

AFORCE

AFORCE symposium 2019 – April 2-3, 2019 in Montpellier (France)

« Forests and climate change: providing support to the adaptation decision »



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The mission of the mixed network technology (RMT) AFORCE, created in 2008, is to adapt French forests to climate change. It is coordinated by the Institute for Forest Development (Institut pour le développement forestier – IDF), the R&D department of the Forest Ownership Centre (Centre national de la propriété forestière – CNPF). It has 18 partners¹, including forest research agencies, development, management, education and training bodies which work together on this issue. Its purpose is to make information and innovation available to foresters, to help them to anticipate climate changes. It achieves this goal with the financial support of the Ministry of Agriculture, and of the national multi-sector organisation France Bois Forêt.

In 2019, the AFORCE network celebrates its 10 years of existence, and is already preparing a new programme for the 2020-2025 period. In order to establish its science and technology priorities and its programme for action, it will build on its range of past actions, on an analysis of national and international developments, on an assessment of the needs of foresters in the field of adaptation and finally, on the analysis of the level of satisfaction of its various target audiences in relation to its past actions.

The AFORCE network (the only French network devoted to the adaptation of forests to climate change) held a Symposium on 2 and 3 April 2019 in Montpellier, in a region at great threat from climate change and where targeted actions have already been implemented by stakeholders. This event has been supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the national multi-sector organisation France Bois Forêt, the Réseau Rural (Rural Network), Europe, the Occitanie region and Montpellier SupAgro. The results of the work carried out by the network over the past five years to help foresters prepare forests for climate change, and the anticipation of its effects on forests and the forest/timber sector have been covered.

Approximately 150 people have shared their expertise on the subject, ranging from researchers, development officers, forest advisors, teachers, trainers, managers and foresters to public policymakers concerned by climate change. European foresters from Andorra, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, the United Kingdom and Serbia, who had already attended previous international workshops for the network, were also present.

The introduction provides an overview of the network's contributions on the theme. The AFORCE network has consolidated its structure and now, after 10 years of existence, has become a leader in the field of the adaptation of forests to climate change. The organisations that produce knowledge and make it available have been involved in this process. To confirm the important needs of practitioners, forest managers have shown commitment in their daily

¹ AgroParisTech Nancy, APCA, CNPF, Irstea, Sarthe Chamber of Agriculture, EFF, EFI, GIP ECOFOR, IEFC, IGN, INRA, FCBA, forest schools of Meymac and Mirecourt, Météo-France, ONF, UCFF-GCF and SFCDC.

roles in the context of climate change. This includes the visible impacts, taking the initiative of sharing experiences, using the available decision-making tools, and making difficult decisions in the face of uncertainty.

There are high expectations of the network, which justifies the investments made over the past 10 years. The results of the projects reflect the commitment of the network's members to summarise knowledge more quickly and incorporate it into decision-making tools. This work is critical to encouraging and supporting foresters to anticipate risks, adapt forest management, assess the costs of changes in practices and choose more resistant species. Discussions of these outputs are critical to foresters taking ownership of the issue.

The urgency and severity of the situation requires the **pooling of resources and skills**. For this reason, the network has also forged links on a European scale (Focus Group, European Partnership for Innovation, etc.) and encourages cross-border sharing of experiences. In 2018 it held inter-regional action meetings to accelerate ownership of innovation tools by foresters in the region, and to encourage the development of working groups on the subject of adapting forests to climate change.

The network also plays a role of **documentary and pooling platform** for all projects and tools on the theme of the adaptation of forests to climate change. The platform includes works that have been supported by the network as well as external publications. Some have been presented at this Symposium, including action by stakeholders of the Haut-Languedoc Regional Nature Park to adapt the forests to climate change, an economic analysis of adaptation strategies put in place to deal with forest drought, and the establishment of a network of research infrastructure for the monitoring and adaptation of forests to climate change.



The **group presentations of practical tools** to assist management decisions have generated a lot of interest. Expectations are high for tools which help foresters to choose which species to prioritise or plant to replace vulnerable existing species in the region. A user-friendly website is under construction to help practitioners to choose species, taking into account the most recent knowledge (potential, requirements, and climate compatibility). A simulation tool to assess the genetic impacts of forestry practices is also being finalised. It will be used for educational purposes to compare different forestry strategies. Finally, the assessment of growth conditions for particular species (soil, climate, exposure, etc.) is now facilitated by the provision of digital maps which can be easily accessed by practitioners (for the north-west of France). The feedback and comments submitted by participants during the presentation of these tools will help to improve them.

Three workshops discussed **the future outlook** for the next period of activity of the AFORCE network (2020-2025), as regards priority actions. One of the conclusions of the workshops is that the network could play a role in developing a dialogue with society, provided that it equips itself with the appropriate communication tools to effectively focus its communication efforts on climate change issues, i.e. adapting to maintain forest services, and to help climate change mitigation by forests. It must invest to encourage a crossover dialogue between research and management, for better feedback of requirements on the ground. The recent incorporation of new management members into the network should facilitate this dialogue.

Finally, the Symposium ended with the future outlook of the AFORCE network, and its commitment to the next period of activity (2020 to 2025). The network's new visual identity and updated logo marks the beginning of a new period even more focused on supporting regional practitioners.



The new AFORCE logo

This event was supported by:

