

Integration of forest policy goals at European, national and sub-national levels.

The case of fire prevention and biomass production.

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Abstract

Through literature review and involvement of local stakeholders, this project analyzed to which extent forest fire prevention and the production of forest biomass for energy are integrated in European, Spanish and Catalan policies. It was found out that the lower the policy level, the stronger the policy integration, though the need to improve such integration is a reality also at Catalan level.

Keywords

European Union, Spain, Catalonia, literature review, stakeholders, questionnaire

Introduction

Especially in Mediterranean areas, production of forest biomass for energy is a very actual discourse due to the high potential attributed to Mediterranean forests to provide wood for energy generation and to the possibilities of biomass production to reduce wildfire risk. In some instances, policies at different governance levels were criticized for the weak coordination of different forest-related objectives related to fire prevention and energy production.

Objectives

- Analyzing European Union, Spanish and Catalan policies focused on (or related to) forests, in order to verify to which extent they integrate on paper the two topics of fire prevention and production of biomass for energy.
- Enquiring perspectives of relevant stakeholders on the actual (policy) integration between the two topics of fire prevention and production of biomass for energy.

Methods and material

The study was carried out during a Short Term Scientific Mission at the Forest Sciences Center of Catalonia and it applied the following methods:

- Literature review of relevant European, Spanish and Catalan policies.
- Interviews with Catalan experts.
- Preparation and distribution of a questionnaire to a broad range of Catalan stakeholders (see the Figure below).

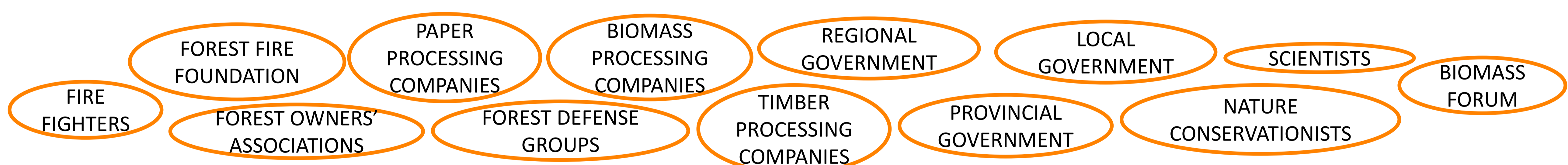


Figure: categories of Catalan stakeholders considered in the study.

Results

The policy analysis showed that the lower the policy level examined, the stronger the integration between fire prevention and biomass production objectives. The expert interviews and preliminary results from questionnaires revealed that some room for improvement exists at sub-national level, mainly in relation to the limited consideration of the biomass topic in fire related policies that mostly concentrate on suppression

rather than on prevention approaches. To improve integration of the policy objectives under study in Catalan policies, stakeholders suggest to: 1) strengthen policy coordination among policies dealing with forest production and forest fire and 2) broaden the scope of subventions dedicated to biomass production to foster forest management in abandoned areas prone to fire risk.

Conclusions and discussion

Coordination of forest policy objectives should be improved at European, Spanish and Catalan levels, first of all by strengthening dialogue among different policy sectors like fire prevention and biomass production.

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