

SPANISH FOREST STRATEGY

HORIZONTE 2050

SPANISH FOREST PLAN 2022-2032

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



GOBIERNO
DE ESPAÑA

VICEPRESIDENCIA
TERCERA DEL GOBIERNO

MINISTERIO
PARA LA TRANSICIÓN ECOLÓGICA
Y EL RETO DEMOGRÁFICO

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INDEX

Background and Justification for the Revision of the Forest Strategy and Plan	5
Spanish Forest Strategy 2050	7
Reference Framework	7
Diagnosis of the Current Forest Situation in Spain. Identification of Needs and Challenges of the Spanish Forest Policy	7
Vision, Goals and General Objectives of the Spanish Forest Policy for 2050	9
Strategic Axes and Lines of Action	10
Spanish Forest Plan 2022- 2032	13
Proposed Measures	13
Budget	15
Monitoring of the Implementation of Forest Plans	17



Background and Justification for the Revision of the Forest Strategy and Plan



The first Spanish Forest Strategy (Spanish acronym: EFE), approved at the Environment Sectoral Conference on 17th March 1999, was conceived as a reference document to define the State's forest policy, giving rise to the Spanish Forest Plan (Spanish acronym: PFE), approved by the Council of Ministers on 5th July 2002 as a long-term planning instrument (2002-2032).

Article 29.3 of the 2003 Spanish Forest Law (Act 43/2003) stipulates that *“When circumstances so advise, and in any case upon each revision of the Spanish Forest Plan, the Spanish Forest Strategy shall be reviewed.”* On the other hand, Article 30 states that *“The Spanish Forest Plan shall be reviewed every ten years, or at shorter intervals when circumstances so advise.”*

In addition to compliance with the legal obligations, there are other reasons that justify the revision and update of Spanish forest planning documents such as the adaptation of Spanish forest policy to the international commitments and demands emerging in the current context, and the adaptation of Spanish forest policy to the country's own needs, challenges and opportunities from the state competence of the General State Administration and of the Autonomous Communities as a whole.

The new Spanish Forest Strategy aims to become the reference instrument that establishes the long-term general strategic framework for Spanish forest policy (**EFE 2050**) in a coherent, consensual and participatory manner. The Strategy establishes the guidelines that enable its articulation and governance, respecting the current distribution of powers between the General State and Autonomous Administrations. Additionally, it takes into account the forestry planning undertaken in recent decades by the Autonomous Communities in their territories.

The new Spanish Forest Plan is a long-term planning instrument for Spanish forest policy that defines the measures and means necessary to develop the strategic lines established by the EFE 2050. The Plan must be in accordance with the General State Administration own competences with respect to forests, both those exclusive to its exercises and other competences shared with the Autonomous Communities.

This new Spanish Forest Plan determines the initiatives, measures and actions or activities for the next decade (**PFE 2022-2032**) in each line of action in accordance with the guidelines of the EFE 2050.

The drafting of the new instruments, which update the EFE of 1999 and the PFE of 2002, are included in the reform package associated with the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (Spanish acronym: PRTR). After approving the EFE 2050 and the PFE 2022-2032 in the Council of Ministers held on 20th December 2022, milestone no.63 of the Council Implementing Decision on the approval of the assessment of the Spanish Recovery and Resilience Plan was fulfilled.



Spanish Forest Strategy 2050

Reference Framework

The first part of the EFE 2050 includes the reference framework, a detailed analysis of the global, European and Spanish forest policy references, focusing on the main Spanish plans and strategies with an impact on the Strategy development.

Diagnosis of the Current Forest Situation in Spain. Identification of Needs and Challenges of the Spanish Forest Policy

Aimed at decision-making, the EFE 2050 includes a current diagnosis of Spanish forest sector and forests situation itself. It analyses the evolution, current status and trends of the different aspects/ areas that make up the Spanish scenario: status of forest areas and resources; protected forest species and areas and status of biodiversity of forest ecosystems; ecosystem services and multi-functionality; natural and anthropogenic risks in the forest environment (climate change, erosion risks, desertification, hydrological risks, forest fires, pests and diseases); distribution, regime and structure of forest ownership; socio-economic scenario of the Spanish forest and forestry sector (wood and non-wood forest products, depopulation of rural areas and abandoned forest lands); formal and environmental education of society and social perception of the reality of forestry in Spain.

