

Criterion summary

Criterion goals

Criterion 6 – “socio-economic functions of forests” – supplements the Criterion 3 indicators on the productive function of forest by describing the economic and social benefits of forest spaces enjoyed by society. These benefits extend from the production and consumption of the raw material to the protection services, the well-being of populations and the development of rural regions.

This is therefore the most heterogeneous criterion. It counts fifteen indicators which provide information on a variety of topics, from the structure of the forest ownership to the forest's cultural and spiritual values via employment, health and training, economic performance of the forest sector, integration of forests with the regions, certification, access to forests for recreational purposes, etc. It is proposed to group indicators into four themes to give the information in this criterion some semblance of order: humans and forest regions (6 A), economic characteristics of the French forestry sector (6 B), investments and efforts for ecological or environmental purposes (6 C) and cultural, social and spiritual needs and values (6 D).

Analysis

6.A. Humans and forest regions

The 16 million odd hectares of French forests are territories marked by Man and his intervention. The information under Criteria 1 and 3 shows how Man has fashioned the forest through management and what benefits he gains from it, but now Criterion 6 provides details on the men who fashion the forests and process the timber and how they incorporate the forestry problem into the problems of development and sustainable management of regions through the following indicators:

- 6.1. Structure of the forest ownership
 - 6.1.2. Training in the forestry sector,
- 6.5. Jobs in the forest-timber sector
- 6.6. Occupational health and safety in the forestry sector,
 - 6.1.1. Integration of forests in local initiatives,
 - 6.1.3. Voluntary sustainable management certification initiatives

The management goals and methods change according to whether the forest is publicly or privately owned, the size of the holding and the management operators (**Indicator 6.1**). These elements influence the timber mobilization capitalization capacity and the spatial organization of stands.

Three quarters of French forests are privately owned and one quarter publicly owned (municipalities and other communities, State). In 2012, there were 3.3 million owners for the 10.4 million hectares of private forests. Those owning 25 hectares or more hold slightly less than half the surface areas and account for just 2% of owners. In 2014, the 17,000 “public forest owners” shared 4.6 million hectares (for 37% State-owned). Public forests are mainly large (several hundred hectares on average against a few hectares only as private forest).

Proof of the appeal of the forestry sector and the sensitivity of players (owners and elected representatives) to sustainable management, between 2010 and 2014, training (**Indicator 6.1.2**) has tended to rise both in terms of diploma and non-diploma courses for owners; however, initial training courses are showing a slight drop in graduates.

At the same time, silviculture and logging provide almost thirty thousand full time equivalent jobs (**Indicator 6.5**). Despite the downward trend of employment in silviculture and logging in the period analyzed, it remains fairly stable, at around 14%, in the timber sector as a whole.

Mirroring the better working conditions, the work accident frequency rate in the forestry sector (**Indicator 6.6**) has been improving steadily since 2002. All the sectors are showing a downward trend and although logging has traditionally been the most risky activity, clear progress has been made as the accident frequency rate per million hours worked in this activity is now at the same level as for silviculture.

Forest regions are at the heart of rural area development and organization, testifying especially to the development of massif development plans (390 plans for 930,000 owners involved and about 2.9 million hectares) and territorial forest charters (140 charters in 6,800 municipalities for a forest area of 5 million hectares of which 68% is privately owned) (**Indicator 6.6.1**). Sustainable forestry dynamics within territories are also expressed through expanding certification (**Indicator 6.1.3**): over half the national forest areas are certified for their sustainable management, the guarantee of environmentally-friendly, socially beneficial and economically viable management.

Forests make a major contribution to rural economies, to the living environment and well-being of populations in the rural areas. Many situations encountered in French forests can be sources of wealth and diversity, mainly at the scale of landscapes, the diversity of stands, habitats and management (or non-management) methods; but they can also generate economic (timber mobilization costs, owner incentives, etc.) or ecological (fragmented habitats) difficulties.

6.B. Economic characteristics of the French forestry sector

Processed forest products are sources of trade and create value for the French economy. This section of Criterion 6 sets out a few macro-economic indicators of the forestry sector that can replace value within the French economy:

- 6.2. Formation of the added value of the forest-timber-paper-furniture sector,
- 6.3. Distribution of the added value of the forest-timber-paper-furniture sector,
- 6.7. Timber consumption
- 6.8. Imports and exports.

