



FORESTS AND THE FORESTRY SECTOR IN LIGURIA





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One of the institutional tasks entrusted to the regional authority is certainly that of planning, which is the main factor that can ensure the adequate development of specific sectors within a framework of economic, environmental and social sustainability.

This assumption is particularly evident in the forestry sector, also based on the territorial characteristics of our region which, as the State of Forests and the Forestry sector points out in several places, are so strongly influenced by the presence of forests.

This significant presence stems from a natural vocation, also linked to morphological constraints, but is closely intertwined with human life. The functions, goods and services we expect from forests today are probably in a different order than in the economies of the past, taking into account the changed distribution of our settlements and socio-economic parameters that have changed profoundly from those of not-too-distant times and which, moreover, are changing further at a pace that we struggle to keep up with.

The powers I am called upon to exercise within the regional administration clearly identify the need for a broad and interdisciplinary approach to the territorial development of Liguria, especially the entire area that extends just inland

from the coastline and suddenly reveals a wealth of environmental, landscape, historical and cultural resources that anyone can recognise but which are often difficult to attribute and identify a consequent economic value. This is also because there may be a lack of data and information that would allow us to appreciate the interrelationships between an activity and the territory in which it takes place.

The State of Forests and the Forestry sector in Liguria clearly illustrates the breadth and depth of existing connections, confirming both the true multifunctionality of Ligurian forests and the ongoing need for strong collaboration among public and private actors. It also underscores the importance of ensuring coherence between sectoral policies that ultimately shape the same beautiful - yet fragile - territory.

“A wealth of environmental, landscape, historical and cultural resources that anyone can recognise but which are often difficult to attribute and identify a consequent economic value

The number and expertise of the people who contributed in various ways to the preparation of the Report and the other linked products, to whom I extend my sincere thanks, highlight the complexity and importance of the task of planning, but the availability of organised and accessible data allows us to start from a position of true knowledge, free from prejudice.

THE STATE OF FORESTS AND THE FORESTRY SECTOR IN LIGURIA

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The need for updated data and information on the forestry sector in Liguria has been evident for some time, as has the importance of creating spaces where the various stakeholders - public bodies, institutions, associations, businesses, professionals, citizens and others - can meet. These are all actors who, in different ways, operate, live, or produce goods and services in the Ligurian territory, particularly in areas characterised by extensive forest cover.

In this regard, following the approval of the Regional Forestry Programme (approved by Regional Council Resolution No. 17/2007), three subsequent volumes were prepared, entitled "Report on the state of Forests in Liguria", specifically in 2008, 2010 and 2013. These reports, in addition to representing an important knowledge tool over time, underpinning certain planning choices, have also promoted the dissemination of available data and greatly contributed to the desired connection between the various figures involved in many ways in issues of protection and territorial development, easily highlighting the cross-sectoral nature of forestry policies and the need for a multidisciplinary approach.

Moreover, Instrumental Action 1 of the National Forestry Strategy also indicates the need for "Monitoring of socioeconomic and environmental variables, coordination and dissemination of

information and statistical data" and, specifically, sub-action 1.2 provides for the production of a "Public and periodic report on the state of forestry, the sector and its supply chains". And it is indeed through the resources made available by the Fund for the implementation of the aforementioned Strategy that an updated State of Forests and the Forestry sector in Liguria (RaFF Liguria) has now been prepared.

Compared to the organisation of the first editions, which were divided into 10 thematic working groups, the new Report has adopted a format aligned with the National Forestry Information System (SINFor), based on 6 **areas of investigation**, designed to meet the sector's knowledge needs in relation to the objectives of the Forestry Strategy:

1. forest heritage;
2. programming and planning;
3. forest management;
4. environmental protection and conservation;
5. bioeconomy;
6. financial resources.

“ The RaFF gives a snapshot of the sector that aims to be as clear as possible, but also captured with a wide-angle lens, allowing its complexity and richness to be appreciated, without however glossing over its limitations

In particular, the Report examines areas 1 to 5 in depth, bearing in mind that financial resources are essentially functional to the activities reported on in the specific thematic areas.

A specific working group was set up for each area, with a coordinator identified from among the staff assigned to the relevant regional sector. The work involved thematic meetings and specific

in-depth activities, involving a total of more than 100 people who, with a spirit of collaboration and qualified expertise, collected data, provided information, and explored and described activities and research of interest to the sector.

