

Unit 2. Forest and climate crisis

The forest wildfires are here.



Source: La voz de Galicia

Description

Forest wildfires in Galicia can be considered a systemic risk, characterized by showing high complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity, as well as by its potential to produce important social, economic and environmental effects. To this should be added other characteristics such as persistence over time and the ability to in turn trigger other risks, the so-called "cascade effect".

Fire is much more than a source of risk; it is a physical and ecological phenomenon as well as a social and cultural one. In Galicia, fire, with all its variants, was used for decades in rural areas, linked to agriculture and grazing. Fire also fulfills an ecological role, not understood by urban society, which also does not accept the consequences that derive from it. This ambiguous relationship of many cultures with fire, on a landscape scale, translates into political tensions between groups that have conflicting fire management models. In addition, different scientific investigations have contributed to giving a negative vision of fire, being more focused on emphasizing its negative effects than offering a more holistic and balanced perspective. All of this contributed to favoring the widespread catastrophic perception of the fire, also fostered by most of the media. In fact, the recognition of the dual nature of fire, capable of generating both benefits and harm, is a key point in the change of mentality necessary to adapt to the change in fire regimes caused by global change.

Galicia is immersed in a process of global change. To the challenges produced by an accelerated course of socioeconomic changes, particularly in rural areas, we must add the effects of climate change. Both types of changes occur at the same time and affect the problem of forest fires. Galician society remains attentive to the impact caused by dramatic episodes of recent fires, such as the wave of fires in October 2017, which left a notable collective perception of vulnerability to these events and deep concern about the possibility of their repetition. In any case, this vision of fire does not seem to promote in society the recognition that it itself contributed to the risk. Wildfires are more than 95%

caused by humans. In reality, society has developed patterns of behavior that translate into continuous increases in the quantity and continuity of accumulated fuel, not in the management of rural space, land use conflicts between rural actors and tensions derived from opposing visions of the forest. in the urban and rural population. among others. They also contributed to extensive reforestation policies for years, without the necessary forestry work, disorderly planting of forest species without cultural care, by many owners, abandonment of agricultural and forest areas, later invaded by bushes and woods.

Our protected spaces are not really protected because they are vulnerable to this new wildfire regime. Trees do not burn if there is no fuel on the surface. Global change implies large forest extensions with high scrub biomass that are increasingly available to burn due to the greater demand for water by plants, in increasingly complex scenarios of heat waves and atmospheric instability as a consequence of climate change. Society has to address the structural causes of the fires, provide socioeconomic solutions while conserving the natural heritage and forestry policies that favor business activity with a determined and courageous public commitment to investment (which I do not spend), supporting and channeling the opportunities they offer European funds, so that rural and urban society feel that they are rowing in the same direction.

Goals

The objective is to Invest in sustainable forest management, which will give ecosystems and people an opportunity to be resilient to this new regime of increasingly wildfires and, at the same time, reduce their severity.

Activities

- Forest management.
- Fight the wild fires

Impact

The combination of the effects of climate change and land use results in changes in the frequency, severity, recurrence, intensity, size, and type of wildfire. The lower private management and public policies in which it was believed that the abandonment of the extensive would benefit conservation, are paradoxically generating an increase in the size, speed and intensity of wildfires.

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