Some of the main conclusions of the diagnosis carried out include:

- The forest land area in Spain (28.3 million hectares of forests and other woodlands) is increasingly threatened by global changes, both climatic and socio-economic, and is being gradually abandoned for various reasons.
- Forest fires are the most obvious consequence of change, becoming one of the main threats to forest ecosystems, putting at risk even the lives of the inhabitants and professionals working to extinguish them.
- Nowadays, forests are the result of the intense human interaction to which they have been subjected until recent times, constituting cultural landscapes that have been maintained for centuries through their agrosilvopastoral use, and which have been affected by all the historical vicissitudes they have suffered.
- As the traditional agricultural system has been abandoned, knowledge of ecology and economy associated with forest land has been developed. These techniques have enabled the articulation and development of extensive experience in silviculture, forest planning and restoration, which have contributed decisively to the improvement of the ecosystem services provided by forests.
- Failing to manage forest ecosystems sustainably means assuming very high risks and uncertainties regarding their future, which only lead to increasingly adverse scenarios that transcend the forest itself, such as emergencies caused by forest fires, desertification processes, loss of biodiversity and insufficient water cycle management.
- In light of the foregoing, all sustainable productive activities and ecosystem services must be maintained in order to offer future opportunities to the inhabitants of forest areas, while at the same time ensuring the balance, diversity and resilience of the forests by means of the necessary investments and the coordinated action of different qualified professionals.

Based on the specific current circumstances and the existence of a wide and varied series of weaknesses and threats that loom over the Spanish scenario (environmental, economic, social), the EFE 2050, based on the strengths of the forests and forest sector, of which there are many significant, seeks to take advantage of the opportunities that arise in the future and that transcend beyond the forest sector itself.

<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of definition and size of forest holdings. 2. Lack of knowledge and fragmentation of forest ownership, with numerous legal forms that complicate exploitation management. 3. Low or no economic profitability of some forestry activities. 4. Lack of information on forest production and forest products markets. 5. Association and counselling systems are not widespread. 6. Undervalued, highly demanding and dangerous jobs in remote, underserved areas. 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate change and forest fires. 2. Desertification and land degradation. 3. Rural neglect. 4. Skilled labour shortage. 5. Public opinion against forest management. 6. Dispersion of administrative competences affecting spatial planning and management.
<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is no better alternative for managing the natural environment. Unique manageable carbon sink, forests as generators of soil and biodiversity. 2. Forest restoration and green infrastructure. 3. The role of forests in biodiversity, soil and the water cycle. 4. Availability of forest resources. 5. Forest sector open to partnership and collaboration on improvement and innovation processes. 	<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decarbonising the economy. 2. Economic activity to combat the demographic challenge in rural areas. 3. Promoting the circular bioeconomy. 4. Using of construction timber and wood-based products with a positive ecological footprint compared to other energy and resource-intensive materials in their different stages of production, use and recovery. 5. Possibilities for funding through PES schemes. 6. Growing social demand for nature and concern for nature conservation.

In light of the analysis carried out and taking into consideration the Autonomous Communities' contributions, it is concluded that the Spanish forest policy should serve to:

- Promote and strengthen forest management, progressively reducing and removing barriers to its implementation.
- Improve the social visibility of the forestry sector and boost its socioeconomic development, focusing on the bioeconomy and promoting value chains.
- Develop a favourable economic scenario for forest operations and the reinforcement of the whole sector.
- Revitalise private property.
- Ensure sustained public investment programming to strengthen the role of forests and the forestry sector and promote mechanisms to incorporate and channel private investment in forestry management.
- Develop a Spanish forest governance framework that allows adequate coordination and monitoring of the policies developed by the Autonomous Communities, the participation of the agents involved and the improvement of collaboration with those responsible for policies that interact with the forestry sector.
- Promote education in forestry sector and encourage research and innovation.
- Strengthen international cooperation and representation.

Vision, Goals and General Objectives of the Spanish Forest Policy for 2050

The **Vision of the Spanish Forest Strategy by 2050** is to achieve well-managed forests and forest ecosystems in Spain. In other words, actively well conserved, making them more resilient to climate change, and protecting them from the main threats (forest abandonment, fires, diseases and pests), providing the ecosystem goods and services necessary for our well-being and to enable the economy to initiate a necessary ecological transition. To this end, it is essential to work towards the complete structuring and digitisation of the forestry sector, improving the functioning of the sector's value chains and programming the public and private investments necessary to achieve this purpose.

