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Valuing environmental goods and services derived from the forests

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Abstract

The purpose of this special issue of the Journal of Forest Economics is to illustrate the use and limitations of environmental valuation in decision making related to the management of forest resources in Europe. The contributions to this special issue are organized following the conclusions of a workshop on forest valuations in Europe in Nancy, France (September 26–27, 2006). The aim is to (1) establish guidance protocols for forest valuation studies, (2) organize the estimated values in a database and (3) use the database for meta-analysis and value transfer. As these guidance protocols are firmly established and followed, and the frequency and quality of these studies increase, their increased use in the decision-making process should help the forestry sector in finding its just place in the sustainable development strategy for Europe.

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Introduction

This special issue of the Journal of Forest Economics reports on a certain number of valuations studies illustrating different methods available, and their use and limitations in the decision making and policy processes related to forest conservation and management in Europe.

The interest for this special issue derives from a Workshop organized at the Forestry School in Nancy, 26–27 September 2006, on *A protocol and database for the environmental valuation of French/European Forests*. The workshop was part of a program to further the use of forest environmental valuation in the decision-making processes in Europe, co-financed by the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development of France and the European Commission for Europe (COST Action E 45: European Forest Externalities (EUROFOREX)). The objective of the program is to collect existing forest-related environmental valuation studies and to enter their results into a database following guidance protocols to ease value transfer. The present series of articles complements the ones presented at the workshop which are available on the website of the Laboratoire d'Economie Forestière (LEF).¹

The European Commission and the European Parliament are taking non-market, most often non-wood, forest goods and services seriously. The new EU Rural Development Regulation mentions investments to enhance the public amenity value of forests. In the evaluation of the EU Forestry Strategy in 2004² for the European Parliament, the Commission undertook an Internet-based stakeholder consultation which identified the costs and benefits of the provision of social and ecological services from forests as a priority in the implementation of that strategy. A colloquium in Nancy³ to prepare the EU Forest Action Plan⁴ identified the valuation of and compensation for non-market forest goods and services as deserving attention in the future. As a result, the EU Forest Action Plan includes in its action no. 3 “*Exchange and assess experiences on the valuation and marketing of non-wood forests goods and services.*” The follow-up of the fourth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) identified these goods and services issues as closely linked to the Vienna resolution no. 2 “*Enhancing economic viability of sustainable forest management in Europe.*” Without a market mechanism for these goods and services, regulations need to influence behaviors through restrictions on forestry practices, which could reduce the competitiveness of the sector otherwise environmentally friendly. Their free availability misinforms the users on their values and the costs of their provision.

The Nancy workshop concluded on three points, used here to structure the contributions to this special issue: (1) The necessity to specify some guidelines and protocols on how forest valuation studies should be reported and their quality assessed; (2) the need to enter these valuation studies into a broad database such as

¹<http://lef.nancy-engref.inra.fr/Docs/workshop200609/Nancy200609.pdf>

²SEC (2005) 333 Annex to COM (2005) 84 final.

³In Search of Economic Social and Environmental Convergence, Nancy, 2–3 February 2006.

⁴COM (2006) 302 final http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/fore/index_en.htm

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