

# THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN FOREST OWNERS AND THE SUCCESS OF FINANCIAL PROGRAMS

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## ABSTRACT

An important share of the forested area is privately owned in Europe. Therefore, private owners need to be involved to meet the economic, ecological, recreational and societal objectives of national and international forest programmes. Instruments used to involve private owners in these programmes are categorized as carrots, sticks and sermons, meaning financial, legal and educational instruments. In Flanders, the northern region of Belgium, the regional government uses subsidies as a financial instrument to motivate private owners to participate in various forest programmes such as reforestation, afforestation, natural regeneration and public accessibility. The appliance for subsidies was analysed by personal interviews with 405 private forest owners. An empirical typology of private forest owners was created based on the motivation of the ownership and the expectations of the owner towards his or her property. The typology was extended with meta-information of the owner.

In general, appliance for subsidies is very low in Flanders. Only 2600 applications for subsidies were granted by the Forest Service during the period 1991-1999. Forest owners most often applied for grants for reforestation and afforestation. Yearly 200 - 250 owners used this subsidy. Grants for forest accessibility and natural regeneration were rarely used having less than 10 applications per year. The owners who use subsidies own their forest mainly for their personal recreation. These owners are well informed and highly educated. They maintain frequent contacts with the Forest Service and other forest organisations. Probably because of the frequent communication with the forest service, the owners are well satisfied with the forest policy of the regional government. In contrast, owners who are not interested in subsidies see forests as an investment. Probably because of the low profits of forest ownership in Flanders these owners became indifferent toward forest management and are even prepared to transfer the management of the property to the government. It can be concluded that only a small and well-defined group of owners is interested in financial support from the government, in relation to their objectives.

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