

## BELGIUM

# LEADER

### Location

LAG "Tiges et Chavées",  
Assesse - Gesves – Ohey

### Programming period

2014 – 2020

### Priority

P2 – Competitiveness

### Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

### Funding (EUR)\*

Total budget 203 550

EAFRD 73 278

National/Regional 109 917

Private 20 355

### Project duration

2016 – 2019

### Project promoter

LAG 'Tiges et Chavées'

### Contact

[xavier.sohet@tiges-chavees.be](mailto:xavier.sohet@tiges-chavees.be)

### Website

[www.tiges-chavees.be/project/forets-filiere-bois/](http://www.tiges-chavees.be/project/forets-filiere-bois/)

\* Forecast

## Promoting the sustainable management of small, privately owned forests.

### Summary

Most of the private forests in the area covered by the Local Action Group (LAG) 'Tiges et Chavées', are very small and fragmented. They contribute very little to the local economy as it is difficult for owners to perform effective forest management on small plots. To address this constraint, the LAG aims to create links between small forest owners, advisors and professionals in the sector.



Activities supported by this project include organising wood sales in groups, facilitating forestry work, organising training, developing local chains, creating partnerships and informing the public. In addition, the project promotes social carpentry to make it possible to carry out non-profit actions with a positive societal and environmental impact. The promoter of the project is the LAG 'Tiges et Chavées' in partnership with the Wallonian Support Office for the Private Small-scale Forest (Cellule d'Appui à la Petite Forêt Privée) and the Royal Belgian Society of Forestry (Société Royale Forestière de Belgique).

### Results

Mobilised 55 forest owners. 45 of them received a visit to assess the short-term needs on their plot

Supported establishment of 27 service agreements between owners and forestry experts to organise the marking of trees for harvest. Established a common sales catalogue for 2 650 m3 of local woodland

Supported the sale of 25 lots of 2 270 m3 of firewood, softwood and hardwood lumber for a total of 76 000 EUR

In autumn 2018, the project organised a collective sanitary action to help small properties to remove wood attacked by bark beetles (*Ips typographus*)

Trained four forest guides to welcome visitors to the territory (a further training session is foreseen in 2019)

### Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ It is important to provide a territorial approach and to integrate different sectors: bringing together forest management, primary processing, secondary processing, environment, forest recreation. The LAG has to play a role of facilitator.
- ❑ The project must allow opportunistic developments: e.g. the support given to forest owners to intervene against the current invasion of bark beetles is a real value-added.

## Context

Private forests in Wallonia cover an area of 290 000 hectares and constitute 53% of the total forested area in the region. These forests are owned by some 100 000 private owners. A very large percentage of them have only one small, or very small plot, usually acquired through inheritance. Because of this, owners tend to view their forest(s) as being of sentimental value, an important part of their tradition and heritage. This emotional attachment makes the exploitation of small plots, with their small amount of wood and limited economic return/incentive, even more difficult.

The Wallonian government set up a support unit dedicated to small private forests. The staff of this unit intervene only where properties are smaller than 5 ha. The unit seeks to group small forest owners together in order to increase the effectiveness of the services they offer. However, it is hard to reach these small owners and public appeals most often fail to mobilise them. The best way to reach them is through a local partner who is well-established and who works with both local authorities and associations i.e. LAGs.

The LAG "Tiges et chavées" covers an area of 19 970 ha over three municipalities. 25% of the LAG area is covered by forest and almost 80% of this forest is private and owned by 470 landlords. Out of these 470 properties, 333 are smaller than 5 ha. In addition, two hardwood sawmills are located in the area.

## Objectives

The project "Forests" aims to support the sustainable management of the private forests of the territory, by offering training, tailored advice and awareness raising for forest owners and by promoting the collective management of small private forests. The project also aims to create a social enterprise for construction work using local wood. With this objective in mind, the LAG is developing links with training enterprises that are active in the forestry sector.

## Activities

1. Activities implemented to support the economic development of the local wood industry

- Established a database of timber companies operating in the territory (2016).
- Provided information to 377 small owners (under 5 ha) on forest management and organised a demonstration session for them (2016).

- 55 forest owners received a diagnostic visit from a private expert. Part of a team set up by the 'Public agency for small private forests' (CAPFP) in collaboration with the 'Federation of forestry experts'. The visits aimed to identify the owners' aims for their forest as well as any works that needed to be carried out on the land. Three forest owners with more than 5 ha also applied to participate.
- A collective timber/lumber sale was organised with the support of CAPFP (2016).
- On-site advice was provided to forest owners of properties sized between 5 to 25 ha (2018).
- In 2018, a contest was organised to make benches from locally produced wood. 24 contestants took part including professionals and amateurs from the sector, as well as regular citizens.
- Finally, a promotional event for the local wood industry was also organised in 2018. The day included visits to forest plots and local sawmills, with demonstrations by lumberjacks, pruners, mobile sawmills, carpenters, etc.

