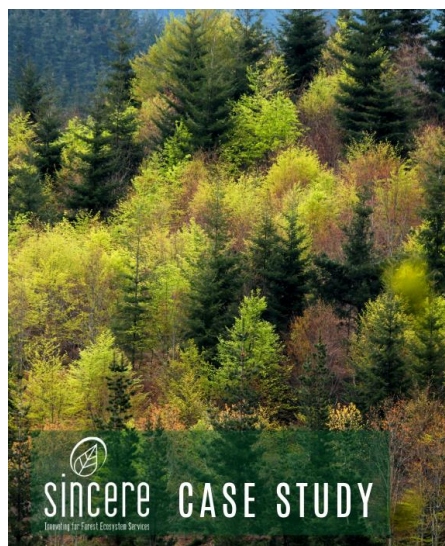


Creating a legal framework for forest management for ecosystem services in Bizkaia county

This case study looked to introduce valorisation and compensation of forest ecosystem services (FES) into Biscay Territory legislation. A participatory process included broad stakeholder contributions to policy implementation.



Evaluating and integrating the added-value of forest ecosystem services into forest management regulations

Forests provide people with multiple benefits, many of which are “free”. Placing economic value on these services means that funds raised can be invested in forest management.

Diputacion Foral de Bizkaia. Servicio de Montes in collaboration with European Forest Institute

Location: Bizkaia, Spain

Type of business model:
Changes in legislative framework

Ecosystem services targeted:
All ES with focus on water quality, water quantity, landscape and timber

Providers: According to service provided: public administration, private owners

Users: Society, foresters, forest owners, farmers

Stakeholders consulted:
Foresters, farmers, landowners, associations, public administration, university / research partners

📍 Context

The case study is developed in the Historical Territory of Biscay, part of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, Spain. It is a small mountainous area of about 220,000 ha, with an important forest area of 130,000 ha (60% of the total area). Main forest production species are *Pinus radiata* (65,000 ha) and *Eucalyptus spp.* (16,000 ha).

The distribution of ownership is 25% public and 75% private. 25% of the territory is a Protected Natural Area. The County Council of Biscay is a public institution with full competences to develop its own forestry strategy and legislation within the national legal framework.

🎯 Objective


- Create a **new legal framework** for forest and forestry that incorporates the concept of ES into regional forest legislation, to improve the provision, valuation and monitoring of ES and to provide the resources to pay for ES provision.
- Focus on two FES: **water quality and quantity**, and **landscape as social and recreational service**. Also research to establish correlation between management actions and the improvement of these ecosystem services.
- The innovative mechanism consists of **creating and implementing subsidies** to pay for the provision of these ES in the annual subsidy call of the Bizkaia Province

➔ Implementation

Implementation of new legislation to enact payments for the ecosystem services delivered by the forest includes identifying and quantifying FES that typically constitute externalities of forest management, and internalizing them in the management. A change in the choice of species and silvicultural methods leads to a more environmentally friendly management.

The legislation is still under preparation, but the FES framework aims at generating a clear incentive structure to secure the delivery of FES, thus also securing the necessary funding.

Outputs

- 
- Participation of a number of different actors related to the forestry sector (e.g. forest owners, universities, research centres, administrations etc.) in order to obtain a holistic view and to integrate all possible concerns and worries.
 - This has led to a broad ownership of forthcoming changes in regulation frameworks.

Outcomes

If successful, the innovation mechanism will, in the long run, enhance the provision of several types of FES, including improved water regulation and decreased erosion risk in the area.



Impact

- Securing the use values of water provision and reduced erosion.
- Public recognition of the value and importance of the FES delivered through the management of forests.



Upscaling potential

National geographical upscaling:

The local government of Bizkaia has exclusive competences to develop its own forest strategy and regulations within the national legal framework about forestry. A similar structure could either be incorporated in national forest legislation or by other local governments in Spain if something similar is not present. As such, they may learn from and adapt to the process undertaken in the Spanish case.

Upscaling to other schemes:

Given the format and focus of the case study, it is not obvious that there are other related existing regulation and instruments in place addressing the same services that may adopt aspects of this innovative mechanism (IM).

Upscaling in scope:

Depending on the specific implementation of the IM, it may be that the approach can be upscaled to include other FES of value for the wider society, e.g. recreational values or climate change mitigation or adaptation efforts. The more general approach of securing that ecosystem services are and can be accounted for in regulation could perhaps also be relevant for other local domains in the region, e.g. agriculture.

Upscaling to other countries:

The general mechanism in this IM, a change in the current legislation, is conceptually related to the [Russian case study](#), though the actual changes differ according to context. In a similar way, the potential for upscaling to other countries depends on their current legal frameworks and whether they include or not provisions for accounting for FES in practical regulation and instruments.

Further information

Case study coordinator: Juan Carlos Uriagereka, juan.carlos.uriagereka@bizkaia.eus [Case study webpage](#)

Synthesis report: [D4.2 Synthesis report of the experiences and lessons learnt, situating them in the global experiences and knowledge](#)

Upscaling report: [D4.1 Assessing the upscaling potential of SINCERE IAs using a Theory of Change structure](#)

Explore more findings from SINCERE case studies: www.sincereforests.eu/resources/factsheets/



About SINCERE

Spurring INnovations for forest eCosystem sERVICES in Europe (SINCERE) is a four-year project to develop novel policies and new business models by connecting knowledge and expertise from practice, science and policy, across Europe and beyond.

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