The specific **goals** to be achieved through the implementation of the EFE 2050 are:

- Increase the forested area through afforestation by at least 0.6 million hectares (20 000 ha/year).
- Increase the area of managed forests: achieve a substantial increase in private forests, so that at least half of them have a forest management plan.
- Increase the carbon sink capacity of forest areas, specifically an increase of:
 - ◊ 7.04 MtCO₂eq of net uptake by creating wooded land areas,
 - ◊ 4.34 MtCO₂eq from the promotion of forest management and,
 - ◊ 0,54 MtCO₂eq from the promotion of agroforestry systems and pasture regeneration.
- Increase the percentage of forest habitats of Community interest that are in a good state of conservation and ensure that there are no habitats of unknown conservation status.
- Achieve a maximum of 0.2% of forest area affected by fires each year.
- Promote, through forest management, fire prevention in the fight against forest fires. To this end, investment in forest fire fighting must not exceed 15% of total investment in forestry by 2050.
- Increase sustainable timber harvesting in forests. Achieve a harvesting rate of no less than 50% in relation to annual growth.
- Increase the contribution of the forestry sector to the Spanish economy, reaching at least 1% of GDP by 2050.
- Increase investment in forestry: exceed €100 per hectare of forest per year, integrating all public and private investments.

In accordance with the needs and challenges identified, the EFE 2050 proposes the following **general objectives** (GOs) for Spanish forest policy, which shall be developed and adapted by means of the different state and regional forest plans:

- **OG1:** In accordance with the needs and challenges identified, the EFE 2050 proposes the following general objectives (GOs) for Spanish forest policy, which shall be developed and adapted by means of the different state and regional forest plans:
- **OG2:** Improve the state of conservation of selected forest ecosystems, their biodiversity, their connectivity and their role in green infrastructure, through their protection, conservation and ecological restoration and through the ecosystem approach to sustainable forest management, including the conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources and the protection of mature forests.
- **OG3:** Strengthen the protective role of forests and other wooded land in the water cycle for the conservation and restoration of degraded land and soils, as well as their resilience to risks from forest fires, pests and diseases.
- **OG4:** Mitigate the effects of climate change by strengthening the role of forest systems as a unique manageable natural carbon sinks, increasing their carbon sequestration capacity through

well-planned and executed silviculture and new afforestation, using adapted forest reproductive materials and integrating into the necessary ecosystem restoration from a territorial perspective.

- **OG5:** Promote the circular bioeconomy, recognising the leading role of the forestry sector, which bases on the use of raw materials of biological origin, providing ecological products for the construction sector and in a multitude of industrial and food applications, replacing the use of coal, gas, steel, concrete, plastics and other synthetic materials.
- **OG6:** Modernise and enhance the value of forest production chains, improving their knowledge and promoting innovation and digitisation of processes, as well as strengthening the transparency of the entire chain of custody.
- **OG7:** Participate in energy transition and decarbonisation policies, promoting the sustainable use and exploitation of forest biomass as a source of renewable energy under the principle of cascade use, especially in rural areas close to forests, as well as extensive livestock farming as a tool for landscape management, forest fire prevention and climate change mitigation in agroforestry environments.
- **OG8:** Contribute to the sustainable socioeconomic development of the rural environment, taking advantage of the high employment-generating potential of investments in forests and forestry activities, as well as tourism and recreational activities, boosting the growth of the sectoral value chain, while favouring the settlement of the population in rural areas in the face of the demographic challenge.
- **OG9:** Raise awareness of the essential role of forests in society, highlighting the importance of sustainable forest management as a regulated environmentally responsible technique, which is necessary in order to guarantee the future of forest areas and resources capable of adapting and responding to the challenges of climate change and forest fires.
- **OG10:** Improve forestry information, promoting forestry research and knowledge transfer, and strengthen cooperation, participation and transparency of all public and private actors in the forestry sector.
- **OG11:** Develop a governance framework for Spanish forest policy that allows for adequate coordination and monitoring of the policies developed by the Autonomous Regions, as well as the participation of all public and private agents in the forest sector and interest groups.
- **OG12:** Contribute Spain's extensive experience in forestry matters in the different European and international forums and working groups, and cooperate with international forestry organisations, the European Union and other States in order to contribute to the improvement of global forest governance, mainly with Mediterranean countries.

Strategic Axes and Lines of Action

In order to achieve the vision and general objectives, and in accordance with the structure of the autonomous communities' strategic forest plans, the EFE 2050 is divided into 5 strategic axes of intervention, each of which includes a set of specific objectives (SO), for the achievement of which a total of 25 Lines of Action are defined.

EFE 2050 STRUCTURE	
INTERVENTION AXES	LINES OF ACTION
Axis I. Conservation and enhancement of natural heritage, biodiversity and connectivity	I.1. Improvement of the state of conservation of forest ecosystems. Prevention, control and eradication of invasive alien species in forests.
	I.2. Ecological restoration and green infrastructure. Actions in public domains. Riverbank restoration.
	I.3. . Conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources.

