

Deliverable N° 5.1

Joint call on selected programmes

Lead participant: Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (MINECO)

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Publishable abstract: This document established the basis for choosing themes for joint competitive calls. It develops the call content (scope and thematic areas as well as the target countries or institutions) and the procedure to launch it.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Preamble

FORESTERRA ("Enhancing FOrest RESearch in the MediTERRanean through improved coordination and integration"), GA n° 291832, is an ERA-Net funded by the European Commission within the VII Framework Programme.

FORESTERRA aims to reinforce the scientific coordination and integration of Mediterranean forest research programmes as well as scientific cooperation with Mediterranean-area countries (including EU and non-EU member states) and with countries from other Mediterranean Climate Areas (MCA) like Australia, South Africa, Chile and California.

FORESTERRA has partners from twelve countries, as well as two international institutions, the European Forest Institute (EFI) and the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM).

FORESTERRA is launching a transnational joint call for project proposals based on funds from participating countries. Thanks to the agreement of the partners on common prioritized research topics for Mediterranean forest areas, the network will enable a better use of research funding whereas the human resources as well as research facilities will be complementary and more effectively utilized in order to reduce the high fragmentation of Mediterranean forest research and to maximize its impacts..

FORESTERRA is therefore of primary importance and will provide a large added value to the present situation by offering new opportunities for a higher quality research on forests in the Mediterranean area.

1.2. Context

One of the main objectives of previous FORESTERRA work has been to develop its Strategic Plan in order to define the most strategic research themes, or topics, for implementing joint activities and research projects in the Mediterranean forest research.

This call is the result of a process of defining topics based on (1) a bottom-up call for research ideas conducted via email, and (2) an interactive scientific workshop with all consortium members and invited representatives of research organizations (involving all disciplines relevant to forest research) from most Mediterranean countries as well as other Mediterranean climate areas (California and Australia). We have also taken into account that some topics were previously funded by different EU R&D programmes, such as FP7 or COST, and therefore have not been included in this call, although options for implementing joint research calls within each of these strategic themes, are under study, with a different approach.

Advancing and integrating research is a prerequisite for creating the basis of innovation and providing the scientific expertise to develop efficient cross-cutting policies and new forest management models based on the key role of Mediterranean forests and forestry regarding other strategic resources and issues, such as water, soil, energy, agriculture, biodiversity, fires, climate change, etc. To meet these goals, forest science should adopt and adapt the most innovative developments from relevant disciplines (climatology, economics, decision science, biology, ecology, information technology and geomatics, etc.).

However, forest research in the Mediterranean region has traditionally been handicapped by its fragmentation, its limited means, and occasional outdating and isolation. Also, Mediterranean forestry

poses specific research challenges, related to its biophysical (i.e. low productivity, high erosion and fire risks...) but specially socio-economical conditions, such as, weak wood based value chains, relative greater relevance of Non Wood Forest Products and a much greater relative importance of non market values related to ecosystems services (i.e. biodiversity, water...).

All this, frames the scientific context of this call that has build upon the Mediterranean Forest Research Agenda 2010-2020 (MFRA), which presents a pan-Mediterranean vision of the forestry challenges and scientific priorities relevant to all Mediterranean countries (http://www.efi.int/files/attachments/press_releases/mfra_2010-2020).

The MFRA provides a scientific framework for FORESTERRA, in order to develop joint transnational forest research cooperation. In fact, the MFRA, is the result of a extensive consultation process focussed at identifying research cooperation needs –in relation to forest ecology, management and governance– in order to ensure the sustainability of Mediterranean forest in a context of global change. The MFRA advocates for incorporation to forests sciences of the most innovative scientific developments in fields such as climatology, economics, decision science, biology, ecology, information technology and geoinformatics.

MFRA is structured around four strategic research areas, selected on the basis of their intrinsic importance and significance for policy decision-making. These can be summarized in the following questions: 1) how will climate and land use changes impact Mediterranean forest ecosystems? 2) How to address forest and fire management concerns in a global change context? 3) How may governance, policies and economic instruments ensure the provision of valuable forest goods and services? and 4) How to manage multifunctional forests and woodlands in multiple-use landscapes?

