

STRATEGIC R&D&I AGENDA FOR FOREST AND FIRE MANAGEMENT

2025-2030



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Contents

Executive Summary ____ **6**

Preface _____ **7**

Themes and
Subthemes of the
Strategic R&D&I
Agenda for Forest and
Fire Management _____ **8**



Management and Sustainability **11**

Sustainable Forest
Management _____ **13**

Multifunctional
Forests and
Ecosystem
Services _____ **14**

Plant
Production and
Breeding _____ **15**

Ecosystem
Restoration _____ **16**



Risk **17**

Fire Management ____ **19**

Fuel Management ____ **20**

Climate Change
and Forest Health ____ **21**

Impact
Assessment and
Quantification _____ **22**



Circular Bioeconomy **23**

Biomass
Mobilization
and Use _____ **24**

Forest
Operations and
Mechanization _____ **25**

Sustainable Use of
Wood Products _____ **26**

Non-Wood
Products,
Services and
Business Models _____ **27**

Forest
Investment _____ **28**



People and Territory **31**

Socioterritorial
Dynamics and Rural
Development _____ **33**

Attitudes and
Behaviours _____ **34**

Ownership and
Collective Management
Models _____ **35**



Key Enabling Technologies **37**

Decision Support
Systems _____ **39**

Digital Technologies _____ **40**



Governance and Policy **41**

Governance and Collaborative Approaches _____ **43**

(Co)Design of Policies and Impact Assessment _____ **44**



Innovation and Capacity Building **45**

Capacity Building and Specialized Training _____ **47**

Collaborative Innovation Networks _____ **48**

Communication and Social Valorisation of the Forest _____ **49**



Implementation and Monitoring of the Strategic R&D&I Agenda **51**

Agenda Implementation _____ **51**

Progress Monitoring _____ **53**

Executive Summary

The CoLAB ForestWISE Strategic R&D&I Agenda for Forest and Fire Integrated Management 2025 - 2030 presents an integrated vision to address the major challenges and opportunities of the forest sector in Portugal. Structured in seven strategic themes and twenty-three priority subthemes, the Agenda aligns with the stakeholders' needs and with the main national and European public policies, contributing to a more sustainable, resilient, and competitive future.

The Agenda proposes a systemic and collaborative approach, fostering (co)research and the transfer of knowledge and technology as key drivers for transformation and impact.

The strategic themes are as follows:

- 1. Management and Sustainability** – Promoting sustainable, multifunctional, and resilient forests, enhancing the valorisation of ecosystem services and biodiversity protection.
- 2. Risk** – Developing strategies and actions for the prevention and mitigation of rural fires and other biotic and abiotic risks, with a focus on assessing their impacts.
- 3. Circular Bioeconomy** – Enhancing the valorisation of new (bio)products and forest-based business models, driving digital transition and sector competitiveness.
- 4. People and Territory** – Promoting initiatives anchored in the visions and expectations of local stakeholders, reinforcing social, economic, and territorial cohesion.
- 5. Key Enabling Technologies** – Developing and adopting innovative solutions to increase management efficiency and the competitiveness of the forest sector.
- 6. Governance and Policy** – Supporting decision-making and the (co)design of more informed and robust public policies, based on participatory and collaborative approaches.
- 7. Innovation and Capacity Building** – Strengthening communication, knowledge transfer, training, and capacity building on forest and fire-related issues.

Preface

CoLAB ForestWISE® – Collaborative Laboratory for Integrated Forest and Fire Management – established in September 2018, aims to promote integrated forest and fire management in Portugal through activities of (co)research, development, and knowledge and technology transfer. The scope of its mission is strengthened by the creation of synergies and collaborations among entities from the private sector, the National Scientific and Technological System (SCTN), public administration, and sectoral associations.

Since 2019, CoLAB's activities have been guided by its Strategic R&D&I Agenda, built through a participatory process involving its associates and other key stakeholders in the fields of forest and fire management. Five years later, the Agenda has been revisited based on: i) the assessment of the work carried out by the CoLAB and the framing of projects within the different themes and subthemes of the Agenda; ii) the analysis of the alignment between the Agenda's themes and subthemes and relevant national and international strategies and policy instruments; and iii) a participatory process (Focus Groups and Workshop) involving more than 50 participants from various entities operating within the national context.

