



## Group Certification for Sustainable Forest Management: Promoting Shared Forest Management and Ecosystem Services Enhancement

### Introduction

In Italy one of the main obstacles to forestry management is fragmentation and small forest area of private properties. For overcoming this problem, the project CO2 Marche promoted a Group Certification between different forest owners.

The Group Certification is specifically designed for small and collective forest properties, is the result of great teamwork related to the ability to unite public and private forces, overcoming territorial fragmentation for a common goal in order to simplify and share the organisational aspects of Sustainable Forest Management Certification and to reduce its costs. It is an alternative approach to individual certification, allowing certification of several forest owners as a group. It requires a Lead Partner representing the group, with responsibility for ensuring that the forest management practices of individual owners within the certified area comply with PEFC requirements.

In the context of the project, the 'Bosco di Marca' was created, a forest consortium of 9208,25 ha that achieved the goal to obtain the PEFC Sustainable Forest Management Group Certification. Forest Group Certification is a good opportunity for forest owners to manage forests and the ecosystem services produced, by increasing carbon storage, prevent forest fires, hydrogeological instability, soil erosion, protect forests and biodiversity, contribute to good water and air quality, mitigate temperatures and climate change, enhance the landscape and offer better tourism and recreational services. Moreover, in the context of the project, a particular attention was put in promoting the exchange of sustainability credits and create employment and wealth in the mountain areas of the Marche Region, with a special focus on the 2019 earthquake crater area.

The certification highlights the effort put to enhance ecosystem services: it demonstrates concretely how forests and woodlands can be not only an environmental but also an economic resource, and how everything is interconnected. Forest owners and managers will then be able to calculate the forest's carbon storage capacity and offer credits to be sold to organisations or companies wishing to neutralise their emissions. In this way, forest communities will be able to survive and not abandon the inland areas of the country.

## Lessons learned

This group certification model allowed the achievement of the largest group certification in central Italy with 9,208.25 ha. This certification is proof of the possibility of overcoming territorial fragmentation for a common objective by uniting public and private forces. In these areas, obtaining and maintaining GFS certification will guarantee not only the application of a continuous monitoring system but also the implementation of a continuous improvement programme.

## For further information contact

Marco Perrino, Project Coordinator, Italy, email: marco.perrino@dream-italia.net

Francesca Giannetti, Assistant Professor, University of Florence, Italy, e-mail: francesca.giannetti@unifi.it

The information presented in this factsheet was developed by the FOREST4EU partner, drawing on the innovations and knowledge generated by the indicated operational group with their explicit authorization.

## Further information

<https://www.co2marche.it/>



 <p><b>Funded by the European Union</b></p> <p>Funded by the European Union (Grant n. 101086216). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.</p>	 <p>UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI FIRENZE <b>DAGRI</b> DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE E TECNOLOGIE AGRARIE, ALIMENTARI, AMBIENTALI E FORESTALI</p>	 <p>CO<sub>2</sub> S.Fo. Marche</p>	 <p>FOREST4EU</p> <p>  FOREST4EU Project   FOREST4EU Project   info@forest4eu.eu         </p> <p>Website</p> 
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