In the northern and central regions of Portugal, forest owners and managers are looking for ways to prevent forest fires while running their businesses in a viable way. Rosario Alves, executive director of the Associação Florestal de Portugal (Forestis), the federation of Portuguese forest owner organisations, says: “Residues of forests, like shrubs and wood that remain on the ground after harvesting or thinning, act as fuel in terms of fire. Even though foresters are aware of the risks of wildfires, many small Portuguese forest owners are finding it too costly to perform tending operations.”

Alves would like to help: “One solution we see is to create value for the production of primary forest biomass for energy. The Operational Group GOTECSFOR allows us to work on optimising the forest biomass supply chain in partnership with research institutes, local consumers and forest owners.”

The Operational Group will specify what modifications are needed to existing machinery. Filipe Santos, researcher at Instituto de Engenharia de Sistemas e Computadores, Tecnologia e Ciência (INESC TEC), says: “To reduce transport costs, the machinery has to make woodchips on-site. The machinery has to cope with steep slopes, small plots and narrow pathways and it has to produce woodchips that are appropriate for use as energy.” Rosario Alves says forest owners are happy to become involved in this Operational Group: “They will test machinery and their adequacy on
experimental forest plots. Also, they will be collecting wood samples, so that we can do tests to identify the wood that can be used for making the woodchips.”

Read the press article [4]

Further reading:
Foresters prevent forest fires in Portugal with woody biomass [4]

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