The Strategic R&D&I Agenda for Forest and Fire Management (2025–2030) serves as a guiding and reference document for CoLAB's future activities, developed in close cooperation with its associates and key stakeholders across the forest sector.

ForestWISE aims to be a national and international reference in the production and transfer of knowledge and technology for the integrated management of forest and fire, operating at the interface and in close collaboration with industry, academia, public administration, and society.



Themes and Subthemes of the Strategic R&D&I Agenda for Forest and Fire

The Strategic R&D&I Agenda for Forest and Fire (2025 - 2030) presents the priority areas for (co)research and for the transfer of knowledge and technology to be addressed by CoLAB ForestWISE. These are guided by the needs of the main stakeholders in the forest sector and aligned with key national and European policies. The themes and subthemes of the Agenda are consistent with the vision of major national strategic instruments - such as the National Action Plan for Integrated Rural Fire Management and the Forest Intervention Plan 2025 - 2050 - as well as international frameworks, including the EU Forest Strategy 2030 and the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, among others.

The Agenda is structured around four central themes, reflecting the pivotal role of forests in the sustainability and resilience of socio-ecological systems, in the promotion of a circular bioeconomy, and in the enhancement of health, well-being, and quality of life, particularly in rural contexts. Complementing these core themes, the Agenda also includes three transversal themes related to: i) the development and application of innovative technologies; ii) the improvement of governance mechanisms and decision-making processes; and iii) the valorisation of knowledge through innovation, technology transfer, and the strengthening of competences across the sector's stakeholders.



Strategic
R&D&I Agenda

Management and Sustainability



01

Promote the active and sustainable management of forest areas through the implementation of best practices and initiatives that foster the valorisation of forest goods and services, increased production, and improved forest condition and resilience.

Sustainable Forest Management

Enhance sustainable forest management, contributing to greater resilience and improved adaptation to climate change.

This subtheme will focus on the development of new silvicultural models and forest management practices better suited to climate change, considering forests' multiple functions, risk reduction, and the enhancement of economic, ecological, and social sustainability. In close connection with other subthemes of the Strategic R&D&I Agenda, it will also include the collection of forest data using remote sensing and proximal sensor tech-

nologies, and its integration into information systems that can support forest managers. Through best forest management practices, this subtheme will contribute to increasing forest production, resilience, and sustainability, in line with the EU Forest Strategy 2030, while respecting established environmental targets and addressing social concerns such as inclusion and employment.



Multifunctional Forests and Ecosystem Services

Strengthen the multifunctional character of forests and the valorisation of their multiple products and services, including ecosystem services and biodiversity.

This subtheme will focus on the potential of forest ecosystems to provide goods and services to society. Methodologies will be developed for monitoring and quantifying biodiversity and ecosystem services, including carbon storage and sequestration, water conservation, soil protection, and others. These methodologies will be based on solid scientific foundations that enable credible valuation strategies, particularly within the framework of the voluntary carbon market and sustainable business models. In coordination with other subthemes of the Strategic R&D&I Agenda, initiatives will be developed to stimulate business opportunities and strengthen value chains for non-wood forest products, generating additional income for rural communities to complement revenues from timber sales. Through these activities, the subtheme aims to contribute to Portugal's and the European Union's ambition to maximize the value of sustainable and multifunctional forests, achieve carbon neutrality, protect biodiversity, and promote the socioeconomic development of rural territories.



Plant Production and Breeding

Promote plant production and species breeding to strengthen the quantity and quality of plant material available in Portugal.

This subtheme will focus on initiatives aimed at improving plant production, both in quantity and in quality, to meet needs related to: i) reforestation and the restoration of degraded areas; ii) increased productivity and quality (e.g., improved species that are more productive and efficient, ensuring higher yields of wood, pulp, resins, and other forest products); iii) adaptation to local conditions; iv) adaptation and/or resistance to ex-

treme conditions such as drought and high temperatures; and v) conservation of forest species diversity, ensuring greater adaptability to future environmental changes. Through these activities, the subtheme seeks to help meet the demand for more resilient plant material, adapted to local edaphoclimatic conditions, from forest managers and landowners.