Based on the a consultation and prioritization process, FORESTERRA partners have made an important effort towards the implementation of the MFRA, defining four main priority research themes that are multi-disciplinary and cross-cutting. These are:

- Understanding global change drivers, indicators and impacts on Mediterranean forest ecosystems: a Mediterranean-scale approach
- Fostering forest system resilience through managing biodiversity, from genes to communities
- Multi-purpose forest landscapes management to enhance the role of non-wood products and related ecosystem services in rural development
- Integrated watershed management for delivering forest water-related services

From those four, two thematic areas are funded in this call, based on the principles of scientific relevance and funds necessity and effectiveness. In this respect, it has been taken into account that the role of NWFP is covered by the FP 7 funded STARTREE project and by the Cost Action FP1203, while the Integrated Watershed management is also coveted by FP7 projects BEWATER or ECOADAPT. Accordingly, the retained priority themes for this Join Call are:

- *Understanding **global change drivers**, indicators and impacts on Mediterranean forest ecosystems: a Mediterranean-scale approach (Global Change);*
- *Fostering forest system resilience through **managing biodiversity**, from genes to communities (Biodiversity).*

1.3. General Considerations

The proposed actions should meet the following criteria:

- ***Added value.*** The activities should have added value at Mediterranean level, promoting exchange of knowledge between Northern and Southern Mediterranean countries and involving as much as possible other Mediterranean Climate Areas.
- ***Interdisciplinary.*** The research activities should take an interdisciplinary approach in order to promote innovative scientific approaches and get beyond the currently dominant stage of theory.
- ***Transnational collaboration.*** Coordination/clustering of existing capacities and activities should result in a more structured research area at the Mediterranean level.

2. SELECTED RESEARCH TOPICS AND INSTRUMENTS FOR THE FORESTERRA JOINT ACTIVITIES

Project consortia are invited to apply to one of the Thematic Research Areas hereafter indicated.

2.1. Thematic Research Area 1: Understanding global change drivers, impacts & indicators on forest ecosystems: a Mediterranean-scale approach (Global Change)

Justification

The Mediterranean Basin is considered to be very vulnerable to global change impacts (including urbanization, climatic, environmental, socio-economic, atmospheric pollution and land-use changes) because its ecosystems are threatened by drastic and rapid changes and complex interactions among multiple drivers. Global change is putting at stake important forest goods and services: wood and non-wood production; biodiversity, including genetic resources; water resources; and carbon budget. However, different parts of the Mediterranean Basin are impacted by different and contrasting processes depending on their socioeconomic situation and demographic trends. For example, forest degradation, overgrazing and intense use of available forest resources is a dominant trend in the southern Mediterranean regions, whereas in the north, forestry activities are being abandoned and natural forestation is increasing, at least in the uplands. In this context, determining the expected impact of global change on forest ecosystems and the goods and services they provide in different parts of the Mediterranean Basin poses an enormous challenge. Such information is crucial for developing adaptive strategies, from forest management to forest policy level, to ensure that Mediterranean forests will continue to deliver relevant services. This is particularly important in hot spots, where the impact of global change drivers is predicted to be particularly large, and complex interactions among drivers lead to situations in which different policies may have conflicting effects on different ecosystem services. Long-term monitoring through a large observational network is essential to gather the information needed to orientate proper management. It is crucial to promote the institutional changes needed to face the above-mentioned challenges.

Scope

This strategic theme requires a pan-Mediterranean regional scale, a truly multidisciplinary approach (climatology, ecophysiology, demography, geography, ecology, fire research, modelling, economics, governance, etc), and different scientific tools, including remote sensing and information systems, long-term monitoring networks, socio-economic data, integrated modelling.

