Forest cooperative societies: land consolidation of jointly owned community forests in NRW, Germany

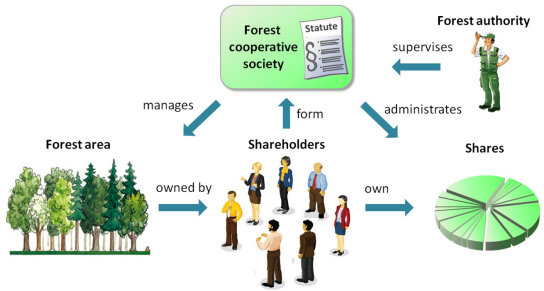


Figure 1 *Legal status of the FCS according to the NRW GWG (adapted from Ewers 2015)*

Forest land consolidations can enhance the land ownership structure of small-scale private forests and reactivate the forest use.

A forest cooperative society (FCS, in German Waldgenossenschaft) is a type of joint private forest ownership, which is generally termed community forest. As such, it is not to be confused with communal forest, which is forest owned by a commune or a town. Community forests have existed in Europe already for centuries in manifold traditional forms and have survived in many regions until today. The main characteristic of community forest compared to other forms of forest ownership is that the owners do not own a particular land parcel of a forest area, but an ideal share of the whole cooperative property, which can be understood as a share of a stock market (Figure 1).

Based on the unique legal framework of the Community Forest Act GWG of NRW, this special land consolidation achieves a legal merger of community forests and private owners into a larger forest cooperative society (Waldgenossenschaft) for the purpose of improving the conditions for forest management and administration, which goes beyond the readjustment of land parcels per single landowner. The degree of the merger and the benefits for collaborative SFM are thus enhanced compared to conventional land consolidations. Various supporting measures, such as road constructions, silvicultural improvements or landscape interventions are included to generate additional sustainable impacts in the region.

In the federal state North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), community forests are an important forest ownership type. The original community forests were based on century-old laws, which were all unified and redefined as forest cooperative societies (FCS) in the Community Forest Act (Gemeinschaftswaldgesetz, GWG) of 1975. Today there exist 270 FCS with circa 42,000 ha and an estimated 17,500 forest owners as shareholders. A specific aspect of the NRW GWG is that it permits a special procedure, based partly on the land consolidation act, to merge several FCS into a new, larger FCS to improve the conditions for forestry and administration. The specificity is that not only a readjustment of land property, but also a merger of ownership is achieved in one procedure. Such a combined procedure can enhance the degree and effect of the FLC even more compared to a conventional consolidation, which essentially reduces only the number of land parcels, but not the number of landowners.

MORE DETAILS

CHALLENGE ADDRESSED

3.- Activate private owners and cooperative forest management

DOMAIN

Ownership, cooperation

Forest management, ecosystem, resilience

TYPE OF SOLUTION

Land reform

KEYWORDS

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DIGITAL SOLUTION

No

INNOVATION

Yes

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Germany

SCALE OF APPLICATION

Local

START AND END YEAR

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CONTACT DATA

OWNER OR AUTHOR

BRA - Bezirksregierung Arnsberg Dezernat 33 - Ländliche Entwicklung und Bodenordnung

Andreas Peter

andreas.peter@bezreg-arnsberg.nrw.de

www.bra.nrw.de/308240

REPORTER

InnovaWood asbl

Uwe Kies

uwe.kies@innovawood.eu

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

MAIN WEBSITE

http://bit.ly/kies2017

PROJECT WEBSITE

http://simwood.efi.int

PROJECT REFERENCE

SIMWOOD - FP7 grant 613762, 2013-2017

RESOURCES

NRW pilot project report

LOGO OF BEST PRACTICE

LOGO OF MAIN ORGANIZATION

PROJECT UNDER WHICH THIS FACTSHEET HAS BEEN CREATED

Rosewood 4.0

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