Ecosystem Restoration



Foster the restoration, recovery, and rehabilitation of degraded forest ecosystems, contributing to the enhancement of their biodiversity and resilience.

This subtheme will focus on tools, methodologies, and best practices aimed at improving forest condition, promoting the restoration of habitats and associated species, while considering territorial specificities and the need to mitigate wildfire risk. These initiatives seek to strengthen the capacity of forest ecosystems to provide goods and services. Synergies will be promoted with living labs and/or demonstration areas that address forest restoration objectives. In addition, activities will be encouraged to monitor the progress of forest restoration, generating relevant knowledge

for forest managers and supporting public policy guidance. Through these actions, the subtheme aims to contribute to the European Union's global objectives on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as biodiversity protection, in line with the ecosystem restoration targets set for 2030 and 2050 under the EU Nature Restoration Regulation.

Risk

Contribute to territorial resilience
by integrating rural fire monitoring
processes, climatic and phytosanitary
indicators, in coordination with
forecasting models, operational
planning, and impact assessment.

Fire Management

Promote the integrated management of rural fires by adapting prevention, mitigation, and suppression actions to territorial specificities and fire regimes.

This subtheme will promote the development of strategies, practices and policies aimed at mitigating the risks associated with rural fires, as well as the operationalization of resources for the different stages of rural fire management, while simultaneously recognizing the ecological role of fire in certain environments, territories and meteorological conditions. These efforts are expected to generate knowledge and tools that support

planning and decision-making by forest owners, civil protection agencies, and other entities involved in rural fire management. Through these activities, the subtheme seeks to contribute to the objectives of the National Action Programme of the Integrated Rural Fire Management System and to the resilience goals defined in the Forest Intervention Plan 2025 - 2050.





Fuel Management

Strengthen fuel management from the local to the landscape scale, aiming to reduce rural fire hazard and risk.

This subtheme will contribute to improving fuel management practices by prioritizing interventions, assessing their performance and adapting them to the appropriate territorial scale. The selection of available technical options for fuel management, such as grazing, prescribed burning or mechanical/manual, should consider the specific characteristics of each territory, with the aim of effectively reducing rural fire risk while com-

binning the best operational strategies. Through these activities, the subtheme seeks to promote a debate on the current legislative framework related to this matter, ensuring that actions are adapted to each territory and that investment is redirected towards other equally structural initiatives in the field of rural fire management.

Climate Change and Forest Health

Manage other biotic and abiotic risks associated with forests, aiming to mitigate their impacts on territories in the context of climate change.

This subtheme will develop new approaches to mitigate the effects of forest pests and diseases, the spread of invasive woody species, desertification, and other forest-related challenges in the context of climate change, with the goal of making territories, particularly forest areas, more resilient and better adapted to extreme events. Monitoring systems, new silvicultural models, and forest species that are more resistant and better

adapted to regional climates will be incorporated into tools and Decision Support Systems. Through these activities, the subtheme aims to contribute to risk identification and to improving forest managers' decision-making regarding the implementation of prevention, mitigation, recovery, and rehabilitation actions in forest territories.



Impact Assessment and Quantification



Quantify and assess the impacts associated with risk management, with the aim of economically translating the effects or consequences of the proposed actions.

This subtheme will integrate impact analysis tools into Decision Support Systems, contributing to a more holistic and objective assessment of risk management. This process involves identifying risks and, in their evaluation, considering both direct costs - such as material losses or mitigation expenses - and indirect costs, including impacts on public health, environmental degradation and losses in ecosystem services. This assessment will enable the identification of vulnerabilities and critical points, supporting the prioritization of

more effective and sustainable prevention and mitigation measures in the short, medium and long term. The economic translation of impacts will play a key role in shaping public policies and management strategies. Through these activities, the subtheme aims to contribute to the implementation of more robust strategies, promoting not only the protection of financial and environmental assets but also the well-being of the populations involved.

Strategic
R&D&I Agenda

Circular Bioeconomy



03

Biomass Mobilization and Use



Contribute to the greater valorisation of forest biomass by promoting its “cascading” use and fostering new bioproducts, biochemicals, and bioenergy as sustainable alternatives to fossil resources.

