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Overview

In November 2013, 28 organisations from 11 countries (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom) began the European collaboration FP7 project **SIMWOOD (Sustainable Innovative Mobilisation of Wood)**.

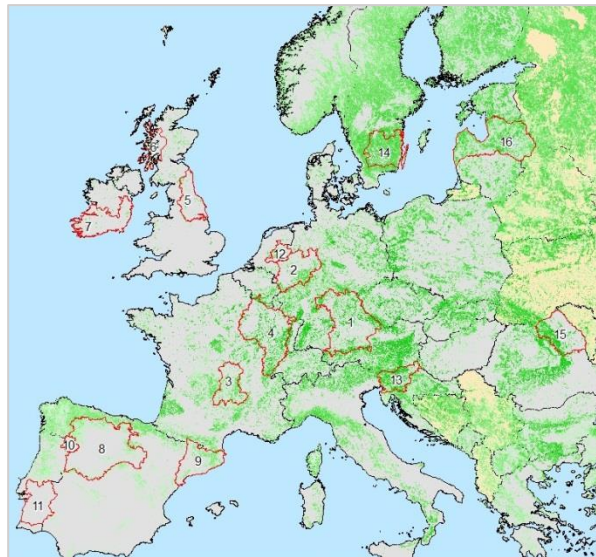
This four-year project seeks to provide solutions on how to mobilise forest owners, promote collaborative forest management and ensure sustainable forest functions in order to mobilise the present unlocked wood resources in Europe.

We work in **16 regions across Europe**, selected for their high relevance to Europe's wood mobilisation challenge. In each of our model regions, we've made a detailed analysis of the present situation, and the barriers and challenges for wood mobilisation which currently exist. Now we are working on identifying objectives, developing possible tailor-made solutions, and selecting some to be tested in a series of pilot projects.

In each region, we have a Regional Learning Laboratory (RLL) as an integral part of the research process. This is linked to existing initiatives in the region, and is collaborative: teaming up with regional stakeholders to obtain fresh findings on the region's specific status quo, chances and proposed solutions.

In this issue, we are focusing on our work in two regions:

- **Yorkshire and North England**
- **South Eastern Ireland**



1. Bavaria, GER 2. North-Rhine Westphalia, GER 3. Auvergne, FRA 4. Grand-Est, FRA 5. Yorkshire & North East England, UK 6. Lochaber, UK 7. South Eastern Ireland, IRE 8. Castile and León, ESP 9. Catalonia, ESP 10. Nordeste, PRT 11. Alentejo, PRT 12. Overijssel & Gelderland, NLD 13. Slovenia, SVN 14. Småland, SWE 15. North-East Romania, RO 16. Latvia, LV

This issue has been produced to be distributed at the SIMWOOD Mid-term Conference taking place in Kilkenny and Wexford in Ireland from 30th November to 2nd December 2015.

Over 70 participants are expected at this event, which comprises an open session giving an overview and summary of the SIMWOOD project, its regional profiles and focus studies, as well as demonstrating a mobilisation support tool (the mobiliser) for the first time to the public.

Participants will also learn about different types of forest management at two different sites during a field trip.

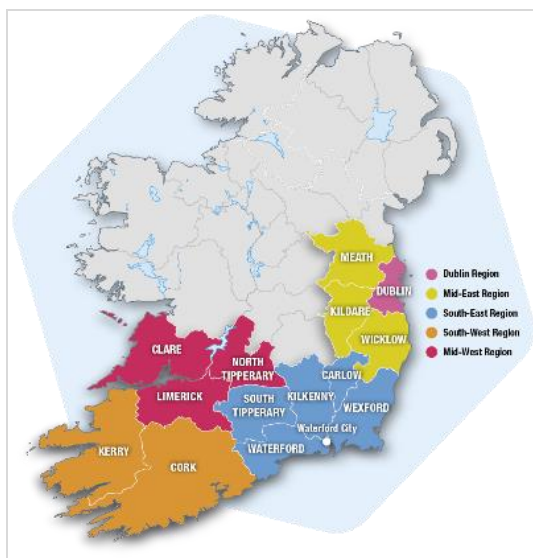
The open session will be followed by an internal session for SIMWOOD partners only.

Focus on South Eastern Ireland

Background

The Southern and Eastern region of Ireland spans across 13 counties from County Kerry in the south west to County Meath in the east and comprises 36,414 km² or 53% of Ireland's total area. Just over 73% of Ireland's population lives in the Region.

