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► **To cite this version:**

V. Garavalia. Towards a renewed framework and functioning of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea*. Forêt Méditerranéenne, 2015, XXXVI (2), pp.286-290. <hal-03556699>

**HAL Id: hal-03556699**

**<https://hal.science/hal-03556699v1>**

Submitted on 4 Feb 2022

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# Towards a renewed framework and functioning of *Silva Mediterranea*

by Valentina GARAVAGLIA

***During the IV<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Forest Week held in Barcelona, an extraordinary session of Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea* was organized. It was an opportunity to present the new road map that this statutory body of FAO is undertaking, both for its framework, internal functioning, and for its relations with its Mediterranean partners.***

## Context

The history of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions-*Silva Mediterranea* dates back to 1911 when an international association of technicians interested on Mediterranean forestry questions was created. This association became the *Silva Mediterranea* Mediterranean Forest League in 1922. Since the beginning up to the present, the main objectives were the specificities of the region and the need for an adapted response. The association dealt with technical and scientific issues such as choice of species, treatment and reforestation methodology, grazing restoration and fight against forest fires. In 1948, at the countries' request, the *Silva Mediterranea* activities became part of the FAO through the creation of a statutory body<sup>1</sup>, the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions.

The committee is currently composed by 28 members and represents the unique intergovernmental forum dedicated to forests in the Mediterranean region. Main aims of the Committee are to periodically review the trends in the use of forest land in the Mediterranean area and to assess the impact of changes implemented in the agricultural, industrial and urban sectors, to advise member governments accordingly on reorientation or improvements necessary to meet changed situations or newly-emerging needs, to periodically examine progress in forestry technology within regional and ecological contexts in order to better assess present forest land utilization methods, to identify forestry research priorities in the Mediterranean area, determine forestry research projects of common interest to member governments in the region and recommend measures necessary for forestry research institutes in the region to carry out these projects and to determine and carry out, in collaboration with member nations and with the support of the appropriate national forestry

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1 - FAO technical statutory bodies are neutral bodies that must allow an international dialog that may support the efforts that countries make in order to have adequate policies, practices and institutions. Their task is mainly to identify problems and provide technical and political advice to its members and others, in accordance to the circumstances

Source: *Evaluation 2013 of *Silva Mediterranea* Committee.*

agencies, technical studies and surveys to assist in the formulation and implementation of national forest policies.

## The evaluation of *Silva Mediterranea*

The evaluation of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea* was requested by the Member States on the occasion of its 21<sup>st</sup> Session in Antalya (Turkey), in February 2012.

In response to additional requests from the FAO Forestry Department, prompted by the presence of new stakeholders and initiatives on Mediterranean forests – i.e. the Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests (CPMF), the Mediterranean Regional Office of the European Forest Institute (EFIMED), the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) – the panel decided to broaden its scope and analysis in July 2013. Apart from the examination of the works and functioning of the six working groups of *Silva Mediterranea* Committee for the period 2009-2012 that constituted its initial mandate's core, the panel examined the relevance of two new working groups<sup>2</sup> created in 2012 but also, and above all, the overall functioning of the Committee throughout that period, its added value, its positioning on the Mediterranean scene, how it's covering stakes and issues, and finally its sustainability. The common guiding thread of this work was the issue of the specific added value brought or which could be brought by the *Silva Mediterranea* Committee to its members.

The methodology adopted for the evaluation was mainly qualitative and realised by an independent panel.

The Extraordinary Session of *Silva Mediterranea*, held on June 27, 2014 was the occasion to present the final report of the evaluation to all *Silva Mediterranea* Member States.

The evaluation suggested key recommendations that may be summarized as follows:

- towards a renewed framework;
- more readable links with the partners;
- a smoother internal functioning;
- interface subsidiary bodies;
- better structured voluntary contributions.

The implementation of several recommendations is straight-forward (or in cases it had already been implemented during 2010-2014).

## Conclusions

The decisions taken by the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions – *Silva Mediterranea*, based on the recommendations of the evaluation panel and on the management response of FAO, define a roadmap for the evolution of *Silva Mediterranea* on the time horizon 2015-2018, regarding both its framework, its relationship with partners and its internal functioning. These decisions have been taken into account during the High-Level Session of Director in charge of Forests organized on March 20, 2015 and several key decisions have been formally endorsed by the High Level Session through the Barcelona Declaration (see next page).