The first part of the volume provides a series of **updates and news** on activities that have been completed or are ongoing, referring to various topics, with the necessary references that allow for further exploration of the highlighted content.

In the second part, **specific indicators** are provided for each of the areas of investigation mentioned above. In addition to being expressed with data and illustrative graphs, they contain comments that guide and facilitate their interpretation. Compared to the indicators available on SINFor, where possible, more accurate databases have been used in order to provide sub-regional breakdowns or to identify the indicator's reference element more precisely. As always, the Report also serves to highlight gaps in knowledge, which must be filled as soon as possible by setting up an adequate forestry information system for Liguria. In this regard, I would like to point out that the Regional Council has already decided to allocate the necessary resources for this purpose.

Furthermore, for each area of investigation, **a strength, a weakness and the priority action** to be taken to improve the situation are indicated. The Report is an informative tool preparatory to planning, but it was deemed appropriate to take advantage of the broad participation in the groups to also focus on the three points mentioned, as an aid to future decisions.

In addition to news and indicators, the Report also contains an in-depth analysis of the **climate in Liguria**, taking into account certain particularities that should be highlighted, given the possible or already established repercussions on Ligurian forests.

This concise brochure (also available in Italian) was produced during the preparation of the Report to facilitate the dissemination of data. Short informative videos were also created to reach a wider audience, using more accessible language and methods.

Ultimately, it is a snapshot of the sector that aims to be as clear as possible, but also captured with a wide-angle lens, allowing its complexity and richness to be appreciated, without however glossing over its limitations, for which corrective measures can still be proposed. I therefore hope that RaFF Liguria will be a useful tool for knowledge and work for many people.



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FOREST HERITAGE

The orographic and territorial characteristics make Liguria a region naturally characterised by large forest areas where historically it has been difficult to find space for living, cultivation and settlements, thus leaving ample room for natural dynamics. Nevertheless, **the territory of Liguria has been "adapted" to human needs through constant work that has created and maintained cultivable terraces and allowed for widespread human presence**. Around 1880, the rural population reached its maximum expansion and, as a result, the forest area reached its lowest level ever, estimated at around 230,000 hectares. The 1936 Forestry Map of Italy showed that the forest area in Liguria had already increased to around 277,000 hectares, but an analysis of the most recent survey data (IFNI of 1985, and the subsequent INFC of 2005 and 2015) shows that **an exponential growth becomes evident, mainly due to the abandonment of agricultural and pastoral activities, which have left room for the natural expansion of the forest**. Even when analysing data on the species present or evaluating the forms of management, the heavy relationship between man and the forest is evident: almost a third of the forest area is represented by chestnut groves and about two-thirds of the inventory category of "high forests" is indicated as being managed as coppice.

It is also clear that **human interaction has a significant impact on forest heritage, both when it is very present and, conversely, when it is effectively interrupted**. The large presence of aged coppice and over-mature high forests testifies to the absence of management and suggests the need to establish sectoral policies that pursue active management of forest heritage. The urgency is dictated not only by economic and employment benefits, but also by the need to secure territorial situations where the lack of management causes profound imbalances and consequent risks for the stability of the forest cover, accumulation of biomass, susceptibility to fires, excessive presence of wildlife, sensitivity to plant diseases and other problems.

Linked to this, the area of forest protection, conservation and multifunctionality also requires explicit choices and constant attention, as inertia in management cannot be allowed. **The climate crisis requires strategies that make forest heritage more resistant and resilient**. In this sense, periodic inventory surveys are very important, as they allow for accurate monitoring and provide useful data for communication campaigns aimed at providing real information to policy makers and the public, who seem to have a distorted perception of the reality on the ground.



STRENGTH

The forest heritage is significant and diverse, and therefore has the potential to provide numerous ecosystem services. The availability of inventory data and up-to-date maps helps to understand its potential and limitations.



WEAKNESS

Low public awareness of the actual situation on the ground, resulting in limited attention and difficulties in proposing active management policies.



PRIORITY ACTION

Establish ongoing monitoring activities, using up-to-date methodologies, to enable adequate monitoring of forest resources, including to assess the effects of the climate crisis and communicate appropriately.



