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# Forest plantations: the views of local stakeholders, users and residents

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## Résumé

Forest plantations are particularly encouraged in the current context of accelerating climate change and, consequently, their area increases, especially fast-growing ones. However, they also raise environmental and landscape issues, and are at the heart of controversy. What arguments are put forward by stakeholders in the forest-wood sector and by other local stakeholders? And what do users and local residents really think? As part of the Plantaclim project (financed by the Centre-Val de Loire region and led by UMR CITERES, 2021-2024), we studied the way in which people view the maritime pine and poplar plantations in the Centre-Val de Loire region.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders of the entire forest-wood sector, from tree planting to wood processing: 2 nurserymen, 12 forest owners, 1 forester, 1 forestry expert, 1 manager (national office of forest: ONF), 2 representatives of the interprofession (FiBois Centre-Val de Loire), 2 harvesters and 5 processors; regular exchanges were also held with representatives of ONF, CNPF (National Center for Forest Ownership), a poplar association (Peupliers du Centre-Val de Loire), which are project partners like FiBois Centre-Val de Loire. Similar exchanges also took place with representatives of the regional nature park and a nature protection association, also partners in the project. The representatives of this association were also interviewed, in a semi-directive way, as were an elected official and a representative of the Val de Loire Mission (working to maintain the Loire Unesco). At the same time, 19 users were interviewed, most of them *in situ*, during hikes, as well as 23 local residents met at their homes, within the 6 project study sites.

The stakeholders of the forest-wood sector are seizing the opportunity presented by new societal concerns, and are highlighting the benefits of plantations in terms of climate change mitigation: between sequestration, storage and avoidance, through a renewable and local resource. In contrast, other stakeholders point to the limitations of monospecific plantations,

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in terms of biodiversity and/or landscape. However, a compromise can be found (as shown in the documentary we produced).

As far as hikers are concerned, some are strongly opposed to the plantations, but they are in the minority and most appear rather indifferent, even if the rectilinear character is not appreciated. The same idea is found among local residents, who also prefer more spontaneous forests. However, they also relativize and defend the economic benefits of plantations (especially if local), and possibly their ecological virtues; their presence is then preferred to areas left without trees, after logging. Forest plantations: the views of local stakeholders, users and residents

**Mots-Clés:** Forest plantations, representations, stakeholders, hikers, inhabitants