This subtheme will focus on forest biomass value chains, identifying strategies to reduce the operational costs of collecting and using woody material and forest residues, with a view to developing new bioproducts and transformation processes that can strengthen markets. Priority will be given to establishing strategic partnerships for the creation of pilot initiatives, testbeds, and demon-

strators that, together with end users, will enable the testing of newly developed technologies and processes. These activities aim to strengthen the competitiveness of forest-based companies and, consequently, enhance the contribution of the forest bioeconomy to society.

Forest Operations and Mechanization

Foster mechanization and other technological advancements to improve the efficiency, sustainability, and safety of forest operations.

This subtheme will address the challenges related to the development and adoption of mechanization and digital technologies for executing and monitoring of forest operations and biomass flows along supply chains. Equipment adapted to the specific conditions of forest stands in Portugal will be developed, along with planning and decision support systems for service providers and forest managers, making use of data collected by different devices for remote operation monitoring. Issues such as interoperability, the use of standards, and data governance will be addressed collaboratively to promote broader adoption of

these solutions. Efforts will be made to leverage increased investment in pilots and demonstrators for capacity building and performance evaluation. The development of flexible business models will also be encouraged, supported by public policies and incentives that make high initial investments feasible. These activities aim to contribute to the national and European objectives for digital transition and the promotion of competitiveness within forest-based industries.