KEY FACT AT A GLANCE

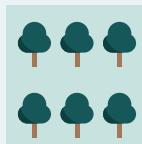
FOREST HERITAGE IN LIGURIA



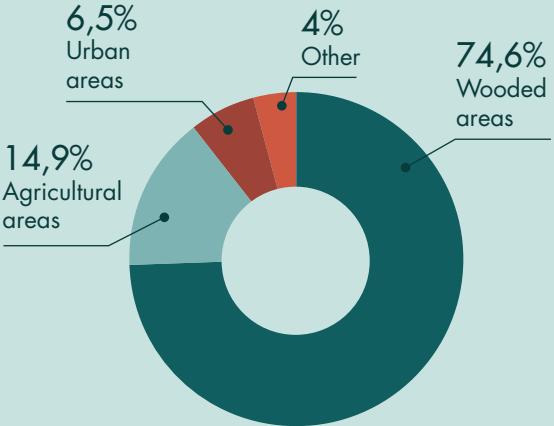
Over 400.000 HECTARES OF FOREST according to 2024 data



16 FOREST CATEGORIES from coastal pine forests to beech forests

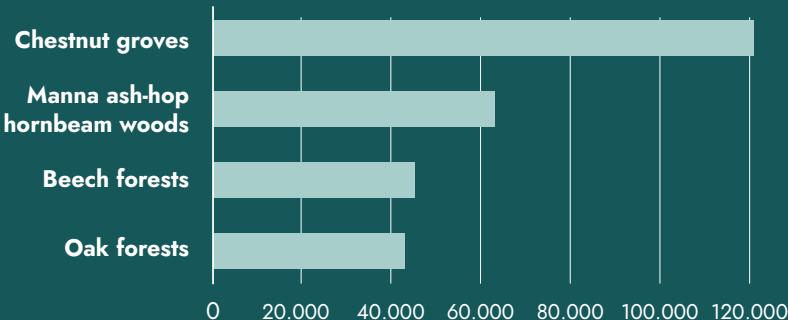


74% OF THE AREA COVERED BY FORESTS



MAIN FOREST CATEGORIES

Data from the Regional Forest Types Map (2024) indicate that the four main forest categories present in Liguria are chestnut groves, manna ash-hop hornbeam woods, beech forests, and sessile oak and downy oak forests. These four categories alone account for almost 70% of the total forest area.



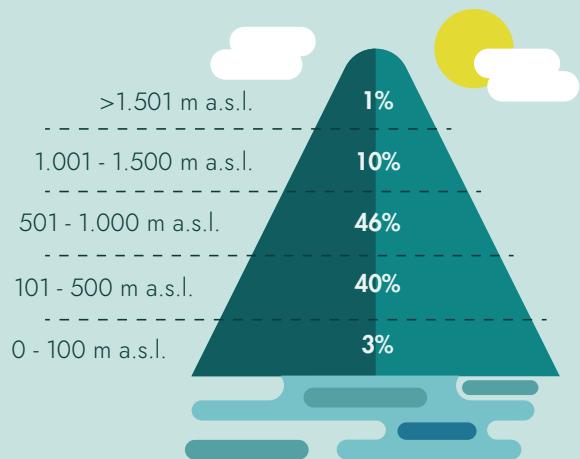
EVOLUTION OF FOREST AREA

Comparing the IFNC data for 2015 with that for 2024 from the Regional Forest Types Map (CRTF) with due caution, the regional forest area has grown at a rate of almost 2.000 hectares per year over the last nine years.



ALTITUDINAL DISTRIBUTION OF FORESTS

Over 85% of Liguria's forests are located in the two altitude ranges between 100 and 1,000 metres above sea level.



GROWING STOCK AND INCREMENTS

Some average data per hectare for Ligurian forests (IFNC 2015)



PROGRAMMING AND PLANNING

Regional programming and forestry planning, both district-wide and company-specific, find their guidelines for the application of regional forestry policy in the Consolidated Law on Forests and Forestry Supply Chains (TUFF) and in the National Forestry Strategy. With the TUFF, **forest management once again becomes an expression of a conscious cultural choice** that is implemented through planning tools, as a legal instrument capable of making public and private owners responsible for treating forest heritage as, to quote Article 1 of the TUFF, *part of the national natural capital and as an asset of significant public interest to be protected and enhanced for the stability and well-being of present and future generations*. **Stability and well-being for future generations are also the founding elements of the sciences that guide forest management** and, in fact, the programming and planning of forest management interventions are listed among the tools for *ensuring the protection of forests in terms of their extent, distribution, geographical distribution and ecological and bio-cultural diversity* (Article 2, paragraph 1, letter a).

