



## International Association for Mediterranean Forests (AIFM) presentation

**ASSOCIATION  
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Forests and other wooded lands submitted to a **Mediterranean climate** (which means warm and dry summers and wet winters) cover respectively 25 and 50 million hectares in 25 countries of the Mediterranean Basin (FAO-Plan Bleu, State of Mediterranean Forests 2013). For convenience, they can be grouped under the term of "Mediterranean forests".

The vegetation can take several forms: scrubland with kermes oak, shrubland, green oak forest, cork oak forest, downy oak forest, Aleppo pine forest, cedar forest, among others. These types of forests are also present in other countries of the world: Australia, Chile, the United States or Mexico.

Mediterranean forests have outstanding ecological particularities: great specific richness, endemic species pool, remarkable habitats. Forests around the Mediterranean Basin are particularly known as one of the **world biodiversity hotspots**.

Mediterranean forests have always been a framework in which human activities take place (such as timber and cork exploitation, various non-timber products picking, grubbing, hunting, grazing, place for excursions, etc.). The separation between the economic life and the natural environment is very thin: the dynamics of Mediterranean forests have always been closely linked to human societies that have grown up around it.

Mediterranean forests are a set of **delicately balanced ecosystems**. They have to face multiple issues, like from case to case economically viable timber, cork and other non-timber production, flood and erosion prevention, protection against desertification, fire hazard, carbon sink, biodiversity conservation and valorisation, climate change effects mitigation, living environment and recreational function.

Mediterranean forests are thus the object of **many and sometimes conflicting expectations** from various social and professional groups such as forest owners, breeders, farmers, environmental associations, elected representatives, planners, natural areas managers, public, etc.

In this context, the International Association for Mediterranean Forests (AIFM), established in 1996, aims to facilitate the **exchange of knowledge and experience** on these forests and other wooded areas, based on a cross-field and multidisciplinary approach at the international level. For this, AIFM works, among others things, to develop and implement cooperation projects.

This knowledge exchange purpose is to help formulate and solve issues encountered in Mediterranean forests management and use through a common thinking process. AIFM contributes to an **enhanced consideration** of specific issues related to Mediterranean forests in **policies**, decisions and concrete actions, at international, national, local and individual levels, in the fields of **environment, sustainable development and land development planning**.

AIFM works with a **network** of actors from the entire basin and working in various sectors (foresters, academics, environmentalists, elected officials, civil security, etc.), guaranteeing a **diversity of approaches**. This network stems partly from cooperation projects conducted since 2000 (Interreg, MEDOCC, MED programmes): RECOFORME, Problematic, Qualigouv, Forclimadapt, Proforbiomed, Medland 2020.

This network is put to use since March 2015 to develop a network of forested areas of high ecological value, the **MEDFORVAL** network, through a project funded by MAVA Foundation for Nature. This project aims to help practitioners and policy makers from different sectors of the Mediterranean basin to collaborate in concrete measures to protect, manage or restore ecological values in forested areas, through networking.

Around twenty forest sites, spread over the entire Mediterranean basin and representative of the major ecological types, were selected on the basis of their ecological interest and motivation to join the network. The sites are organized into four clusters, which correspond to four types of Mediterranean forests, and within which specific actions will be undertaken and proposals for future projects developed.

A first **workshop** in Martigues (France), in July 2015, has brought together all the stakeholders of the project, and helped identify three priorities for action and ways to achieve them. The project and the network were also presented in **three international forums**, and a first **call for small projects**, intended to fund activities in the field by and in the sites, led to the award of four grants.

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AIFM is also a founding member of the **Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests** (CPMF), which gathers together around twenty institutions concerned in the coordination of their actions in favour of Mediterranean forests sustainable management, and coordinated by FAO's Committee on Mediterranean forestry issues – *Silva mediterranea*. In this partnership, AIFM represents civil society, among the institutional and research partners.

As such, AIFM has participated in the writing of the **State of Mediterranean Forests 2013** and the preparation of the **Strategic framework for Mediterranean forests**. This framework, taking into account the different Mediterranean forest development issues in nine strategic areas, was developed in a participatory manner through several workshops and was adopted in Tlemcen by the participating Ministers of the Third Mediterranean Forest Week High-level segment.

AIFM is also co-organizer of the **Mediterranean Forest Weeks**, which first four editions were held in Antalya (Turkey, 2010), Avignon (France, 2011), Tlemcen (Algeria, 2013) and Barcelona (Spain, 2015). The next one will be held in Morocco in 2017.

To finish, for the first time, Mediterranean forests were represented at the XIV **World Forestry Congress**, held in Durban, South Africa on September 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015. AIFM was charged with the coordination of a 27 m<sup>2</sup> stand at this event, which helped to bring the voice of Mediterranean foresters in the world and present the current actions undertaken all around the Mediterranean Basin.