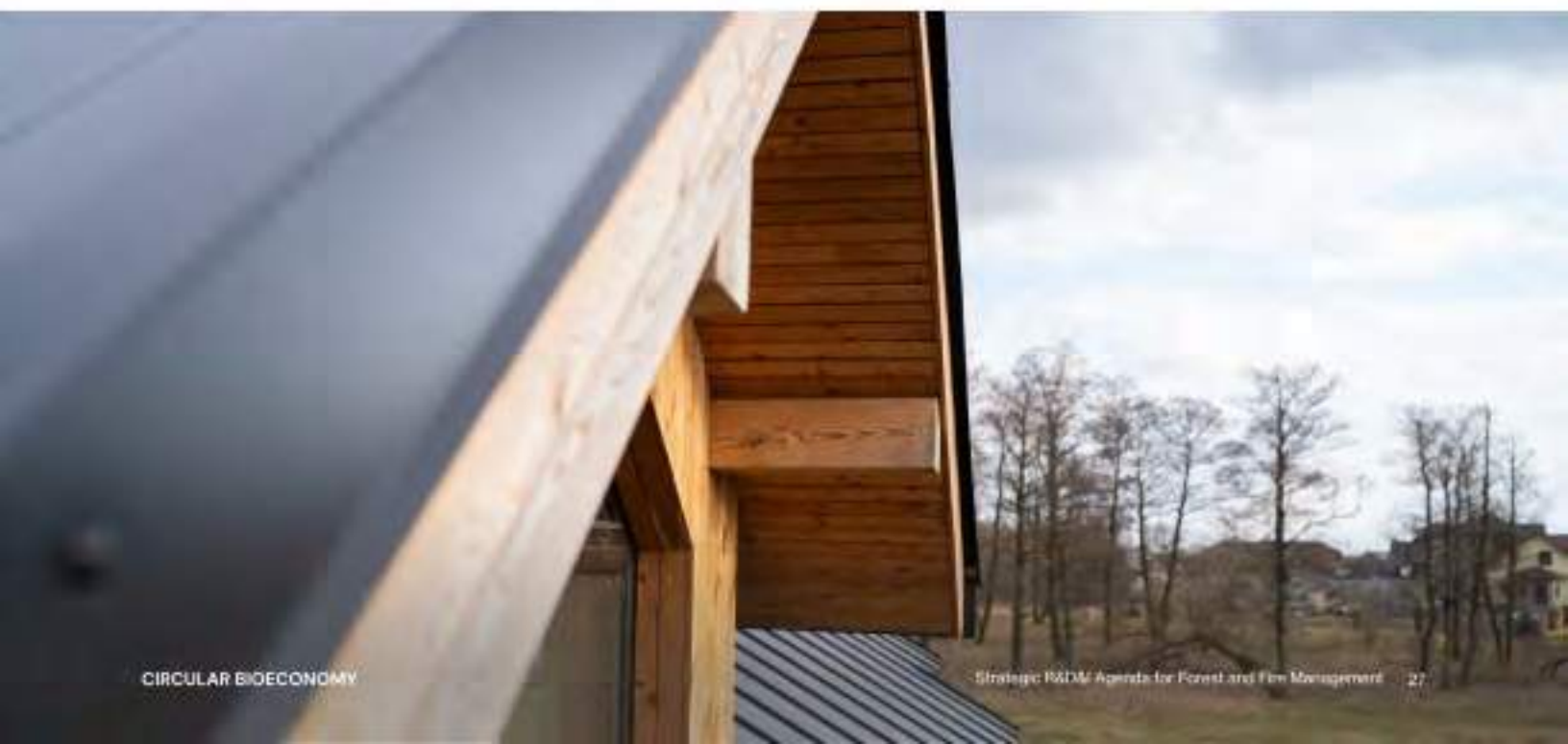


Sustainable Use of Wood Products

Promote the sustainable use of forest-based wood products, supported by new products and applications grounded in the principles of the circular bioeconomy.

This subtheme will contribute to identifying new products and collaborative production models, enhancing the sustainability of the entire supply chain through the efficient use of raw materials, by-products, and residues. Some of the aspects to be analysed include: i) the use of wood and wood-based products in construction (e.g., appropriate species selection, construction technologies, and processes); ii) the application of methods for technical and economic characterization and impact assessment to ensure the proper use of new species; iii) the development of new wood-derived products with higher eco-

nomic and social value; and iv) the analysis of alternative solutions for the utilization of residual biomass through its incorporation into production processes for the manufacture of panels or other products. These activities aim to contribute to promoting a greener economy, increasing resource-use efficiency and product durability, while simultaneously reducing environmental impacts, optimizing energy use, and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.



Non-Wood Products, Services and Business Models

Boosting the production and valorisation of non-wood forest products by strengthening their distribution chains and exploring new markets and consumers.

This subtheme will develop new methodologies and models for adding value to non-wood forest products such as resins, cork, wild fruits, mushrooms, and aromatic and medicinal plants, among others. These will be based on sustainable and efficient production, the promotion of local economies, and the diversification of activities linked to the forest sector. The development of assessment methods to compare alternative supply chain scenarios, processing technologies, suppliers, and circular economy practices will also be addressed. New value chains will be analysed to identify best practices and benefits for stakeholders at all stages of the supply chain, enhancing their scalability and replication. E-commerce business models and branding strategies for positive differentiation will be encouraged to foster closer relationships with consumers and strengthen the market for non-wood forest products and forest ecosystem services, in coordination with the subtheme Multifunctional Forests and Ecosystem Services. These activities aim to contribute to increased profitability for forest owners and local communities and to promote the consumption of forest-based products as sustainable alternatives to non-renewable ones.



Forest Investment

Support decision-making in forestry investment projects, valuing technical information on profitability, diversification of uses and risk management, and interaction with local agents.

This subtheme will contribute to medium- and long-term investment decision-making supported by economic profitability indicators and by the consideration of complementary factors such as wildfire risk management and impacts on local communities. To leverage the attraction of capital toward sustainable and high-impact projects, topics will be addressed related to assessing the productive viability of products and services complementary to timber production, as well as the valorisation of ecosystem services, including

carbon sequestration potential and other non-financial benefits valued by society. The technical and scientific knowledge generated will be crucial for guiding investment decisions. Through these activities, the subtheme aims to foster forest investment and the sustainable and optimized management of forest resources, aligning economic development with environmental conservation, employment, and the well-being of rural communities.





People and Territory



04

Reverse depopulation and rural abandonment trends by developing community-driven initiatives that promote social, economic, and territorial cohesion.

Socioterritorial Dynamics and Rural Development

Revitalize rural territories through innovative dynamics and initiatives that foster their attractiveness, competitiveness, and sustainability.



