

News from



FIRE-RES



Dear reader,

Welcome to the fourth edition of our [newsletter](#) on **extreme wildfires** and the integrated approach promoted by the [Fire-Res](#) project to tackle these unpredictable and uncontrollable events.

That **summer 2025 would be marked by fire** was already clear in June, when a thick haze settled over large parts of Europe. It wasn't local smoke, but particles carried across the Atlantic from the [massive wildfires burning in Canada](#) — lifted by the intense convective columns typical of extreme fire events and transported thousands of kilometres by upper-atmosphere winds. For Europe, it was only a forewarning.

In the following weeks, an exceptional heatwave — intensified by climate change — took hold of the continent, fuelling severe wildfires that displaced people, destroyed forests, and claimed lives. According to [EFFIS](#) (the European Forest Fire Information System), **almost 200,000 hectares of land had already burned by July 1st — 150% more than at the same time last year**. Meanwhile, the number of large wildfires (over 30 hectares) rose by around 50%, confirming that the most destructive fires are the ones increasing fastest.

What these figures make clear is that [fire suppression alone is not enough](#). A new strategy is needed — one that invests in [resilient, healthy forests and recognises fire as a powerful ecological force](#) that we must understand, and learn to live with. **Building fire-resilient landscapes means involving the people who live and work in these areas**. Without their

participation, rural territories risk abandonment, losing biodiversity, knowledge, and value — and becoming even more vulnerable to fire. But when land is managed with risk in mind, it can help slow, shape, and even tame fire, creating space for sustainability and diversity to thrive.

In this issue, we look at real solutions on the ground: shepherds whose grazing reduces flammable material, winemakers planting fire-resistant crops, forest managers creating patchworks that break fire paths. **These actors deserve recognition and support.** We explore policies and incentive schemes — from subsidies to quality labels — that can help ensure local communities are empowered to shape their future and build truly fire-resilient territories.

Enjoy the read!



From ethical brands to targeted grazing: “fireproof” landscapes involve communities

Even if they escape control, extreme wildfires — like all fires — are largely driven by human activity, or by the absence of it. Depopulation, the expansion of urban-forest interfaces, and the decline of land stewardship are key factors that contribute to growing wildfire risk.

Building resilient landscapes requires the active involvement of society — not only through rules and regulations, but by engaging local communities in decision-making and addressing their social and economic realities. From subsidies to sustainability labels, from insurance schemes to community-based landscape planning, the tools are as varied as the regions facing this challenge — from countries long familiar with the threat of extreme wildfires to those only beginning to experience it.

What they all share is a common principle: resilience to fire goes hand in hand with resilient, empowered communities.

[Read the full article](#)



“Wine producers are precious allies for fire-proof landscapes”

Soazig Darnay is a landscape architect, expert in rural landscape management (natural, cultural, functional) and wine landscape. She makes part of CTFC team “Bioeconomy, Health and governance”. In FIRE RES she is responsible of IA 3.1 called “[Fire Wine](#), engaging wineries in maintaining fire-resilient territories through a label”

What exactly is the "Fire Wine" label and how does it fit into the strategy for preventing wildfires?

Fire Wine is a European-registered trademark that recognizes the good practices of producers located in strategic areas, offering them administrative support and facilitating access to funding. We're not only interested in the label itself that goes on the bottle — our goal is to build new relationships with local authorities and the territory. Moreover, the idea is not just to focus on the product but to reach the end consumer, for example by involving certain restaurants and sommeliers.

Why do vineyards play a special role in wildfire risk mitigation?

Vineyards require very little water and can survive with minimal rainfall — basically, like olive trees — in regions that are most at risk of extreme wildfires. Even if they're not the most productive, many traditional vineyards are cultivated in rugged, hard-to-reach areas where firefighting is particularly challenging. Compared to other crops, vineyard soil is heavily worked, which makes it function almost like a firebreak. In rural areas, they can become islands in a sea of fire. When located near inhabited areas, they create a kind of protective buffer zone.

Moreover, the wine sector is very structured and well-organized. This isn't a new discovery — the use of vineyards as fire barriers has historical roots, particularly in France since the 1990s.

Beyond fire prevention, what social and economic benefits does the "Fire Wine" label aim to promote for producers and local communities?

