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EXPERIENCES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN A LAG OF THE LIGURIAN APENNINES: PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT

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The decennial experience in territorial and forest management in the Apennines areas provides indications for the land planning and reflect over opportunity to develop the short chain forest-territories. The integrated management of the activities has made possible an articulated collaboration between the different actors of the short chain: wood owners, farmers, inhabitants, timber companies, local administrators, the technicians. The activities of Consorzio Forestale (Forest Consortium) – which is a mixed business with private prevalence – are explicated: energy implementation (district heating plants), forest planning and management (SFM and CoC certification by PEFC scheme and Natura 2000), timber valorizations (new manufactured products and green procurement GPP) land maintenance, forest mechanization improvement and forest service companies. Activities tested in the Apennines with a good degree of transferability might provide a new approach to participatory management of forests and the countryside with respect for the multitude of the very small private forest owners and benefit for community.

Key words: chestnut; private property; association; consortium, positive externalities; forest certification; short chain.

Parole chiave: castagno; proprietà privata; associazionismo; consorzio, esternalità positive; certificazione forestale; filiera corta.


1. INTRODUCTION

The experience described has been developed since 1998 in central Apennines of Liguria. This is a process of forest private property’s aggregation and management for the development of the territories. The small size of the initial project (less than 1,000 hectares) and the availability of ongoing technical assistance, have allowed the testing of a large number of enhancement activities. This condition has allowed the collection of a lot of information and the development of corrective actions.

1.1. Situation

The activities are developed in a mountain area of the province of Genoa, the area concerned has a total area of 10,000 hectares of which 80% wooded. The experience concerns about 10% of this area. The coppices of forests are at a record low since World War II. The coverage of forest is represented 60% by aged chestnut’s coppice and overripe. Periodically the places to the north are affected by soft rime. The area is included for 30% in Natura 2000, with prioritary habitats (black alder and chestnut) and has slopes ranging from 20 to 60%.

1 Adriano Stagnaro died October 1, 2011 and we remember him with this last work.
2. Methodologies

The Mountain Community, active until April 2011, planned in 1987 the establishment of a Forest Consortium. Since 2008, the regional territorial policy has been replaced by the action of LAG Valli del Genovesato axis 4 LEADER. The Forest Consortium Stura and Orba Valleys, formed in 1998, has worked as a development agency by linking the needs of the various stakeholders involved. It is assumed that the economy based on forest products and the multiple uses of the forest must be supported by public funding considering the positive externalities which are offered to the community. This policy will be developed on the new scheme of P.E.S. (Payment of Environmental Service). We shall develop a model that offers, at no cost to the owners and enterprises, the design, the planning of the work and the maintenance works. The model is the mixed public-private consortium, dominated by private property and with the presence of the economic realities of the industry: logging companies and service forest companies and of wood processing.

2.1. The private owners

The properties associated with the Consortium are small private forest lands of the average size of 7.0 hectares, aged chestnut coppice for 80%, coppice oak mixed for 15% and meadows and pastures for 5%. From 1950-60 the cut of coppice is limited to those parts close to the roads.

2.2. The enterprises

Member companies are divided into two groups: forest companies and cooperatives of forest service and forest; sawmills and woodworking shops, which transform wood and craftsmanship. The forestry companies, and especially the cooperative service, until the establishment of the consortium, worked in prevalence far outside the area of the LAG (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Owners1</th>
<th>Enterprises2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Public n. workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own elaboration.

1 Owner that gives the land for the joint management.  
2 Enterprises: Includes forest enterprises and service, first and second wood products processing.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The activities and the response of the territory

Over the years this model of aggregation has carried out several activities aimed at the formation of a short chain starting from the forest-energy and after that it has been gradually conformed on the model forest-territory with the important goal of territory service:

- cuts for the use of aged coppice with differentiated products for energy, poles, carpentry, craft;
- accommodation hydraulic forestry techniques with low environmental impact with the use of timber from cuttings of improvement (DERCHI, 1998a);
- restore and enhance the network of paths for hiking and educational functions;
- collaboration in the management of district heating plants using forest chips using only local wood of short chain (<30 km) (DERCHI, 2004; 2006);
- PEFC certification of forest land for all consortium members and the chain of custody of products (AA.VV., 2008);
- design of new products made of chestnut wood;
- scheduled maintenance of roads and streams;
- administrative management of private property without charge on the associated.

You can find a detail of the activities in the bibliographical notes.

The activities are financially sustained, less the net value of the timber and the volunteer

3.2. The lesson learnt
Many activities for the exploitation of timber and of the non wood forest products (NWFP) are possible. In the Apennines the woods are in high prevalence of private property. The first action to be finalized is the connection, between the interests of the owners, of the communities and of the forestry companies. With this scheme we can offer some positive long-term effects in the local forest development chains. Another important aspect is given by the creation of a positive consideration of the professional forestry. An important aspect is to link local production with the mechanisms of green public procurement (GPP) and with the positive characterization of life cycle analysis (LCA) of the local wood production, characterized also by the GFS certification based on the PEFC standard (DERCHI, 1998b; DERCHI e STAGNARO, 2007, 2009).

3.3. Perspectives
In the Apennines there are many opportunities for the development of new jobs. The indications for adjustments to policy planning and programming may include:
– reward for long-term relationships between small and structured private properties and businesses;
– reward for the positive externalities on water quality, accessibility, and non-wood forest products, in the PES policy;
– structuring control on the traceability of wood products and wood in connection to the ecological footprint(energy);
– reconstruction of the cultural values of the forest workand of the mountain governance.

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RIASSUNTO
Esperienze di sviluppo rurale in un GAL dell’Appennino ligure: gestione forestale partecipata
L’esperienza decennale di gestione forestale e del territorio nelle aree appenniniche fornisce indicazioni utili per le attività di pianificazione di uso del suolo e fa riflettere sull’opportunità di sviluppare filiere corte foresta-territorio. La gestione integrata delle attività ha reso possibile un’articolata collaborazione fra differenti attori della filiera corta: proprietari forestali, agricoltori, comunità, imprese di trasformazione del legno, amministratori locali e tecnici. Questo contributo descrive le attività svolte dal Consorzio forestale Valli Stura e Orba, un soggetto misto a prevalenza privata: sviluppo delle energie rinnovabili (impianti di teleriscaldamento), pianificazione e gestione forestale (GFS e Catena di Custodia PEFC, Natura 2000), valorizzazione del legno (nuovi prodotti artigianali e acquisti verdi pubblici - GPP), gestione del territorio, miglioramento della meccanizzazione forestale e imprese di servizio forestale. Le attività svolte nell’Appennino con un buon grado di trasferibilità potrebbero fornire un nuovo approccio alla gestione partecipata delle foreste e del territorio con rispetto per l’insieme di piccoli proprietari forestali privati e per il beneficio della comunità locale.

REFERENCES