The National Forestry Strategy also identifies, as the first operational action to be implemented, the development of forestry programming and planning divided into the three territorial levels provided for by the TUFF:

- integrated, multidisciplinary and interterritorial **forestry programming** (regional

level), which the European Union Forestry Strategy defines as a priority for the allocation of EU structural funds;

- large-scale, integrated, multidisciplinary and **inter-territorial forestry planning** (provincial or district level), which makes it possible to strengthen the local forestry supply chain by identifying the range of multifunctional services offered by the forest to the population and the priorities for the development of local and interterritorial infrastructure and supply chains;
- **forestry planning for public, private and collective properties** in line with the principles and criteria of Sustainable Forest Management (company and supra-company level).

The current regulatory framework governing forestry programming and planning in Liguria – consisting of regional regulations on forests and the environment, the Regional Forestry Programme and specific provisions for third-level spatial planning – helps to guide and implement forestry management activities at regional and company level in accordance with the TUFF and the National Forestry Strategy. The Territorial Forest Plans, which are fundamental documents for the development of locally managed supply chains, will also be integrated into the regional regulatory framework in the near future.



STRENGTH

High potential added value for regional development in the areas of tourism, crafts, gastronomy, disaster prevention and nature conservation, trade and wood processing.



WEAKNESS

High volatility in the trade of wood assortments compared to production cycles. The sustainability of investments will have to find stability and compensation in the enhancement of the multifunctionality of forests.



PRIORITY ACTION

Greater involvement of forest owners in long-term forestry planning that goes beyond individual management plans, coordinating with all levels of planning and programming.



KEY FACT AT A GLANCE

PROGRAMMING AND PLANNING IN LIGURIA



65 MANAGEMENT PLANS or equivalent tools active



Approximately **24.000 HECTARES** of planned forest area



6% of total forest area is **PLANNED**

MANAGEMENT PLANS AND EQUIVALENT TOOLS

By 2024, **23.786 hectares** are planned in Liguria, for which a Management Plan or equivalent instrument is in place.



Compared to 2015 (INFC data), the area covered by planning has increased from 3.5% to 6%.



TERRITORIAL FOREST PLANS

In 2024, Liguria began **revising its Regional Forestry Programme**, accompanied by the Regional Council's commitment, expressed in 2025, to implement at least **one Territorial Forest Plans (PFIT)** for each province. Two experimental PFITs have been drawn up in Liguria, without operational force.



RESULTS ACHIEVED WITH EAFRD FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR THE FORESTRY SECTOR

The Liguria Region has provided substantial support for the enhancement of forest heritage through measure 8 of the 2014-2022 Rural Development Programme.



Sub-measure 8.3

Actions to prevent damage to forests from fires and natural disasters



Sub-measure 8.4

Actions to restore forests damaged by fires and natural disasters



Sub-measure 8.5

Actions to mitigate forest damage and increase environmental value



Sub-measure 8.6

Investments in forestry technologies

19.046.381 €

23.270.508 €

2.925.898 €

45.242.787 €

FOREST MANAGEMENT

The section dedicated to forest management starts with **data on forest use**, with the areas subject to felling notifications received by the Agricultural Inspectorate Sector showing a decrease from over 660 to approximately 580 hectares. The data are not exhaustive, as current legislation in Liguria does not require reporting for coppice cutting, for which, however, many operators have voluntarily submitted information, reflecting growing awareness of the traceability of the forestry supply chain.

As regards **timber harvesting**, in the absence of a dedicated data collection system, only estimates are available: just 0.3% of biomass is used, equal to 13-15% of the annual increment, confirming a general underutilisation of wood resources. Data on the **road network**, which are of fundamental importance for the cost-effectiveness of interventions and the protection of forest resources, show that significant interventions have been carried out with the contribution of measure 8.3 of the RDP for over €1.2 million, aimed at preventing forest fires. With regard to **training**, a strategic lever for active, sustainable and professional management, Liguria has defined standards and pathways that have led to the accreditation of around 380 operators. **Forest certification** has also shown growth: since 2022, a total of over

6,182 hectares of forest area have been certified in Liguria according to the PEFC and FSC schemes. With chain of custody certification, there has been a particular increase in the "Paper and cardboard" sector.

Given the underutilisation of wood resources, **other functions of the forest** are becoming increasingly important: this is evidenced by the REL (Ligurian Hiking Network), which now includes over 5,400 kilometres of trails and has received substantial RDP funding for the creation, adaptation or restoration of trails and other infrastructure for public use. **Non-wood forest products** are attracting increasing interest: the 34 consortia dedicated to mushroom harvesting almost doubled their revenues between 2022 and 2023, and 53 new mycologists were registered in the national register. Truffle cultivation is also growing, albeit in limited areas: Regional Law No. 2/2022 established the Experimental Centre for Truffle Cultivation to protect truffle heritage and natural environments.

The overall picture shows that forest management is evolving, with positive signs but also critical issues related to the potential of wood resources to be exploited.



STRENGTH

Greater professionalisation of the sector

Training, qualification and modernisation of forestry companies have increased efficiency and safety; certification and traceability guarantee the sustainability and competitiveness of the supply chain.



WEAKNESS

Underutilisation of wood resources

Wood resources are still underutilised, in terms of the various assortments and by-products that can be obtained, due to fragmented supply chains, complex logistics and uneven management across the territory, with large areas underutilised.



PRIORITY ACTION

Regulatory update and forestry information system

An updated regional regulatory framework and an integrated information system that collects technical and economic data to guide planning and development are needed. At the same time, strengthening the regional support system for the forestry sector can improve the effectiveness of policies and services.

KEY FACT AT A GLANCE

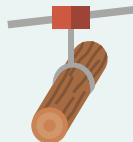
FOREST MANAGEMENT IN LIGURIA



380 FOREST OPERATORS TRAINED
from 2013 to 2024



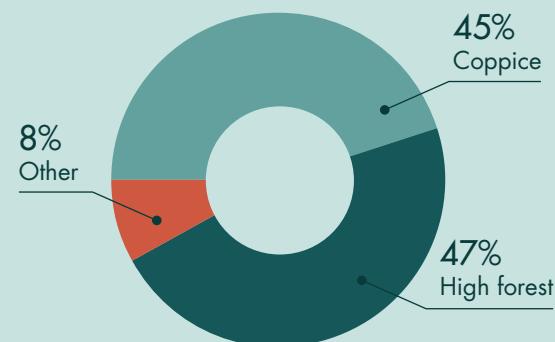
In 2023, there were **23 FORESTRY COMPANIES LISTED** in the Regional Register



10 CABLE YARDING SYSTEMS in 2024 (more than double the number in 2022) with an average length of 310 metres

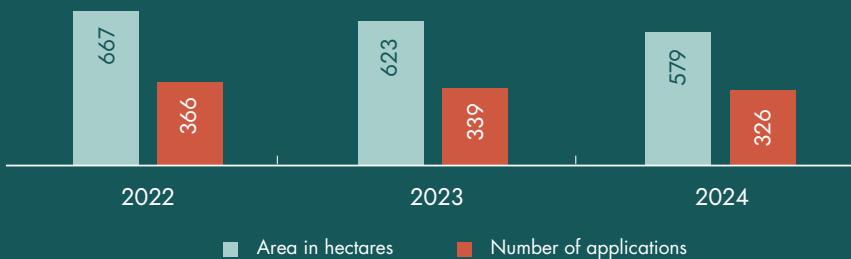
FOREST SILVICULTURAL SYSTEMS IN LIGURIA

Harvesting in high forests has decreased significantly, while notifications related to coppices have increased. This does not necessarily indicate an actual increase in the number of cuts, but rather **greater attention by operators to the traceability of timber**.



FELLING APPLICATIONS 2022-2024

In Liguria, there is no obligation for felling notification in simple coppice forests, which makes the data on utilisation derived from the number of applications less comprehensive. However, **in recent years, many have chosen to submit notifications voluntarily in order to ensure the traceability of timber**.