This subtheme will promote entrepreneurship and social innovation projects involving rural communities, socioeconomic actors, and public administration, aimed at strengthening territorial identity and attracting human capital and investment. In addition to issues directly related to forests and fire, it will address challenges such as i) attracting people and fostering generational renewal; ii) valuing traditional practices and knowledge; iii) adopting technologies and promoting

innovation; and iv) increasing equity and inclusion, among others. Through these activities and an integrated territorial approach, the subtheme aims to leverage sustainable development and innovation dynamics, generating more cohesive and competitive territories that value their endogenous resources and ecosystems, as well as their culture and traditions.

Attitudes and Behaviours

Integrate diverse social perspectives on forests and fire, fostering attitudes and behavioural changes that contribute to forest resilience and sustainability.

This subtheme will focus on action-research initiatives aimed at valuing and connecting empirical and technical-scientific knowledge. Projects will be developed to capture society's expectations and needs regarding forests, while reflection-action initiatives will be launched to respond to people's priorities. Based on these activities, changes in attitudes and behaviours will be pro-

moted in line with the principles of sustainability, particularly regarding the adoption of forest and fire management good practices, the increased valorisation of ecosystem services, and the improved preparedness of communities in the face of risks.



Land Ownership and Grouped Management Models

Promote grouped forest management in Portugal to achieve active forest management on large scale, fostering greater professionalization and profitability within the sector.

This subtheme will promote projects focused on analysing trends related to land use and management, land ownership structure, and rural landowners' profiles, aiming to contribute to the effective and sustainable implementation of grouped management and land consolidation models and initiatives. The monitoring and impact assessment of these initiatives may support the development of (new) grouped management

models, in coordination with various entities and promoters. The implementation of this subtheme will be aligned with the Governance and Policy theme, contributing to both current and future public policies. Through these activities, the subtheme aims to foster the expansion of grouped management in line with the objectives set out in the Forest Intervention Plan 2025 - 2050.

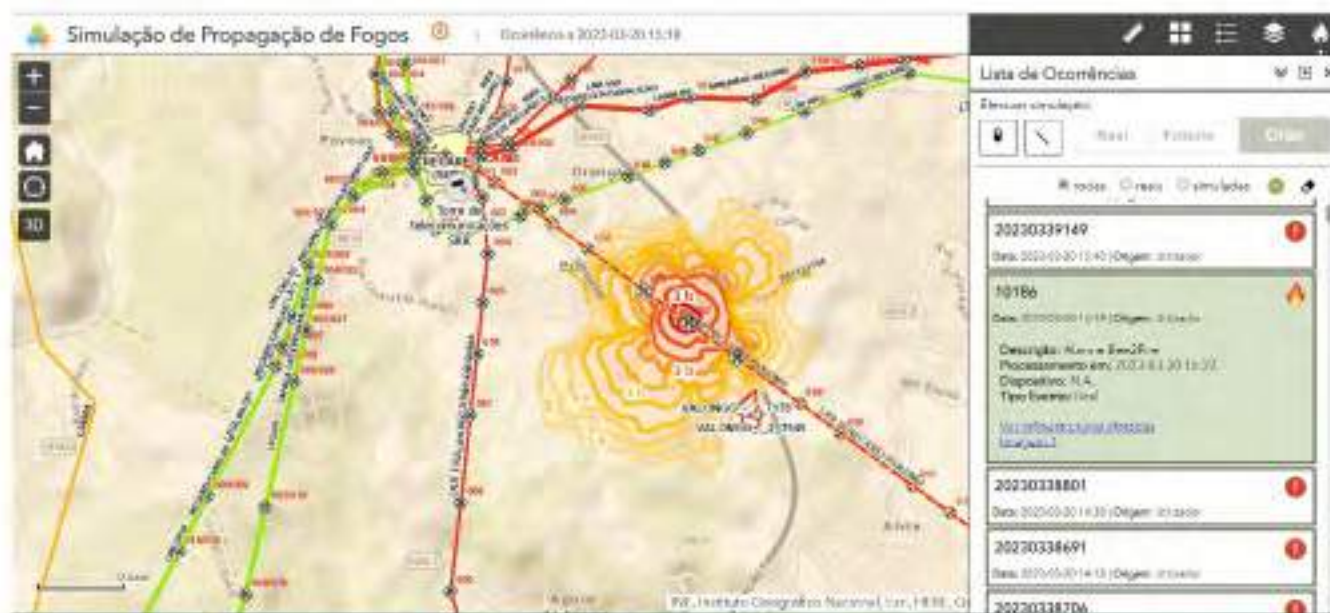


Key Enabling Technologies



05

Decision Support Systems



Contribute to the improvement of Decision Support Systems related to forest and fire management, promoting a more informed and integrated approach.