Just think about the issue of depopulation in agricultural areas. The winemakers who stay not only maintain the land but also care for the surrounding forests, which they often own. In this sense, they are a kind of unsung hero: they don't just produce grapes, they also provide a kind of “security service.” The project seeks to support them by fostering new relationships with local administrations and providing practical support.

How does "Fire Wine" adapt to different regional contexts?

Awareness of wildfire risk varies widely between countries. For instance, it's much higher in Portugal and Spain than in France and Italy, where fires are less frequent or on a smaller scale. The project acknowledges this diversity and aims to establish five-year contracts with producer associations or individual growers. These contracts are designed to help producers evolve their practices — even those who may not yet be adopting best practices but are located in strategically important areas. The project welcomes all types of producers, from small to large, from those making affordable wines to those producing high-quality ones — because they all matter.

What are the biggest challenges you're facing?

On one hand, bureaucracy: the trademark is officially registered, but we still can't sign contracts because the administrative process is complex. It's especially difficult to change land use — for example, turning a forest-classified area into agricultural land. Also, the sector is facing a deep crisis. In many cases, producers are considering switching crops altogether. With climate change, farming is becoming more and more difficult. There's

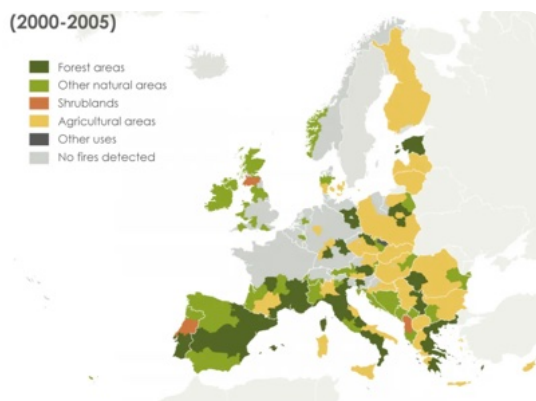
also a huge disconnect between urban society and farmers: city dwellers expect farmers to maintain the picturesque landscapes they dream of, but aren't willing to pay for these services. Fire Wine takes a step in this direction.

Can a concept like Fire Wine be applied to other crops as well?

Yes, many other agricultural products could fall under the category of “fire-products,” such as fruit, grains, cheeses, or meat — particularly where grazing reduces flammable vegetation. One example is another label born here in Catalonia, *Ramats de Foc*.

However, when it comes to expanding this model across regions affected by major wildfires, the crop most similar to the vine is the olive tree. There's still a lot of work to be done because, in the olive oil sector, designations of origin and branding aren't as important as they are for wine — but that's the next step.

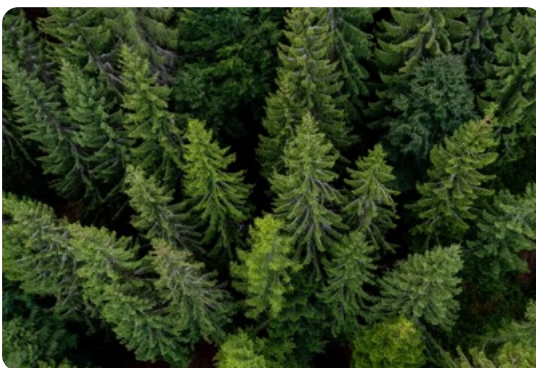
Our investigations



[Depopulation is changing the fire map of Europe](#)

Abel Gil – El Orden Mundial

The rural exodus and the climate crisis have transformed Europe's countryside, and with it the fires that affect the continent every summer.



[The price of climate change: EU countries splash out to fight forest fires](#)

Laszlo Arato – EUrologus

A new EU agricultural policy has brought a qualitative change in forest-fire protection. Governments will now spend twice as much as before on measures such as reforestation to reduce soil drying.



[Rural depopulation is playing a major role in causing fires in Romania](#)

Laura Popa – PressOne

the emptying of Romanian villages has unforeseen consequences. Where there is no more work, farmlands burn – taking with them forests and protected wildlife.



[Fires in Greece: if migrants become scapegoats](#)

Mary Drosopoulos - OBCT

The Greek region of Evros, devastated by fires last summer, is also the external border of the EU: there is a strong temptation to blame the fires on the migrants who cross it. Experts, however, point out the responsibilities of the Greek institutions

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