EFE 2050 STRUCTURE	
INTERVENTION AXES	LINES OF ACTION
Axis II. Prevention and adaptation of forests to climate change and other risks	II.1. Prevention and adaptation of forest ecosystems to climate change projections.
	II.2. Combating desertification in the forest sector. Soil conservation. Forest restoration and improvement of forest ecosystems.
	II.3. Cooperation and coordination in forest fire management.
	II.4. Forest health: phytosanitary control, assessment and monitoring of the health status of forest ecosystems.
Axis III. Forest bioeconomy. Socioeconomic development and diversification of the forest sector	III.1. Revitalisation of productive activity and improvement of basic infrastructure in forests for the mobilisation of timber resources.
	III.2. Strategy for the use and sustainable development of forest biomass for energy use.
	III.3. Diversification of forest production and promotion of sustainable harvesting of non-wood goods from forest and their promotion on the market.
	III.4. Socioeconomic revival of the Spanish forestry sector (green economy and employment): structuring of the business network. Integration of the forests and industry value chain.
	III.5 Encouraging silvopastoralism and transhumance
	III.6. Tourist forest use
Axis IV. Development and improvement of forestry knowledge and culture	IV.1. Forest research: development, innovation, technology transfer and entrepreneurship. Digitisation.
	IV.2. Education in forestry, training and capacity building
	IV.3. Development of a forestry outreach and communication strategy.
Axis V. Forest governance model: regulatory, administrative and instrumental framework of Spanish forest policy	V.1. Legal framework: legislative initiatives and regulatory development measures.
	V.2.- Administrative framework for sectoral coordination, cooperation and participation.
	V.3. Economic framework.
	V.4. Information on forestry: forest mapping, inventories and statistics.
	V.5. Development of sustainable forest planning, development and management. Promotion of forest certification.
	V.6. Defence, legal security and improved knowledge of the public forest domain and other forest assets. Revitalisation of private forest ownership.
	V.7. International forest policy and development cooperation.
	V.8. Iberian and Macaronesian regions framework for cooperation with Portugal.
	V.9. Control of the legality of timber traded in Spain.

For each of the lines of action articulated in each strategic axis, a set of strategic orientations (ORs) is set, taking into account the legal and competence framework in force and in coherence with the international, European and Spanish instrumental reference framework of the thematic area or field in question. The 52 ORs defined constitute the basis for the approach of the measures proposed in the Forest Plan.



Spanish Forest Plan 2022- 2032



Proposed Measures

Respecting the structure established by the EFE 2050, the new Spanish Forest Plan, whose duration is set at ten years (PFE 2022-2032), articulates in the same Strategic Axes of intervention (5) and the same Lines of Action (25) proposed in the new Strategy.

Each proposed measure includes the programming, responsible agents and plans and strategies directly or indirectly linked to its development. It also includes the financing channels for the development of the measures and identifies those considered a priority, in accordance with the vision, messages and general objectives of the Spanish forest policy defined in the EFE 2050.

As a whole, the PFE 2022-2032 proposes **289 measures**, 86 of which have been considered a priority (almost a third of the total), taking into account the recommendations of the Spanish Forest Committee and the comments received during the processing of the Plan.

Three categories or types of measures are established:

- Type A: 68 legislative initiatives, regulatory and instrumental measures.
- Type B: 72 administrative coordination procedures; mechanisms for institutional collaboration, cooperation and sectoral participation.
- Type C: 149 development measures and actions/activities on the territory, analyses and studies.

The measures are clearly identified by means of a code that refers to the axis and line of action in which they are integrated, their type and the order number.

The main lines of work in Axis I are as follows:

- Adaptation from the European guidelines on mature forests, close-to-nature forestry, afforestation and reforestation.
- Improvement of methodologies for assessing the state of forest habitats.
- Green infrastructure work programmes (livestock trails).
- Full development of the National Strategy of Forest Genetic Resources (Spanish acronym: ERGF).
- Establishment, within the Spanish Forest Committee, of a working group on forest biodiversity.

The main lines of work in Axis II are as follows:

- Increase in carbon sequestration. Integration of Long-Term Strategy (Spanish acronym: ELP) and the Spain's National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan (Spanish acronym: PNIEC), increased woodland and forest management.
- Implementation of the Spanish National Strategy to Combat Desertification (Spanish acronym: ENLD). National Inventory of Soil Erosion (Spanish acronym: INES).
- Promotion of forest hydrological restoration. Cooperation and evaluation.
- Forest fire management. Development of the Strategic Guidelines for Forest Fire Management in Spain (Spanish acronym: OEIF) and Royal Legislative Decree 15/2022.
- Improvement of forest health through sustainable forest management (Spanish acronym: GFM): preventive approach. Coordination Phytosanitary Committee.
- Establishment, within the Spanish Committee on Forestry, of a working group on climate change.