The total forest area in the Region is 348,233 ha, which represents 9% of the area of the Region and 53% of total forest cover in the country.



Climate, soil and biophysical conditions in the Region are quite variable. In the south west the landscape is characterised by mountain ranges and poor soils, while in the east better quality soils are found. The main forest species are Sitka spruce and/or a mixture of Sitka spruce and Japanese larch.

Private forests account for 47% of the forest area in the Region. Most of this area was planted after 1990 by farmers in response to generous incentives and subsidies co-funded by the EU and the Irish government. Hence most of the forests have not gone through an entire rotation yet. Current harvested material in private forests is from early thinnings rather than from clearfell.

SIMWOOD's work in the region

As the private forests established in the past two decades in the Region mature, it is expected that timber production from such forests will account for an increasing proportion of the total annual roundwood production in the Region.

The mobilisation of this increased roundwood production will be challenging. The owners of these "new" forests are "new" owners who have limited experience or knowledge of forest management. Their forests are small, and often inaccessible, which makes economic mobilisation challenging.

The work in SIMWOOD will focus on new owners and on identifying means of making mobilisation more financially attractive by supporting them during harvesting and/or demonstrating methods of increasing harvesting output.

Regional Learning Labs

The first RLL took place in October 2014.

Representatives of various interest groups were invited to voice what they considered to be the main barriers to wood mobilisation in the Region. In addition, all were invited to identify existing and possible future solutions to address the barriers and facilitate wood mobilisation.

It was through this meeting that pilot projects evolved with the purpose of building initiatives to raise knowledge of alternative thinning methods (Pilot Project 1) and to support forest owners in the harvesting process through forest owner groups (Pilot Project 2).

Pilot Projects

Pilot Project 1

The first pilot project concerns mobilising additional wood fuel from conifer first thinning and consequently additional revenue.

In many cases, first thinning is considered a loss making operation, especially in conjunction with road building. Therefore many forest owners cannot afford to thin their plantations.

In forests located on well-drained sites that are typically found in the Region, there is the potential for more biomass to be removed during the thinning

operations, which would lead to greater wood mobilisation and greater income for those forest owners.

The greater incomes achieved should in turn make thinning more financially attractive to those owners who have yet to decide to thin their stands. The lack of knowledge about thinning and the often unattractive returns associated with first thinning have prevented many of them from mobilising their wood to date.



Photo: Daragh Little

There is evidence that once a forest owner has carried out a first thinning, there is much greater likelihood that they will continue to harvest.

The pilot project involves demonstrating to owners the thinning approaches that can result in greater volumes of biomass being removed.

Work has been carried out on one site in the model region to test 3 methods of harvesting, cut to length, integrated and whole tree harvesting.

Analysis has been carried out on the relative outputs of each and associated costs. Lessons learned from this study will be integrated into future sites to make the system more efficient.

A field day was undertaken in April 2015 in conjunction with Teagasc, Worrell Harvesting and Waterford Institute of Technology to show forest owners these methods.

Some additional investigation into methods of harvesting and selling the timber is envisaged.



Photo: Daragh Little

Work to date has focused on thinning and getting the output to roadside; the most efficient means of getting the felled material to the end user will be included as part of the project.

Work will also be carried out on site selection (soil types, time of year for harvesting, etc.) to come up with a solution that generates more volume while not damaging the site or local environment. It is also important to increase knowledge amongst forest owners and practitioners of methods of sale and construct appropriate contracts.

Creating a system of sale that is simple and easy to understand is an objective of the pilot project where both parties are clear on the expectations and outputs.

The production of a decision support tool is also envisaged to help forest owners/foresters choose the most appropriate method of harvesting for their forest.

Pilot Project 2

In this pilot project, the aim is to develop a sustainable producer group to engage private forest owners towards the mobilisation of timber in the Region.

The Irish SMEs will implement a series of measures to engage forest owners, promote best practice, cluster forest activities and mobilise timber into a range of markets.



Photos: Alex Kelly

A number of activities will form the basis to this project including:

- engaging with private forest owners in collaborative initiatives;
- knowledge transfer through workshops, leaflets and training courses;
- clustering forest activities for economy of scale, facilitating processing and delivery directly from site to increase forest owner profits;
- standardising forest activities, timber processing and sales to provide transparency and promotion of established best practice using the ecosystem services framework;
- developing market supports such as depots to collect timber from clusters of smaller sites to increase critical mass for processing, delivery and contracts.