This subtheme will focus on improving or developing Decision Support Systems for the integrated management of forests and fire, considering the context of global change and the risks and uncertainties associated with climate change. By fostering interaction with other strategic subthemes of the Strategic R&D&I Agenda, it will contribute to greater interoperability among existing systems, the integration of new function-

alities, and the inclusion of relevant and up-to-date data as the foundation for a more informed and accurate decision-making process. These advancements will help promote sustainable and multifunctional forest management, integrating the interests and needs of various stakeholders and strengthening connections between public and private entities.



Digital Technologies

Develop solutions for the integration of advanced digital technologies for the management, sustainable use, and monitoring of forest resources.

This subtheme will explore and develop technologies tailored to the forest sector, promoting innovative solutions within the framework of Forest 4.0, such as IoT, artificial intelligence, Big Data, sensor networks, Earth Observation, and Virtual and Augmented Reality. These technologies will enable real-time monitoring of environmental conditions, forest area mapping, biodiversity assessment, and risk management support. The large-scale use of data will make it possible to predict growth patterns, detect pests and diseases,

and optimize supply chains through digital traceability. It will also contribute to improving forest planning and operator training using Virtual and Augmented Reality simulations. Robotics and automation will likewise play a key role, supporting the development of precision and sustainable silviculture. Through these activities, the subtheme aims to enhance the competitiveness of the forest sector, driven by digital technologies.

Governance and Policy



06



Address challenges and shortcomings arising from traditional and centralized decision-making processes by creating opportunities for the (co)design of public policies and strengthening territorial governance.

Governance and Collaborative Approaches

Develop collaborative approaches in decision-making and territorial governance processes, strengthening community empowerment and fostering a culture of participation within the forest sector.

This subtheme will focus on the (co)design and implementation of participatory processes, supported by good practices and customized methodologies that ensure adequate representation of social actors, to foster solutions tailored to local contexts and needs. These processes aim to explore innovative strategies to define common goals and mitigate potential conflicts, strengthening new governance models. Within a post-participation evaluation framework, continuous monitoring and feedback to stakeholders will

be emphasized as opportunities for learning and improvement in public participation approaches. Transversally to all themes and subthemes of the Strategic R&D&I Agenda, these activities aim to foster the transition toward a culture of participation within the forest sector, contributing to more informed and inclusive decision-making processes, as well as to greater activation and valorisation of the social capital.





(Co)Design of Policies and Impact Assessment

Promote the (co)design of public policies and assessment of the impact for society, strengthening the significance, reach, and benefits of policies and investments in the fields of integrated management of forest and fire.

This subtheme will focus on the (co)design of public policies across their various stages (formulation, implementation, and evaluation), integrating the underlying specific socioecological, economic, and legal contexts. Given the complex and dynamic nature of forest and fire-related challenges, these processes will be developed in coordination with stakeholders (with different levels of interest and influence) and in alignment with other sectoral policies. The impact assess-

ment of public policies will adopt a path for impact approach (ex-ante, during, and ex-post), aiming to identify and implement strategies that maximize their benefits throughout their life-cycle. These activities will lead to more robust, stable, and context-sensitive public policies that foster stronger engagement and more effective implementation, ultimately generating greater societal impact in the short, medium, and long term.

Innovation and Capacity Building



Contribute to the greater valorisation
of forests as an essential asset
for sustainable development,
driving distinctive and disruptive
communication, capacity-building,
and collaboration actions.

Capacity Building and Specialized Training

Define capacity-building and specialized training strategies and actions for the forest sector, contributing to the increase and improvement of professional qualification of the stakeholders.