Objectives

- (i) to understand, analyse and map the main global change state, drivers, impacts (including main biotic and abiotic risks,.) and indicators relevant for the sustainability of forest ecosystems and their goods and services at the Mediterranean Basin scale;
- (ii) to model future impacts and vulnerability of forest ecosystems and their goods and services at Mediterranean scale based on the understanding of
 - climate and environmental changes: the need for downscaling and improvement of climate models
 - main biotic and abiotic forest disturbances

- human demography, economic development, social values and perception (e.g., urbanize society) as well and land-use trends
 - biological/ecological traits and adaptive capacity of species, forest communities and genotypes
 - forest distribution (shift in species, the role of invasive species, species migration vs. adaptation);
 - dynamical tendencies in the community and related structural and compositional changes;
- (iii) to identify main risks and hotspot areas requiring special attention at Mediterranean scale, including forest fire risk.
- (iv) to identify the most sensitive and vulnerable types of forest community in the Mediterranean area.
- (v) to identify the potential added value, feasibility and possible design of an integrated Mediterranean level forest information system (including interactive data-bases, mapping tools, etc.) as basis for developing new adaptive strategies and policies and identifying needed changes in management policies and restoration needs for minimizing impacts of global change on forest ecosystems in the Mediterranean Basin.

Expected Impact

It should reach a Mediterranean-scale understanding and added-value information of DPSIR (Driving Forces-Pressures-State-Impacts-Responses) to global change as a basis for developing new strategies, policies and governance models to enhance the sustainability of forest ecosystem services, from cross-sectoral policies to integrated land management. This will also contribute to the FAO initiative on drylands restoration (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/aridzone/77777/en/>) and the state of Mediterranean forests.

Objectives of the Networking Action

The described strategic theme ("Global Change") is where more research activities, and especially research facilities and capacities have been established during the past years in the Mediterranean region. In this context, FORESTERRA launches a Networking Action with the purpose of capitalizing the existing knowledge through the promotion of expertise/capacities as well as better coordination and networking of the existing projects, programmes and networks/infrastructures.

The Networking Action's objectives should include:

- Coordination, capacity building and networking of research activities around global change and Mediterranean forests addressing the objectives (i-v) mentioned in the description of the theme.
- Develop a plan to support the transnational access to existing research programmes, networks and infrastructures or/and to establish new structures ("Networks of Excellence" type) designed for research institutions willing to combine and functionally integrate a substantial part of their activities and capacities around global change, a "virtual research centre" in this field.
- It is expected to fund one consortium with different legal entities from a minimum of 3 different funding countries, including at least one partner from African Partner countries participating in the call, but opening networking and capacity building activities to all relevant scientists with own resources.
- Estimated funding and duration: a maximum of 250,000 EURO for a Networking Action with duration of maximum 3 years.

2.2. Thematic Research Area 2: Fostering forest system resilience through managing biodiversity, from genes to communities (Biodiversity)

Justification

The Mediterranean area is a biodiversity hotspot with a history of diverse land use and management practices. Bio-diverse ecological systems are expected to be more resilient to disturbances (forest fires, pest and diseases, etc) than simplified ones. However, little is known about the functional response and evolution of this diversity in Mediterranean forests confronted with rapid socio-economic, land-use and environmental changes. Basic research on functional and evolutionary processes in the context of a fluctuating and changing environment, in particular for trees as long-lived sessile organisms and keystone species of the forest ecosystem, including their associate mycoflora, is greatly needed. Similarly, a better understanding of the impacts of the increasing intensification of forest disturbances, especially of forest fires, as well as the rapid socio-economic changes (rural abandonment, etc.) on biodiversity in Mediterranean forests is needed. Integrating such knowledge into forest management is required to develop adaptive forest management models to promote the sustainability of Mediterranean forest ecosystem services. Finally, there is a need to develop comprehensive forest policy and economic frameworks and instruments to ensure the resilience of Mediterranean forests in a global change context, considering various temporal and spatial scales.

Scope

An interdisciplinary effort is required, combining expertise in environmental sciences, ecology, genetics and population biology, forest management, governance and economics. The approach will combine experimentation (in situ measurements and controlled experiments) and modelling efforts, to elucidate the role of biodiversity at different levels (from genes to communities) in fostering forest resilience and preserving ecological functioning and ecosystem services. A thorough understanding of the impacts of forest management to foster the adaptive capacity of Mediterranean forests as well as policy and economic instruments to finance and promote adaptive forest management models that enhance the functional and evolutionary potential of Mediterranean forests is required.