CERTIFIED FOREST AREA AND CHAIN OF CUSTODY

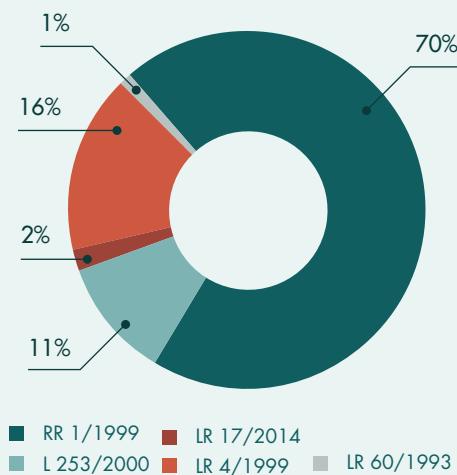
The number of certified forests in Liguria is small but **growing**, with a **higher concentration in the province of Savona**.



VIOLATIONS OF FOREST LAWS



Regulations violated between 2022 and 2024



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

The protection and conservation of Liguria's wooded areas, which are particularly interesting from a territorial, environmental and geomorphological point of view, are implemented through management methods that must take into account the continuous evolution of the natural elements that compose them. The function of the indicators is precisely to provide homogeneous data distributed over time, such as to allow an interpretation of the processes under examination and provide guidance on the management policies to be undertaken.

This thematic area refers in particular to the **environmental and cultural functions that we attribute to forests, i.e. those functions of collective utility which, however, in the Ligurian forests, are provided by areas that are more than 80% privately owned.** There is therefore a clear need to impose the restrictions highlighted in some of the indicators considered, which are designed to protect public functions, but it is also necessary to take into account the factual and operational reality in order to avoid the risk of limiting adequate management that guarantees active protection of the asset, resulting in demotivated disinterest and the consequent abandonment of the territory.

In analysing the various types of forests subject

to protection or environmental restrictions, data is collected on wooded areas that fall within the areas identified under the European "Habitats" and "Birds" Directives, with a focus on priority "forest habitats", and in the protected areas referred to in Law 394/91. In addition to environmental value, landscape and cultural value is also analysed, where data relating to "Forests subject to protection pursuant to Article 136 of Legislative Decree No. 42/2004" are evaluated. These forests are located in areas of considerable public interest with, for example, natural beauty, geological uniqueness, historical significance or scenic beauty.

Another fundamental issue is that of disturbances, with data on **forest fires** – number of events, areas affected – and various types of **diseases** affecting tree species, with analysis of the repercussions that such events may have on land management. Attention is also paid to wooded areas located within particular zones affected by **landslides** of varying magnitude and danger.

A vision that, on the one hand, **recognises and quantifies the important values expressed by Ligurian forests, but on the other hand highlights their fragility;** once again, these are decisive factors in planning and monitoring activities.



STRENGTH

High diversity of environments and habitats within a limited territorial area.



WEAKNESS

Tendency towards expansion of forest areas with consequent reduction in open areas or other ecosystems.



PRIORITY ACTION

Define and implement policies to promote the restoration of open areas through pastoral activities, as well as increase the structural and specific diversity of forests to make them less vulnerable to disturbances.

KEY FACT AT A GLANCE

PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION IN THE FOREST OF LIGURIA



Over 130.000 HECTARES OF WOODLAND located in environmentally protected areas



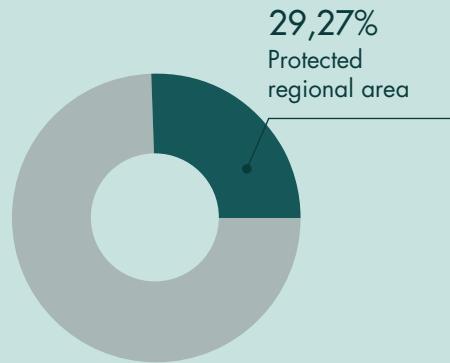
82% OF PROTECTED AREAS are represented by forest areas



133 SITES including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

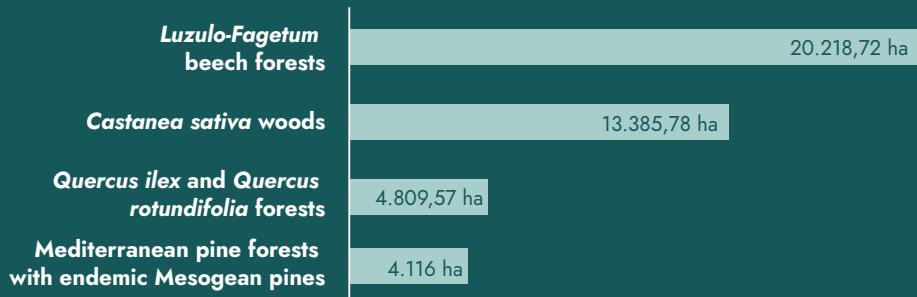
FORESTS UNDER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

According to 2024 data, 32% of Liguria's forest area is under environmental protection, and nearly 30% of the region's territory benefits from some form of protected status.