This subtheme will promote capacity-building and training actions designed to address specific needs not met by the available market offer, in collaboration with leading entities from the SCTN and national and international experts. These actions will aim to equip technicians and other sector stakeholders with new methodologies and technologies for the integrated management of forests and fire. Transdisciplinary approaches and the recognition of professional experience among target audiences will be prioritized. The subtheme also seeks to contribute

to greater safety and increased productivity in forest work, as well as to the adoption of informed practices for fire risk reduction, bioeconomy, and sustainable forest management, among other topics of relevance to the sector. Through these activities, advances in knowledge, particularly those achieved within other themes of the Strategic R&D&I Agenda, will be capitalized on, contributing to the enhanced recognition and attractiveness of professions associated with forests and fire.



Innovation Hubs

Capitalize on knowledge and synergies within the R&D&I ecosystem to address forest and fire challenges through a collaborative and cross-sectoral dynamic.

This subtheme will leverage R&D&I results, promote knowledge and technology transfer, and strengthen entrepreneurship and the valorisation of forests and endogenous resources. Collaborative networks are aligned with the CoLAB's vision and mission as an interface entity connecting companies, academia, policymakers, the public sector, and society, acting as a catalyst for (new) cooperation opportunities. The Innovation Hubs

will be implemented through the promotion of demonstrator projects, living labs, communities of practice, acceleration programs, among others. In association with other themes of the Strategic R&D&I Agenda, these networks will stimulate the economic and social value of innovation while enhancing the sector's competitiveness and resilience.



Communication and Social Valorisation of Forests



(Co)promote an integrated communication strategy for the forest sector, contributing to greater recognition and valorisation of forests in all their dimensions and potentialities.

This subtheme will contribute to the definition and implementation of communication programs targeted at different audiences, in coordination with partners across the forest sector, aiming to: i) raise public awareness, including among school communities, of the multifunctional value of forests; ii) foster greater adoption of innovative solutions, technologies, and best practices; iii) improve social recognition and attract human resources to forest-related professions; iv) strengthen communication with policymakers and other strategic actors; and v) build media capacity for

more informed communication on forest and fire-related issues. As an interface and coordinating entity, CoLAB will promote broader dissemination of advances in knowledge and technology, including those achieved within the various themes of the Strategic R&D&I Agenda. Through these activities, focused on increasing the effectiveness of communication, greater awareness and understanding of forest and fire-related issues will be fostered, both at individual and collective levels.



Implementation and Monitoring of the Strategic R&D&I Agenda for Forest and Fire

Agenda Implementation

The CoLAB ForestWISE value proposition is based on the definition and implementation of (co)research, development, and knowledge and technology transfer activities, aligned with the framework established by the Strategic R&D&I Agenda for Forest and Fire. Through this integrated approach, CoLAB offers a portfolio of science- and technology-based products and services designed to support public and private entities in strengthening their activities related to forests and fire.

CoLAB's vision is supported by its role as a unifying and interface entity connecting the private sector, public administration, and academia, in a collaborative effort to make scientific and technological advancements available to the domains of forest and fire. Within this context, the collaborative effort underpinning the construction of this Agenda will be materialized through collaborative projects involving strategic partners and potential end-users of the results.

The implementation of the Agenda will be achieved through the development of i) aggregating and mobilizing projects; and ii) specialized technical consulting activities geared towards the needs and end-users of results. These projects and activities will feed into the Project Hub, Data Hub, and Training and Capacity-Building Hub. The projects to be developed are part of the CoLAB's portfolio of products and services, which constitutes a flexible and dynamic instrument that will be monitored and updated throughout the Agenda's implementation period.



Progress Monitoring

The implementation of the Agenda will be followed with a monitoring framework designed to assess the contribution of CoLAB projects and activities to advancing scientific and technical knowledge and to fostering collaborative networks across the various themes and subthemes of the Agenda.

The following indicators will be evaluated:

- Number of national and international projects (as coordinator or participant)
- Number of specialized technical consultancy projects
- Number of new products, processes, and services (co-)developed by CoLAB
- Total investment for CoLAB and for the forest sector (€)
- Number of national and international partners involved in projects
- Number of technical and scientific publications
- Number of patents, trademarks, or other intellectual property rights
- Number of communication and dissemination actions
- Number of training and capacity-building activities.







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