The added value created by the forest and timber activity is around 12 billion euros in 2012 (all sectors together, including over 18% for silviculture and logging). Overall, the contribution of the sector to the national wealth (share of the gross domestic product) is showing a downward trend (scarcely more than 0.5% in 2012 against nearly 1% in 1999) (**Indicator 6.2**). The gross logging surplus in the timber sector, which includes the profitability of the sector's production system, is around 3 billion euros every year, including over a billion for the silviculture and logging sector (**Indicator 6.3**).

An analysis of the apparent consumption in volume (production + imports – exports) and international trade in both volume and value (**Indicators 6.7 and 6.8**) indicates that France is a net importer of many products, mainly processed products with high added value. The trade balance in 2014 shows a deficit of 6.8 million cubic meters of roundwood equivalent and 4,497 million euros 2014, i.e. more than 10% of the global French foreign trade deficit (for 0.59% of the gross domestic product).

The macro-economic indicators are used to assess the economic vitality of a sector and its significance in the domestic economy. Although the silviculture and logging data appear to confirm the dynamics of forests, forestry workers and regions, the overall sector performances must be tempered due to lesser performances of other timber processing sectors.

6.C. Ecological or environmental actions

Although Criteria 1, 2 and 4 in particular have indicators reflecting the state of French forests and the pressures facing them, the indicators in this section of Criterion 6 provide (partial) information on the potential responses by society to certain environmental problems:

- 6.4. State expenditure on forests
- 6.7.1. Recycling and salvage,
- 6.9. Fuelwood.

Major public expenditure (**Indicator 6.4**) is granted to support sustainable forest management (annual figures of 140 million euros for non-State-owned public forests and 80 million for private forest management). Added to this are a variety of general interest missions fulfilled by the forests with human support (169 million euros for preventing and fighting fires, restoring the forest canopy after storms and conservation of soils and the biodiversity). Lastly, all the resources for expanding knowledge of forest ecosystems are more difficult to assess but are probably in the order of 100 to 200 million euros (on-going monitoring of resources and research means).

At the same time, public policies encourage the recycling and salvage of wood products and the use of renewable energy sources such as wood (**Indicators 6.7.1** and **6.9**). Thus, the sawmill by-products take on increasingly significant economic and ecological importance; they are no longer considered waste but as raw material for the crushing operations and energy production. Similarly, the main raw material used in the paper and paperboard industry is still (and this is consolidating in 2014) recycled paper and paperboard. In addition, the 46 million cubic meters of wood and by-products used for energy purposes account for 4% of the total primary energy consumed in 2013 and 47% of the renewable energy.

6.D. Cultural, social and spiritual needs and values

Lastly, Criterion 6 measures part of the social benefits which Man gains from forests through two indicators:

6.10. Public access to the forests,

6.11. Forests with cultural or spiritual value.

Opening forest spaces to the general public is a social issue of prime importance (**Indicator 6.10**). The metropolitan forest area counted in number of inhabitants is 0.26 hectare. More than half French people say that they go to the forest for recreational pursuits at least once a year. Public access is part of the missions and goals of public forests, but a large proportion of private forests is also open to the public, as 85% of owners say that they welcome visitors to their forests, i.e. nearly three quarters of private forest areas.

The cultural or spiritual value of forests is without doubt very important for the populations but also very difficult to measure (**Indicator 6.11**). Forest sites with strong cultural or symbolic value include classified sites, arboretums in public forests, biosphere reserves, world heritage sites, unusual trees and populations, peri-urban protection forests and *forêts d'exception* (*exceptional forests*) in State-owned forests.

Conclusion

The very actions of forest owners and managers provide a multitude of economic, social and environmental benefits. The most obvious are – perhaps – what society gains from timber production and timber processing industries. These values can be measured fairly easily, but are always partially limited by difficulties in separating out the proportion of value linked to the timber or the forests in activity sub-sectors or indirect fallout in terms of creating value or jobs, for example. But despite it being linked without question to the market mechanisms and formal economy, the forest cannot be reduced to this trade component alone. History and reason show that the forest have always been subject to complex interactions with the environment, regions and populations. Productions other than timber, tourist activity and ecological considerations, although difficult to measure, play a full role in the sustainable management of French forests.

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