PRIORITY FOREST HABITATS

Over 45.000 hectares of Ligurian forest are included in the forest habitats of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. Of the 49 forest habitats classified in Italy, 19 are also found in Liguria. The most extensive are listed below:



MONUMENTAL TREES

There are 145 monumental trees in Liguria, listed in the regional register.



34 more than in 2020



67 are located in urban areas



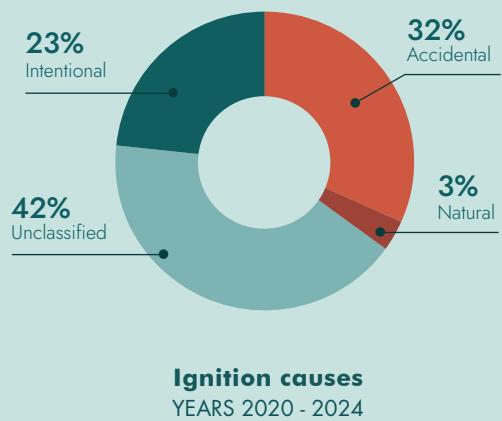
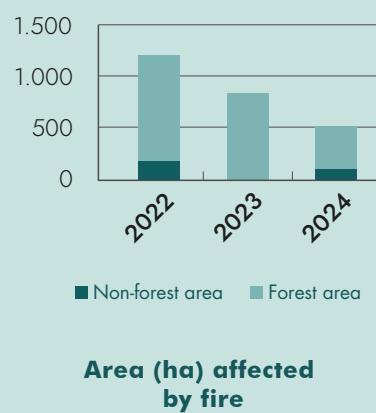
37 are gymnosperms



107 are angiosperms

FOREST FIRES

During 2024, the total number of wildfires was 79, with a total area of 493 hectares affected by the fires. Both of these values have declined over the last three years.



BIOECONOMY

The economy based on natural resources found in agro-silvo-pastoral systems is mainly represented by forestry activities carried out by **forestry companies**, which, in the three-year period under review, have undergone significant growth, resulting in an increase in the **number of employees**. There is greater interest in forestry activities, but in numerical terms, this is still far from the national trend: the **economic added value** of the wood supply chain compared to the regional one is still limited, as it stands at less than 0.5%, compared to the national figure of 1.24%.

The terrain and population decline in Liguria, especially in inland areas where the economic fabric is particularly fragile, do not favour the implementation of added value which, if well organised and economically supported, could be a driver of development.

Certainly, in recent years, public incentives have implemented project proposals, but institutional technical staff has been reduced to a minimum, forcing reliance on freelance professionals. The continuous decline in qualified professionals, primarily **forestry engineers**, also recorded in the three-year period under review, would require action to reverse the trend through awareness campaigns in schools.

The bioeconomy also encompasses all activities that go beyond forestry practices but are carried out in the forest, such as **hunting and fishing**. Hunting, in particular, was affected in the quarter under review by the arrival of African swine fever in Liguria. The imposition of eradication measures, with restrictions on both pedestrian and vehicular access to the wooded areas affected by the infection, effectively limited hunting.



STRENGTH

The forest areas of Liguria have considerable and diverse potential in terms of available resources, and could therefore form the basis for fully sustainable economic development, capable of guaranteeing employment while at the same time pursuing greater territorial protection.



WEAKNESS

Difficulties in bringing together the various territorial potentials to ensure sufficient added value to business activities, partly due to uncoordinated planning and a lack of public figures who can support start-up and development processes.



PRIORITY ACTION

Ensure enhanced institutional oversight at the local level to align territorial needs with their effective implementation, ensuring regulatory compliance and the efficient use of available support instruments.