Objectives

- (i) to advance knowledge, on different temporal and spatial scales, on the functional, structural and evolutionary response of Mediterranean forests as affected by environmental (including the intensification of forest disturbances, especially forest fires), land-use and socio-economic changes;
- (ii) to develop new adaptive forest management models and tools that take into account the role and dynamics of forest biodiversity (from genes to forest communities, including their associate myco - and vascular flora) at local and landscape levels;
- (iii) to contribute to the development of economic valuation, financing mechanisms and appropriate policy frameworks that will support the conservation of biodiversity resources and the implementation of adaptive forest management.

Expected impact

To improve understanding and technological know-how in fostering functional, and evolutionary processes that affect adaptability and resilience of Mediterranean forests through new silvicultural practices and landscape management. Mechanisms to integrate biodiversity in economic evaluations and governance decisions will contribute to the effective preservation of biodiversity hotspots, such as Mediterranean forests, and will safeguard their ecosystem services for future generations.

Objectives of the Call for Collaborative projects

The relevance and complexity of the theme requires a truly interdisciplinary effort through Collaborative projects that address the above-mentioned scientific objectives and specific expected results. Therefore, FORESTERRA launches a call for Collaborative projects, considering that an ambitious and innovative research project within this broad and complex theme has the potential to put the Mediterranean research community working on different disciplines and topics relevant for the theme at the front of knowledge at European and global level in such cross-cutting theme. A Collaborative and interdisciplinary project should bring together the best Mediterranean scientists able to contribute to this complex theme. The scientific innovation of the project based on truly interdisciplinary approaches will be important evaluation criteria. Capacity building activities to transfer existing knowledge within the Mediterranean region should be included.

It is expected to fund at least one consortium with different legal entities from a minimum of 3 different funding countries, including at least one partner from African Partner countries participating in the call.

Estimated funding and duration: a maximum of 1,500,000 EURO for one project for duration of 3 years.

3. FUNDING PARTNERS AND BUDGET FOR THE JOINT CALL

The funding organizations of this call, hereafter referred to as **Funding Partners**, are:

1. Institut National de Recherche Forestière (INRF, Algeria)
2. Executive Forest Agency (EFA, Bulgaria)
3. Institute for Adriatic Crops and Karst Reclamation (IAC, Croatia)
4. Croatian Forest Research Institute (CFRI, Croatia)
5. Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA, France)
6. Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Agroalimentaire et de la Forêt (MAAF, France)
7. Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC, Greece)
8. Department of Biology, Agriculture and Food Sciences of the National Research Council of Italy (CNR-DiSBA, Italy)
9. Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT, Portugal)
10. Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment (MAE, Slovenia)
11. Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (MINECO, Spain)
12. Institution de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur Agricoles (IRESA, Tunisia)

The total available budget for the present call is 1.501 Million EURO.

Selected project research teams will be funded according to the national available budgets given in the table below.

Country	Funding Partner	Funding pledges in EURO*
Algeria	Institut National de Recherche Forestière (INRF)	75,000
Bulgaria	Executive Forest Agency (EFA)	210,000
Croatia	Institute for Adriatic Crops and Karst Reclamation (IAC)	30,000
Croatia	Croatian Forest Research Institute (CFRI)	105,000
France	Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA)	150,000
France	Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Agroalimentaire et de la Forêt (MAAF)	150,000
Greece	Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC)	120,000
Italy	Consiglio per la Ricerca e la sperimentazione in Agricoltura (CRA)	15,000
Italy	Department of Biology, Agriculture and Food Sciences of the National Research Council of Italy (CNR-DiSBA)	51,000
Portugal	Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT)	10,000
Slovenia	Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment (MAE)	150,000
Spain	Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (MINECO)	300,000
Tunisia	Institution de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur Agricoles (IRESA)	150,000
Total		1,516,000

*National eligibility is conditioned upon the published national rules

4. PROCEDURE FOR LAUNCHING A FORESTERRA CALL FOR JOINT ACTIVITIES

4.1. Funding model for the FORESTERRA joint call

Funding will be provided by the partners of this project and other funding agencies willing to for transnational interdisciplinary joint projects on the scientific themes selected defined in this document (Partners).

