

Creating a new legal framework for forests in Bizkaia county

Bizkaia, Spain

This case study looks to introduce valorisation and compensation of forest ecosystem services into Biscay Territory legislation. A participatory process is used to include broad stakeholder contributions to policy implementation.

Bizkaia case develops a regulatory framework to place economic value on services provided by the forest to people.



Setting the scene

The area in which the case study is developed is the Historical Territory of Biscay. This territory is part of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, Spain. It is a small mountainous area of about 220,000 ha, with an important forest area of 130,000 ha (60% of the total area). The main forest production species are *Pinus radiata* (65,000 ha) and *Eucalyptus* spp. (16,000 ha). The distribution of ownership is 25% public and 75% private. 25% of the extension of Bizkaia is a Protected Natural Area. The County Council of Biscay is a public institution with full competences to develop its own forestry strategy and its own forestry legislation within the national legal framework.

Although current forest legislation takes into account the management of natural capital, it does not implement specific mechanisms for the adequate management of ecosystem services. Furthermore, the law and environmental policies have many restrictions on forest use and management

Objectives

- Create a new legal framework for forest and forestry that will facilitate the provision, valuation, monitoring and compensation of ecosystem services
- Recognition for forest owners in managing the forests that provide forest ecosystem services.

Challenges

- To change views about Forest Ecosystem Services and to value them
- Try to reach a common understanding among the different stakeholders with different approaches.

Innovation mechanism

In this case study, we are working in two forest ecosystem services: water provision, both in terms of quality and quantity of supply; and the ecosystem service of landscape as a social and recreational use of the forest. A pilot project includes the development of innovation mechanisms to valorise and compensate these two ecosystem services, so finally this will be introduced in the Provincial Council of Biscay's legislation.

Expected impacts

- ✓ Make forest activity more profitable in order to maintain such activity and the correct management of forests in Bizkaia
- ✓ A legislation where the valorisation and compensation of forest ecosystem services is recognised

The bigger picture

We hope that, by introducing the valorisation and compensation for forest ecosystem services in Biscay Territory legislation, other territories will follow suit and similarly amend their own legislation. This would support forest owners to continue with their activities and not give up management of their forests, which would mean that society can continue benefiting from the forests.

Action

- ➔ Meetings to involve all interested actors in the process
- ➔ Work on a pilot project that serves as a basis to develop a proposal for legislation.
- ➔ Raise awareness among society about the role of forests and forest ecosystem services.

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