Note:

One of the Irish SME's started in the project as the Wexford Wood Producers, but has since merged with three other producer groups to form the Irish Wood Producers, which was launched in June 2014.

The IWP is also part of Danone's global Ecosysteme project, which supports sustainable supply chains. Danone installed a large biomass boiler in the region and the project aims to source biomass from local forest owners.



Photo: Alex Kelly

Who to contact in the region

The SIMWOOD local team includes staff from University College Dublin; Alex Kelly at The Irish Wood Producers and Daragh Little at Forest Enterprises Ltd.

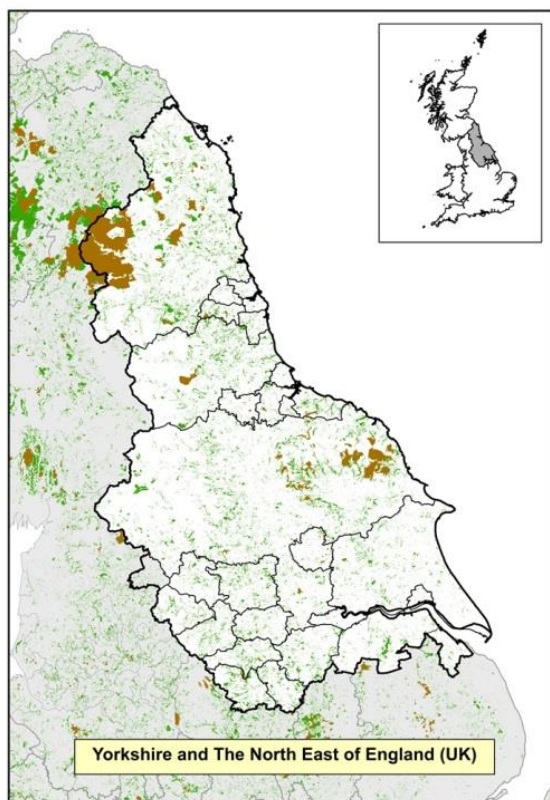
To get involved in SIMWOOD's activities, please contact:

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Focus on Yorkshire and North East England

Background

The Yorkshire and North East model region covers 23,981km² and comprises 4 National Parks and 4 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a population of nearly 8 million inhabitants.



Source: Rural Development Initiatives Ltd

The woodland cover is around 238,250 ha, about 10% of the land covering (National Forest Inventory, 2012).

37% of the woodland cover is owned by the state (Forestry Commission), 41% of woodland is privately owned; with the rest being made up of local government, industrial private owners and non-industrial private multiple owners.

Mainly privately owned woodlands are small and fragmented, with an average woodland size of 13ha. The ownership of many of these woodlands is unknown; however it is likely that a large percentage

of these private woodland holdings will be less than 5 ha.

45% of the regions forest cover is conifer with the main species being *Picea sitchensis* and 34% of the forest cover is broadleaved with the main species being *Quercus petraea*, *Acer pseudoplatanus* and *Betula spp.*



Photo: Andrew Kitching

Many private forests are primarily used to provide wood production (woodfuel) and recreational activities in terms of game management as well as biodiversity.

SIMWOOD's work in the region

Project activities within the region are being conducted within the wider context of Roots to Prosperity, a strategy produced in 2013 and led by the forest industries across the entire forestry and wood processing sector and provides very good linkages with the SIMWOOD project.

The SIMWOOD project will be focussing on the barriers and opportunities for wood mobilisation amongst these small undermanaged private woodland holdings as this represents an untapped resource in terms of timber volume.

Regional Learning Lab

The first Regional Learning Lab comprised of 30 participants and was made up of woodland owners, forest managers, policy advisors, processors, contractors and biomass users.

The regional learning lab enabled the SME to identify the barriers to wood mobilisation of small private woodlands and to help support the development of the focus study, as well as the pilot projects.



Photo: Chloe Bellamy

Focus study: Forestry Skills Assessment

Pilot Project 1: Investigating alternative harvesting methods to maximising woody biomass product breakout from harvesting sites

Pilot Project 2: Bringing undermanaged small farm/estate woodlands into productive and sustainable management.