The Partners aim to secure and earmark a minimum funding to finance common projects with duration of three years. Two different funding schemes have been analysed (see Figure 1):

3.1.1 **Real common pot** pools the countries / regions contributions to a *common and centrally administered call budget*. This provides funding for successful proposals irrespective of the applicant's national / regional affiliation and results in transnational flows of funding (funding crosses borders).

3.1.2 **Virtual common pot**: countries and regions pay for their own participants - it does not establish a joint budget to finance the selected individual projects. Each country will fund its own national project participants of successful proposals and covers its own administrative effort. Applicants of projects that have been selected for funding will receive the grant directly from their national funding partner according to their terms and conditions.

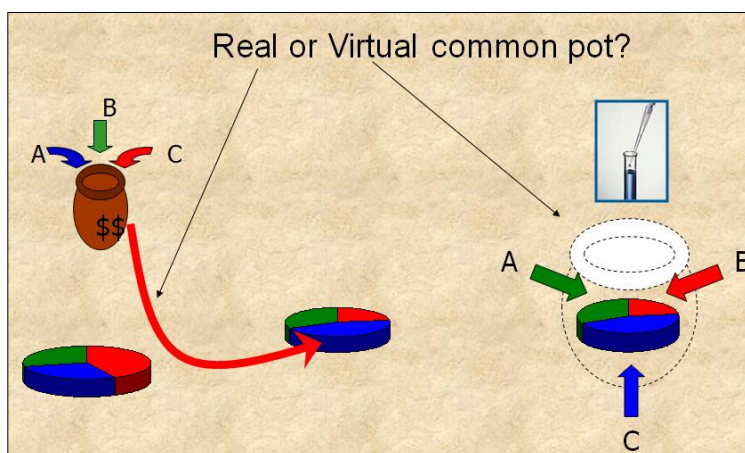


Figure 1. Funding schemes: real common pot and virtual common pot.

The funding model chosen for the FORESTERRA joint call will be the “jointly funded national projects” or “virtual common pot”, due to some funding partners are allow to fund only its own approved national research teams (following the “juste retour” model). Therefore, the FORESTERRA joint call will use a model constituting of a joint call and evaluation, but national funding.

Funding will be awarded and administered according to the terms and conditions of the responsible Partner taking into account all applicable national regulations and the respective legal frameworks.

Depending on national rules, each partner can use different levels of flexibility in this funding model:

- An agency does not have to spend all the money that has been provisionally reserved.

- Some agencies may be able to come up with extra money to fund good proposals.
- Some agencies may be able to fund foreign teams.
- Some agencies would be able to fund foreign teams via subcontracting.

Funding gaps may arise in the ranking when one of the partners runs out of money. FORESTERRA will intend to deal with these gaps through the four levels of flexibility.

Eligibility of the research teams and institutions relies on the national regulation of every funding organization. Corresponds to the funding Partner to determine whether a research team or institution is eligible or not.

National guidelines will be established in the national annexes for the joint call. These guidelines outlines the national rules and regulations for each Partner which will be required to be adhered to by each applicant in addition to those rules as jointly established by FORESTERRA.

4.2. Management and duration of the projects

The FORESTERRA Projects will have a maximum duration of 36 months.

Applicants should ensure that the requested budget is consistent with the proposed duration of the project.

Each project proposal must be constituted by legal entities from at least 3 different funding countries involved in the call by means of a Funding Partner organization, including at least one partner from African Partner countries participating in the call. The proposals must have a balance of North-South and East-West.

The same research group cannot be in two proposals of the same Thematic Research Area.

Other countries' research teams could participate in the Collaborative project or Networking Action's consortia provided they have available funds for their participation.

The requested budget cannot exceed 1,500,000 EURO for the Collaborative Project proposals and 250,000 EURO for the Networking Actions proposals.

