and in the construction sector, will lead to demands for significant increases in production. Exploitation of available woodlands in a sustainable way should be implemented and the exploited plots should be monitored to ensure renewal.

Conflicts over usage resulting from the increase in demand and the increase in new types of usage, such as fuelwood, cannot be ruled out in the near future.



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Adapting to climate change reinforces the uncertainty for foresters in terms of choice of trees and methods of forestry

management in the hope of being able to respond in several decades time to the changing needs of consumers.

However making French forests more productive must not be achieved at the expense of their other ecological, social and societal functions.

**« 3.5 million forest owners, almost 450,000 jobs, €60 billion in annual turnover»**

This is why the methods of management and exploitation must be developed together.

Within this framework forestry jobs should become more attractive, because of the dependence on an indispensable skilled workforce.

Similarly, the role and resources of the ONF (French Forestry Commission), which is a key player, merit particular attention.

With regard to overseas forests their specific characteristics require appropriate measures.

The challenges to be met are complex and will determine the future; research and technological innovation must play a part. They require ambitious and proactive policies to be achieved through improved governance of the whole sector, in order to implement the necessary effective action. ■

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## IMPROVE THE PRODUCTIVITY OF FORESTS WHILE MANAGING THEM IN A SUSTAINABLE WAY

- **Encourage** owners to come together in producer organisations.
- **Make** management materials and documents widely available and adapt them to the smallest holdings.
- **Support** investment in order to increase productivity in the forestry industry through the creation of the Forestry Mobilisation Fund as envisaged by the Grenelle Environment Forum.
- **Ensure** that exploited forest areas are renewed and discuss the desirability of a parafiscal scheme similar to the FFN (National Forestry Fund) and how the wood carbon Fund should be allocated.
- **Foster** a taxation policy which supports active management and prevents the fragmentation of forests.
- **Develop** and control the certification of forests.
- **Promote** diversity of tree species, age and genetics and the ecological continuity of forests
- **Implement** the commitment of the Grenelle Environment Forum regarding the financing of forestry practices with low ecological impact.
- **Improve regulation** of big game to obtain a better balance between agriculture, forestry and hunting.

## REVITALISE THE FORESTRY AND TIMBER INDUSTRY

### TO MAKE IT COMPETITIVE AND TO ENCOURAGE THE USE OF LOCAL TIMBERS

- **Support** first processor companies to make them competitive at international level.
- **Ensure** the continued viability of smaller sawmills by facilitating the pooling of equipment.
- **Support** businesses through development equity loans from the modernisation Fund and the opening of the FSI (Strategic Investment Fund) timber fund upstream in the sector.
- **Develop integrated regional industries.**
- **Designate** and harmonise standards in French timber for use in construction.
- **Adapt** regulations for public procurement so that the source of timber is a selection criterion.
- **Reaffirm** a hierarchy in valuation methods and better identify the regional / territorial resources for national consistency.

## TAKE MORE ACCOUNT OF THE SOCIAL ASPECTS

- **Sustain** existing jobs, create new ones and make the jobs more attractive in order to recruit a skilled workforce.
- **Improve** work and job conditions by refreshing collective agreements and develop preventative measures with regard to occupational risks.
- **Support** and improve training schemes.

## RAISE AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FORESTS FOR MANKIND IN VIEW OF THEIR MULTIFUNCTIONAL USES AND TO RESPOND TO SOCIETY'S NEEDS

- **Provide education** about the various functions and sustainable management methods for forests.

## INTENSIFY AND REFOCUS RESEARCH AND INNOVATION WORK

- **Advance** fundamental understanding of how ecosystems function.
- **Come up** with new market opportunities for forestry products, particularly for hardwoods.
- **Propose techniques** which will reconcile timber production, respect for ecosystems and adapting to climate change.

## STRENGTHEN THE PUBLIC SERVICE REMITS AND RESOURCES OF THE ONF

### TO ENSURE THE SUSTAINABLE AND MULTIFUNCTIONAL MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC FORESTS

- **Make sure** that the human and financial resources are adequate for the public service tasks.
- **Strengthen** regional consultation and governance in compliance with national guidelines and decisions.
- **Strengthen** national dialogue in order to improve working conditions and the prevention of psycho-social risks.

## IMPLEMENT SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR OVERSEAS FORESTS

- **Improve** knowledge about overseas forests by extending the scope for intervention by the IGN (French Geographical Institute).
- **Formulate** a compensatory mechanism for the ineligibility of French Guyana under the REDD programme + to fight against deforestation.

## STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SECTOR

- **Maintain** a State Secretariat (or a department with responsibility) within the Ministry of Agriculture, to ensure a coherent policy.
- **Bring** the two inter-professional organisations closer together and then merge them in the longer term (upstream-downstream).
- **Strengthen** and reinvigorate local governance in the sector.
- **Implement** policies for the massifs and assess the value of the agencies for the massifs.