Focus Study

The aim of the focus study was to better understand the skills and knowledge levels of the woodland owners and manager/contractors as there is concern from across the sector with regards a shortage of suitable contractors and woodland owners when looking at the management of small and complex sites.

Information gathered during the focus study enabled the SME to adapt and amend the pilot project to better understand the audience it will need to target to provide the greatest opportunity for wood mobilisation.

Pilot Projects

Results from the focus study showed that the proposed pilot projects needed to be adjusted to concentrate on areas of the sector which are not disengaged; whilst better meeting the demand of the sector, providing greater engagement and a legacy to the SIMWOOD project.

The pilot project which the SME will concentrate on 'bringing under managed small privately owned woodlands into productive and sustainable management by adopting a market brand'

The revised objective of the pilot project is to support the mobilisation of timber from small and undermanaged woodlands by creating a regional timber marketing group for woodland owners,

woodfuel producers/traders and small scale saw millers with the adoption of a brand for their products.



Photo: Andrew Kitching

The marketing group will provide users of woodlands and timber products as assurance brand that the timber has been grown in the UK in accordance with the UK Government Timber Procurement Policy.

This brand will compliment and integrate with other well proven forest certification schemes such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme of Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

Discussions with organisation within the sector have shown there is an enthusiasm for this type of UK brand awareness.



Photo: Andrew Kitching

Who to contact in the region

The SIMWOOD local team includes staff from Forest Commission Research Agency.

To get involved in SIMWOOD's activities, please contact:

Andrew Kitching (Rural Development Initiatives Ltd)
(andrew.kitching@ruraldevelopment.org.uk)

Regional news

Seminar for presentation of results from the pilot project in Småland_SE

The Linnaeus University and Energikontor Sydost organized a seminar on the 20th November in Växjö, Småland. It has been held once a year since 1999 and is traditionally called "The bioenergy day of Växjö".

One purpose of this year's meeting was to promote the SIMWOOD-project and another to report of the results from the regional pilot project.

The meeting was attended by 75 people, covering various parts of the value chain for bioenergy, e.g., forest owners, practitioners in the forests, forest fuel sellers and purchasers, district heating companies, officials and regional decision makers.



Professor Thomas Thörnqvist gave a lecture about the results from the pilot project concerning techniques for increased and more efficient extraction of forest residues from clear cutting areas.

PhD-students gave presentations about other close related subjects, e.g., factors of the fuel which affect the combustion process.



The event also included a panel discussion, with participants from various parts of the bioenergy chain, and led by the Linnaeus University.

The bioenergy day of Växjö was appreciated by the different categories attending the meeting. It has contributed to strengthening the cooperation between the University, related companies and the official actors in the region – a good example of Triple Helix cooperation in an important context.

The event was financed by the SIMWOOD project and provided important input for the ongoing work in the project, which will from now on focus on disseminating the results of the focus studies and pilot project.



Göran Gustavsson and Thomas Thörnqvist
Photos: Ulrika Lindh

Workshop on forest operations

FCBA hosted a one day workshop on forest operations in mountain and steep terrain areas on November 19 in Grenoble.

More than 90 local and national stakeholders participated and contributed to the success of the meeting.

Morning presentations on logging technics, mountain-specific logistics and collaborative innovation contributed to disseminating state of the art knowledge to forest practitioners.



Photos: Thomas Carrette

Experiences from diverse contexts (e.g., the French Alps, Italy, and Massif Central where SIMWOOD's pilot project is being implemented in Auvergne) and different stakeholder perspectives were shared and discussed during the afternoon roundtable.

Workshop on FlorNExT

FlorNExT was launched in a workshop organized by the IPB SIMWOOD team on November 12, 2015, at the School of Agriculture of the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, in Bragança, Portugal.

The workshop started with a short welcome message and introduction to SIMWOOD by João Azevedo, followed by an introduction to forest modeling by Luis Nunes.

Next, Fernando Pérez-Rodrigues presented **FlorNExT** in detail describing the overall functioning of the tool, structure and options of the interface help resources, models used to estimate growth and tree distribution and the input parameters and output variables.

Examples of applications in forest management with FlorNExT were also provided and followed by participants from their mobile devices.



Photo: João Azevedo

There were 25 participants in the workshop coming from the academic community, conservation and development associations, the Forest Service and forest consultants.

