

IMPACT OF NAVIGATOR'S OUTREACH PROGRAM ON EUCALYPT MANAGEMENT

José L. Carvalho^{1*}, Susana Morais¹, Daniela Ferreira², Nuno Neto¹

¹ Navigator Forest Portugal, Zona Industrial da Mitrena, 2910-738 Setúbal
*jose.luis.carvalho@thenavigatorcompany.com

² RAIZ – Instituto de Investigação da Floresta e Papel, Quinta de S. Francisco, 3800-783 Aveiro

ABSTRACT

Lack of forest management and inappropriate forestry practices contribute to the reduction of commercial wood from eucalyptus plantations and to its degradation over time. Forest management is essential to maximize productivity, reduce fire risk and allow economic return from the investment. In this context, certification is a useful tool, as it requires compliance with legislation and brings forest professionals, with privileged knowledge, closer to forest owners. In addition, forestry products benefit from market recognition of certification labels.

In Portugal, forestry certification started in 2008/09, with strong support by the pulp and paper companies. This industry set up a price premium for certified eucalypt wood, which is still guaranteed today to encourage private owners to join certification. In 2015, Navigator acquired only 10% of certified wood from the Portuguese market and, in 2016, it created a program to foster certification and to improve forestry practices in eucalyptus plantations. One of its major objectives is to support Certification Groups to increase areas with certified management and support Chain of Custody Groups to increase certified operators in the market. To ensure knowledge transfer, support lines were created for technicians (Tec4Forest Program), for service providers (Forest Operations Program) and for landowners (Premium Program).

In 2015, only 10% of the wood from the Portuguese market acquired by Navigator was certified. The first years of the program promoted a substantial increase in this percentage, reaching 50% of wood deliveries with certified wood in 2019. By 2022, the share of certified wood reached 65% (all *E. globulus* wood) and today it represents more than two thirds of wood deliveries. On the supply chain side, in six years of the program, the percentage of certified chain-of-custody groups increased from 18% to 87%.

More than 125 technical sessions were carried out, with more than 1.000 participants and 10 trainers involved, developed as knowledge and information sharing events. These sessions also provide technical training for certification groups and associations' professionals, aiming to improve their efficiency in the management of eucalyptus plantations, as well as on-the-job training for service providers, who carry out forestry operations. The main topics addressed in the sessions are: type and plant quality, land preparation, fertilization, weed control, sprouting selection, pests and diseases and good practices in forest harvesting. In addition, safety issues were also considered in specific or as part of the abovementioned sessions.

Forest owners have been increasingly reaping the benefits of these initiatives, be it through the increased economic return but also the increase in the productivity of their plantations. Finally, as sustainability issues have become more current, they are concluding the change in their production practices adheres to these concerns. As a programme aimed at detailed and precise advice to forest owners, the Premium Programme has already impacted around 6.000 hectares, involving more than 300 diagnostics carried out.

The success of this outreach program is due to its multi-level approach, customizing the proposed solutions to the specificities of the plantation under review and involving a network of entities that understand the importance of promoting forest sustainable management.

Keywords: certification, forest management, productivity, technical support.