

Addressing root causes of forest fires

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In a new video, the European Forest Institute (EFI) looks at the key factors of increased forest fire risk in the Mediterranean region and advocates for a new vision based on shifting the focus from reactive fire suppression to long-term proactive fire prevention and forest management at the landscape scale.

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Each summer, forest fires are reported from global fire-prone areas, a trend that has continued this year with tragic news from Portugal, France and the U.S., among others, and more are expected. It is urgent to combat the fires and provide help to local communities, but once the crisis is past, policymakers need to put forward science-informed policies to address the root causes of forest fires.

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Four key factors explain this: (i) the expansion of forests as a result of rural abandonment; (ii) the increase in fuel loads due to lack of forest management; (iii) the high number of fire ignitions due to socio-economic and land use-related factors; and (iv) climate change and increasing weather risk conditions.

In the past, the focus has been on fire suppression rather than on long-term strategies for fire prevention. A new vision is required to shift the focus from fire suppression to fire prevention and forest management—managing forests to be more resilient to climate change and addressing the socio-economic and land-use conflicts responsible for the high number of [fire](#) ignitions.

Developing the bioeconomy can help to ensure the economic

sustainability of the new approach. The bioeconomy offers new economic opportunities to develop forest value chains around bioenergy, engineered wood products for sustainable construction, biomaterials based on cork and resin, or edible forest products. Developing a Mediterranean bioeconomy can provide the incentives and investments needed for forest owners to address the risk of [forest fires](#), while managing and enhancing the resilience of [forest](#) landscapes and ensuring the provision of key ecosystem services, thus reducing the risk of catastrophic fires.

Provided by European Forest Institute

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