

Challenging the market uptake of European Walnut in Europe

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The importance of wood as a resource grows rapidly in the context of an economic transition towards circular economy. In technical terms, it is a renewable material which can store CO₂. From a wider point of view, wood is part of the natural and traditional landscape as well as a source for richness and employment at rural areas.

Despite of the positive impact of forests, the market promotes fast growing species and intensive forest management models. Those choices lead to a cost-effective supply of biomass entering into the market, but they also conditioned the regression of traditional species which are part of the traditional landscape. One of those species is European Walnut (*Juglans regia* L.), which suffered a significant regression in the last decades.

Fighting against market rules is a worthless effort in our globalized world. For this reason, the market uptake is an unescapable challenge for all European companies, and especially for the European SMEs. Scientists, researchers, and technicians can contribute to that challenge by enabling improved productive processes, as knowledge and technology and the key factors for competitiveness in Europe.

This special issue summarizes up to three years of research and development focusing on walnut trees for wood production in Europe. The efforts have been performed within the contest of the Project "WOODnat: Second generation of planted hardwood forests in the EU". This is an Innovation Action which has been granted by the European Union in the framework of H2020 Programme, making possible to develop innovative experiments and trials.

By means of this publication, the Partners of the Consortium are happy to present their results to the community. The work performed includes a wide spectrum of researches: from genetics of walnut

plants to large format digital printing; from innovative forestry models to growing edible fungi.

The breadth of these studies is appealing by itself for any curious lector, but most of all, it shows how many innovative approaches can be adopted for improving the performance of the European forests in a globalized and competitive world.

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