KEY FACT AT A GLANCE

BIOECONOMY IN LIGURIA



227 FORESTRY COMPANIES che engaged in silvicultural activities and the use of forest areas



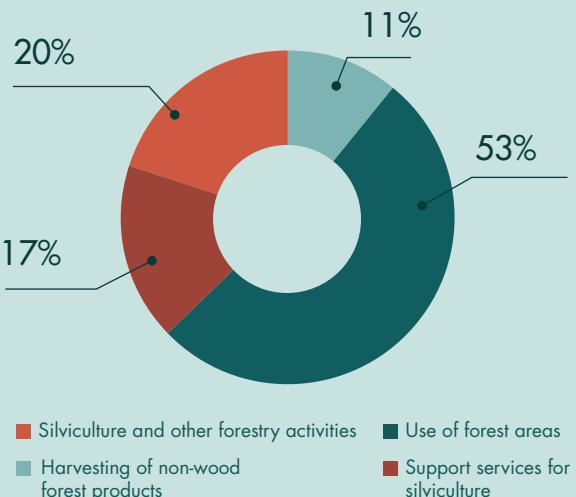
1,465 COMPANIES IN THE WOOD INDUSTRY registered with the Chamber of Commerce



139.000 euro is the total **ADDED VALUE** of the Ligurian timber industry

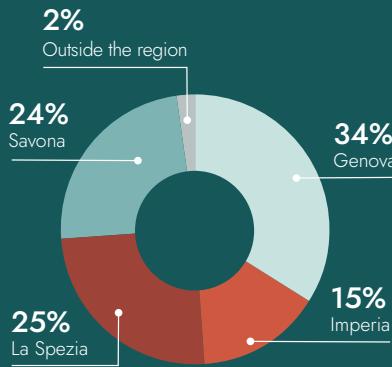
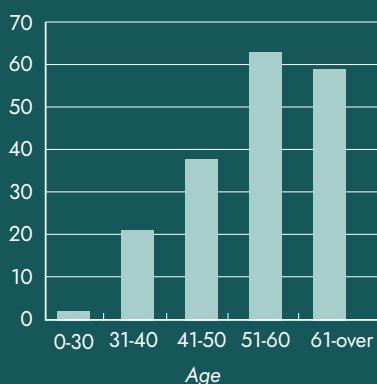
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

Based on ISTAT data updated to 2022, there are **356 employees working in active forestry-sector companies in Liguria**, distributed among the various ATECO codes as shown in the chart.



CHARTERED AGRONOMISTS AND FORESTERS

There are a total of 186 members registered with the Regional Order of Chartered Agronomists and Foresters of Liguria. The two graphs below show the distribution by age group and the provinces in which the activity is mainly carried out.



INNER AREAS AND FORESTS

In Liguria, the SNAI (National Strategy for Inner Areas) identifies 8 inner areas with a population of around 120.000 people. In these areas, the **forest cover index reaches values even higher than the regional average**, with peaks of up to 90%, as in the case of the Val Bormida.



UNGULATES AND SELECTIVE HUNTING

Populations of fallow deer, roe deer, chamois, and wild boar are monitored in Liguria, and their numbers are regulated through selective hunting. The following are the estimated population figures, updated to 2024.



2.536
FALLOW DEER



30.752
ROE DEER

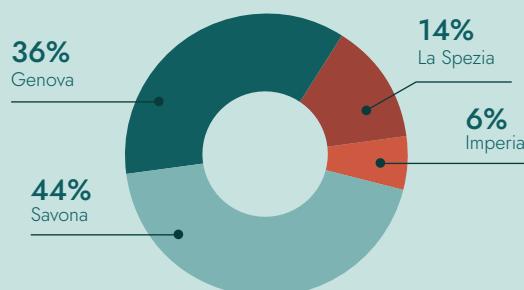


577
CHAMOIS

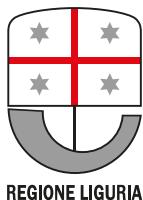


30.000 - 56.000
WILD BOAR

The high number of wild animals in Liguria, combined with the progressive expansion of the interface between urban and forested areas, has led over the years to an increase in wildlife-related road accidents. Peaks of **239 accidents** were recorded in 2019, with **173 reported in 2024**.



RaFF LIGURIA 2025
State of Forests and the Forestry sector in Liguria



REGIONE LIGURIA

RaFF Liguria is a product developed by Compagnia delle Foreste S.r.l. on behalf of the Liguria Region - Department of Nature and Internal Areas, Protected Areas and Marine Areas, Parks and Biodiversity, financed by the fund for the implementation of the National Forestry Strategy.

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