2. Training activities for forest owners

- A survey of training needs was conducted amongst small forest owners (less than 5 ha) (2016).
- A cycle of one-day training sessions (2017 and 2018) was launched in collaboration with the Belgian Royal Forest Society (SRFB):
  - Pruning of forest trees (11 participants);
  - Biodiversity management (12 participants);
  - Pro Silva management in private forests (14 participants);
  - Classification of hardwoods and mobile saw-mill demonstration (24 participants);
  - Thinning of hardwoods (21 participants);
  - Forest site diagnostics (25 participants);
  - Forest landscape interpretation (30 participants).

3. Activities to promote social integration

- Exchanges were organised with the Socio-Professional Integration Centre "Espaces" in Ciney, with a view to creating a structure to support social and professional integration in the wood industry (2016).
- An agreement was established concerning the launch of a social carpentry workshop in collaboration with "Espaces" in 2018.

#### 4. Preservation the environmental characteristics of local forests

- Public information panels on afforestation, thinning and clear cutting were placed in public and private forests.
- A forest owners conference was organised in 2017, to discuss the health and maintenance of the main tree species in the area (60 participants).
- A further conference took place in 2018 concerning the evolution of forest landscapes (38 participants).
- Four training sessions for forest guides were carried out in 2017 (with four participants), and a new session is planned for 2019.
- An educational forest trail concerning forest management and the uses of local species is currently under development.

## Main Results

### Economic benefits:

This project mobilised 55 forest owners. 45 of them received a visit to assess the short-term needs on their plot.

27 service agreements were established between owners and forestry experts, to organise the marking of trees for harvest, and established a common sales catalogue for 2650 m<sup>3</sup> of local woodland.

The project supported the sale of 25 lots of 2270 m<sup>3</sup> of firewood, softwood and hardwood lumber (for a total of 76 000 EUR), and the afforestation of 2 plots (1.6 ha).

Two municipalities agreed to use local wood in their building projects.

The bench-making competition culminated in an exhibition event at a popular provincial recreation site.

In autumn 2018, the project organised a collective sanitary action to help small- and medium-sized properties to remove wood attacked by bark beetles (*Ips typographus*). Technicians visited affected sites and marked the trees that needed to be felled and sold. The action is ongoing and aims to reduce the impact of the bark beetle outbreak on coniferous forests.

### Environmental benefits:

Forest owners are making better use of their property in terms of environmental protection and improving the forest habitat. They are starting to adopt a more natural forest management approach (Pro Silva) which requires less intervention.

### Social benefits :

In Autumn 2018, the project organised a collective sanitary action to help small properties to remove wood attacked by bark beetles (*Ips typographus*).

Trained four forest guides to welcome visitors to the territory (a further training session is foreseen in 2019).

### Networking value:

The project promotes sustainable development by bringing together different sectors relevant to forestry (e.g. tourism, leisure, culture, social, etc.). For example, in 2017 the project organised a forest walk which included a visit to a sawmill. This was in partnership with the municipality of Assesse's "Nature Month" programme, the International Nature Festival of Namur and an association for the promotion of the wood sector (RND).

The project also brings together different private, professional and public actors.

### Transferability:

The problem of fragmented private forests is common in Europe. Solutions for combining regional or national expertise with territorial actors could be promising. The LAG and CAPFP are studying the possibility of developing a procedure to create associations of forest management. The administrative issue is quite easy to solve, but the approach to engaging the owners is key.

The project is also involved in a "Forest Charter" pilot project (conducted in two Walloon territories and based on pre-existing models from other European countries), that would make it possible to widen the number of partners and to perpetuate the project.

### Synergies with other EU policies :

The project has set up a collaboration with several INTERREG projects: FORET PRO BOS, PROFIL WOOD and BATI C2. In particular, it collaborates with FORET PRO BOS on the implementation of the educational forest trail mentioned before.

*"I have inherited a small plot of forest from my parents but I had no knowledge on forest management. The project has helped in this management. It's a pleasure to give life again to this small part of forest linked to the history of my parents!"* Christian Houzard, forest owner who participated to the grouped sale of wood

### Additional sources of information

[www.oewb.be/la-cellule-dappui-a-la-petite-foret-privee](http://www.oewb.be/la-cellule-dappui-a-la-petite-foret-privee)

\*This project has been categorised under 'LEADER' by the nominating National Rural Network