

ENRD Forestry Thematic Initiative

National Rural Network joint activities



The multifunctional role of forests

A joint Spanish - Walloon NRN activity to explore the economic, environmental and social functions of the forest.



1) The Spanish Dehesa (Andalusia, 27-29 October 2010)



During this study visit participants were able to address forest multifunctionality from different perspectives. Major highlight of the visit was the introduction to Iberian pig grazing in the extensive agro-silvo-pastoral system of the Dehesa and the local processing of Iberian ham (PDO status). The forest was also the place to discover how a LAG boosts the touristic offer of a natural park (bird-watching) by providing local entrepreneurs with training and implementing a Charter for Sustainable Tourism. Linkages were finally explored between cork oak forest and local economic activities (cork industry, hunting, tourism).

The Dehesa is an extensively grazed, wooded pasture system typical of the south-west regions of Spain and southern Portugal. The poor quality of the soil makes it a very marginal system. However, these areas hide a great potential for diversification and ensure the provision of a wide range of environmental public goods and services (biodiversity, soil conservation, retention of human capital and skills, etc.).

2) The management of environmental public goods seminar (Namur, Belgium, 18-19 November 2010)



In this seminar experts were called to highlight the different functions of forest and illustrate how Rural Development measures support forest development and management. The discussion focused on appropriate policies for the management of environmental public goods in the forestry sector. A workshop and a field visit provided several examples of forest multifunctionality:

- The agro-silvo-pastoral system of the Dehesa and the role of well-managed forests in fighting against fire in Spain.
- Forests as invaluable cultural landscape and source of employment for young people, supported by a Swedish LAG.

« Forest management represents for us a social and cultural heritage : there are no conflicts of use, because people have always been living in the forest, for the forest, with forest and due to the forest. »

- The Flemish 'bosgroep' system, which provides coordination to a range of local stakeholders for establishing and running a forest management plan.



- The challenging example of a urban forest which is at the same time a productive area, place for scientific research, recreational place for the residents, and a Natura 2000 protected area (Wallonia).