Regarding the booth on Mediterranean forests at the XIV<sup>th</sup> World Forest Congress (see box below), the strong commitments of Mediterranean partners will contribute to raise the attention on the Mediterranean region and its specificities and will contribute to share the Mediterranean regional vision at an important global event.

**V.G.**

2 -Today the active working groups are the following:

- Forest Fires;
- Cork Oak;
- Management of Forests and Sustainable Development;
- Forest Genetic Resources;
- Forests and Climate Change;
- Sustainable Financing Mechanisms;
- Urban and Periurban Forestry;
- Desertification and Restoration of Forest Ecosystems in Arid Zones.

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## Give more visibility to Mediterranean forests at the XIV<sup>th</sup> World Forestry Congress Durban (South Africa), 7-11 September 2015

During the 5<sup>th</sup> organizing Committee of the Fourth Mediterranean Forest Week held in Barcelona (Spain) in January 2015, the members of the Board took the decision to give more visibility to Mediterranean Forest during the XIV<sup>th</sup> World Forestry Congress by organizing a booth (Pavilion) dedicated to Mediterranean region. This will be the place where Mediterranean organizations and partners can give visibility to their projects and products and highlight their last achievements.

This Mediterranean booth will be jointly supported by GIZ, FAO *Silva Mediterranea*, EFIMED, the Mediterranean Model Forest Network and the International Association for Mediterranean Forests (AIFM).

# Declaration of Barcelona

## 20<sup>th</sup> March 2015

***The Mediterranean Forest Week has been conceived as a common regional platform for cooperation on Mediterranean forests, aiming at improving the dialogue between the Mediterranean forest research community, policy-makers and the relevant stakeholders as well as at communicating to the international community and the society at large the relevance and challenges affecting Mediterranean forests. At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Forest Week held in Barcelona in March 2015) the participants of the high-level segment signed the Declaration of Barcelona, providing a new impetus for countries in the region to collaborate and work together in Mediterranean forest issues.***

We, participants at the high-level segment of the fourth Mediterranean Forest Week held in Barcelona - Spain - March 20, 2015, have taken note of the important recommendations proposed by the Independent Panel in charge of the evaluation of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions-Silva Mediterranea and of the subsequent decisions taken by Members States on the occasion of the Extraordinary Session of the Committee held this week (March 18, 2015).

We believe that the implementation of the following decisions will provide a new impetus and a renewed framework for countries in the region to collaborate and work together in Mediterranean forest issues.

To this end we endorse the below mentioned decisions of Silva Mediterranea extraordinary session:

- To elaborate a common view and its own strategy based on the identification of priority areas among the lines and/or recommendations of the Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forest;
- To regularly update the State of Mediterranean Forests (SoMF) in order to provide a sound, basic information for policy makers;
- To contribute to a greater visibility and consideration of the Mediterranean forests issues in the agenda of international bodies and forums (CPF, UNCBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD, UNFF, WFC...);
- To intensify the bidirectional exchanges (needs and feedbacks/outputs) with the spheres of research, training, capacity-building and both production as well as dissemination of information;
- To promote the participation of the key stakeholders;
- To contribute to the recurring implementation of a Mediterranean Forest Week as a place of open forum to the different sectors, stakeholders and sensibilities;
- To ask Silva Mediterranea Committee's Secretariat to coordinate the organization of the Mediterranean Forest Weeks;
- To support existing regional initiatives and invite the main inter-governmental organizations interested in the Mediterranean forests including CIHEAM, Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), EFIMED, FAO, Plan Bleu and Union for Mediterranean to improve synergies by establishing a light coordination platform;
- To promote, inter alia, the existing regional initiatives and FAO Forestry Department's work on forest fire issues, biodiversity/forest genetic resources, non-wood forest products, urban and periurban forests and the fight against desertification/restoration of degraded lands and forests.

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UNFCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  
WFC: World Forest Congress  
UNCBD: United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity  
UNCCD: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification  
UNFF: United Nations Forum on Forests  
CPF: Collaborative Partnership on Forests