The main lines of work in Axis III are as follows:

- Promotion of sustainable use of forest resources.

- Promotion of the use of forest biomass (promoting short circuits and improving knowledge). Updating of the Strategy for the Energy Use of Forest Biomass.
- Promotion of the use of Non- wood goods from forest (NWGs) and associated sectors.
- Promotion of the forest sector. Structuring and building partnerships and associations.
- Promotion of active foresters. Regulation of forest holdings. Forest holdings information system (Spanish acronym: SIEX).
- Promotion of the extensive livestock use of forests and highlighting the value of pastures and scrubland.
- Maintenance of transhumance.
- Promotion of sustainable tourist forest use.
- Establishment, within the Spanish Committee on Forestry, of a cross-sectoral forest biomass roundtable.

The main lines of work in Axis IV are as follows:

- Priority lines of research. Digitisation and knowledge transfer.
- Revision of all curricula for education in forestry.
- Integration in environmental education. Action Plan for Environmental Education for Sustainability 2021-2025.
- Training in the forestry sector. Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS).
- Social perception and opinion surveys on the forest sector.
- Communicating SFM better. Collaboration with the forest sector.
- Establishment, within the Spanish Committee on Forestry, of a working group on forest extension.

The main lines of work in Axis V are as follows:

- Complete the regulatory development of the Forestry Law.
- Improve coordination with the Autonomous Regions. Strengthen the Spanish Committee on Forestry by setting up working groups.
- Optimise public funding through public-private partnerships.
- Establishment of a finalist Forest Fund.
- Study of the economic forest regime.
- Promotion of SFM and support for foresters.
- Promotion of sponsorship and land custody.
- Economic incentives for environmental externalities.
- Improve the economic forestry accounts.
- Forest information system integrated into the Nature Data Bank.
- National Forest Inventory Improvements, Damage Networks, Forest Mapping.
- Structure of forest ownership. New Spanish Forestry Partners Law.
- Digitisation of the Forest Documentary Collection.
- Strengthening of international forest policy.
- Boosting collaboration with Portugal on common issues.

- Coordination on legal timber trade. Implementation of the deforestation regulation.
- Establishment, within the Spanish Committee on Forestry, of a working group with the aim of promoting the study of the sustainability of forestry sector's economic regime.

Budget

The Spanish Government's total budget (without taking into account the contributions made by the Autonomous Regions and other administrations with respect to forestry) estimated for the first decade of implementation of the PFE (2022-2032) is **2,625 million euros**.



Monitoring of the Implementation of Forest Plans



In order to assess compliance with the objectives and lines of action defined in the Spanish Forest Strategy and their articulation in the measures of the Spanish Forest Plan, a set of indicators is covering a wide variety of topics and sources of information. Many of them are used in forestry information processes nationally (Forestry Statistics Yearbook, Spanish Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Inventory, Spanish Economic Forestry Accounts, etc.) and internationally (State of Europe's Forests Report (SoEF), Global Forest Resources Assessment Report (FRA), European Forest Accounts (EFA), etc.).

There are therefore consolidated data series, in some cases in the process of improvement and/or harmonisation. Some of the indicators refer to relatively recent issues or are under development, even on an academic level, which require an effort to define methodologies for data collection and calculation of the parameters indicated; multidisciplinary collaboration is essential in order to implement these indicators.

Likewise, the monitoring of the EFE and the PFE will support on the Spanish Forest Report based on the analysis of the data from the Spanish Forestry Information (Spanish acronym: IFE), provided for in Article 28.5 of the Spanish Forestry Law. Furthermore, it will take into account the synergies with the Spanish monitoring reports sent to the different international organisations to which Spain has reporting obligations, including the Spanish Report based on the Pan-European Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management. Finally, the SFP 2022-2032 will monitor the investment associated.

Given that the implementation of the new instruments (EFE 2050 and PFE 2022-2032) requires the participation and cooperation of different public administrations and departments, adequate cooperation and coordination between the public administrations involved shall be guaranteed in their execution and monitoring through the relevant advisory and coordination bodies. In particular, the Spanish State Commission for Natural Heritage and Biodiversity and its specialised committees, the Spanish Forestry Committee and, where necessary, through the development of new mechanisms for the reinforcement of administrative coordination.



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