The event received media coverage which will further increase the impact of the workshop and of **FlorNExT**.

The workshop met most of its objectives, namely a strong participation from the stakeholders' side and a full understanding of the usefulness of **FlorNExT** for forest planning and management.

More about FlorNExT

FlorNExT is an application for modeling growth and yield for maritime pine (*Pinus pinaster*) and Pyrenean oak (*Quercus pyrenaica*) stands in the Nordeste region of Portugal, as well as for defining thinning plans and their effects on stand growth and yield.

Users of the application can estimate stand growth and yield and tree size distribution over time in a very simple way based on variables easily measured in the field.

They can also plan thinning operations from intensity and other simple parameters obtaining estimates of the volume to extract and the distribution of trees per size class (to extract and to remain in the stand).

The application is now fully available online at <http://flornext.esa.ipb.pt/>.

Workshop “Forest inventory with LiDAR”

The Nordeste Transmontano SIMWOOD team organised a knowledge and technology transfer workshop on the use of LiDAR for data collection and analysis in forest inventory on 14 and 15 October in Bragança, Portugal.

This event was also organised as a Regional Learning Lab involving local forest stakeholders such as consultants and practitioners, as well as representatives of forest associations and authorities.

A survey conducted during the event collected the perceptions of participants regarding the forest sector in the region and their expectations of forest mobilisation and the role of new technologies in this process.

On the first day, a series of lectures explored the origins, development and trends of technology in forest measurements and inventory and the foundations and applications of LiDAR technology.



Photo: João Azevedo

In addition, there was a computer laboratory session on data analysis and software tools and a demonstration of the use of drones for small-scale remote sensing applications.



Photo: João Azevedo

On the second day, participants took part in a practical field session on measurements with terrestrial LiDAR.



Photo: Fernando Pérez-Rodrigues

The workshop attracted over 40 participants from 11 companies and forest institutions, as well as students from the Forest Resources Management MSc program at IPB.

Although the lab and field sessions were limited to 23 places, there were a large number of participants who attended lectures only. The workshop was directed at local agents, but many participants came from other regions which made the event relevant on a national scale.

A blog (workshoplidar.blogspot.com) was developed during the preparation of the event for disseminating and transferring the results of the workshop and the interaction with stakeholders interested in the application of new technologies in forestry.

The registered participants will be a target group to work with in the dissemination and application of the remaining tools developed within the SIMWOOD project.

SIMWOOD promoted at Great Yorkshire Show

Every year RDI support the Yorkshire Agricultural Society to organise the Forestry Arena and the Forestry Information Centre of the Great Yorkshire Show, one of the UK's largest agricultural shows which attracts around 130,000 visitors across the 3 day event in July.

Over the 3 days members of the SIMWOOD team discussed barriers to wood mobilisation in the region

with a range of stakeholders; including woodland owners/manager, processors and suppliers as well as members of the general public.



Photo: Will Richardson

The show also provided a great opportunity to gather data on the knowledge and skills levels of the sector; which was later used as part of the planned focus study.

Whilst discussions with stakeholder were taking place an action packed arena comprising of demonstrations from chainsaw sculptures, local axemen, horse loggers, a mechanical harvester as well as the Great British Pole Climbing competition; kept people entertained.



Photos: Andrew Kitching

The aim of the Forestry Information Centre and the arena is to raise the profile of forestry amongst the general public and gives them the chance to know more about the sector, as well as an opportunity to

discuss barriers and solutions for wood mobilisation with those that are already involved within the sector.

Article on wood mobilization

An article written by BTG and Alterra appeared in the 'de Bosbouw' quarterly newspaper (edition 1, April 2015), which is exclusively aimed at forestry and harvesting of wood in the Netherlands.

The article notes that while the state of the forests in the Netherlands is improving, harvesting is still significantly below the annual increment, which leads to an aging forest.

It also mentions SIMWOOD's activities, and that the project seeks to increase mobilisation while taking other interests (nature, biodiversity) into account.

>>Download the article (in Dutch) 'Meer houtoogst in Europa en Nederland', De Bosbouw:
<http://www.simwood.efi.int/uploads/Publications/De%20Bosbouw%20editie%201%202015.pdf>

Who to contact for more information

If you would like to become involved in our Regional Learning Labs, please contact the coordinator for your region. You can find them on the SIMWOOD website: www.simwood-project.eu/contacts.html

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