Applicants must meet all national eligibility criteria. Clarifications on national rules can be obtained from the National Contact Points listed at the end of this Call announcement.

4.3. Decision making and application procedure

Proposals must be electronically submitted to the Call Secretariat by the Project Coordinator in the Common Application Form, through the FORESTERRA Web portal at <http://www.foresterra.eu> (to be developed by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza).

The Call Steering Committee (CSC), consisting of representatives from each of the funding organisations, will manage the call and give recommendations for funding to the national funding organisations. Proposals will be evaluated by a Scientific Advisory Board, which submits its recommendations to the CSC.

The evaluation criteria for both the 2 sections of the Call are listed in the Framework document.

The objective of the evaluation process is to select trans-national research proposals, which meet the needs of both FORESTERRA and the national funding organisations. The final decision on funding will be made by the national funding organisations.

4.4. Calendar for the FORESTERRA Call

FORESTERRA joint call for research projects, based on the abovementioned themes as well as type and number of instruments) is planned as follows:

4.4.1. Networking action

NETWORKING ACTIONS	SCHEDULED
Closing date for submission of full proposals	15 January 2014
Eligibility check: ethics and formal check by the CS, national check by Funding Partners	17 February 2014
Scientific review and ranking, SAB evaluation meeting	3 March 2014 – 16 April 2014
FORESTERRA (CSC) final funding decision	29 April 2014
Notification letters	15 May 2014
Contract negotiations	June - July 2014
Estimated starting date of project	From July 2014, depending on national requirements

4.4.2. Collaborative projects

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS	SCHEDULED
Closing date for submission of pre-proposals	15 January 2014
Eligibility check: ethics and formal check by the CS, national check by Funding Partners	17 February 2014
Scientific review	3 March 2014 – 16 April 2014
Decision taken by the CSC	29 April 2014
Invitation letters for submission of full proposals, notification letters to the rejected consortia	7 May 2014
Closing date for full proposals	7 July 2014

Eligibility check	1 st two weeks of July 2014
Scientific review and ranking, SAB evaluation meeting	July- September 2014
FORESTERRA (CSC) final funding decision	October 2014
Notification letters	November 2014
Contract negotiations	November 2014
Estimated starting date of projects	December 2014 – January 2015

ANNEX I. FORESTERRA RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE CALL PROCESSES

- The announcement of the common initiative will be undertaken concomitantly by FORESTERRA funding agencies. It will be published in official national journals of the FORESTERRA countries participating in the call and on the FORESTERRA Web site <http://www.foresterra.eu>
- The call for Collaborative projects will follow two-stage procedure involving pre-proposals and full proposals.
- The call for Networking Actions will follow a single-stage procedure involving only full proposals.
- The CSC will manage the evaluation procedure. Proposals must be sent by the project Coordinator to the Call Secretariat via the Web portal.
- The evaluation of proposals will be carried out by referees selected by the CSC and the SAB with the support, if necessary, from a pool of scientists designated by the FORESTERRA partners.
- Whenever required by national legislation, a parallel evaluation of sub-projects at national level may also be carried out.
- Applicants are given the opportunity to comment in a written rebuttal to referee reports.
- The selection and ranking will be duty of the CSC in collaboration with the funding agencies and will take place on the basis of the project proposal, the referee reports and the rebuttal.
- The CSC will make the funding recommendations to the funding agencies.
- Project funding will be the competence of the funding agencies according to national regulations.
- Projects' intermediate and final assessments will be performed by the funding agencies in collaboration with the CSC.

ANNEX II. USEFUL REFERENCES

Public reports from other ERA-Nets:

- ARIMNet: Coordination of Agricultural Research in the Mediterranean Area
<http://www.arimnet.net/index.php?p=publications>
<http://www.arimnet.net/index.php?p=call2011>
- BiodivERSA2: Networking European Research on Biodiversity
<http://www.biodiversa.org/409>
- CIRCLE2: Climate Impact Research & Response Coordination for a Larger Europe
http://www.circle-era.eu/np4/Joint_Initiatives