

What can we learn from

April 21st, 2021



Advances in marine forests restoration under the EU project AFRIMED and stakeholder involvement

The webinar brought together about 100 participants from 21 countries. The different talks, focused on the restoration of macroalgal forests dominated by *Cystoseira* s.l. in the Mediterranean Sea, allowed to present the scientific work done in the first 2 years of the Afrimed project, based on MERCES previous results. Also, the actions dedicated to engaging with stakeholders have been presented, together with a call to join the Business Club.

First, the pan-Mediterranean partnership of AFRIMED was presented along with the main objectives of the project: 1. mapping forest status, drivers of anthropogenic pressures and prioritization areas for their restoration at basin scale; 2. conducting lab and field experiments to optimize the success of restoration interventions and 3. involving relevant stakeholders to maximise the positive impact on the society and the local blue economy. Four talks were given to deepen these different aspects in more details including the international policy framework.

There are tens of *Cystoseira* s.l. species in the Mediterranean sea, from very shallow to about 50 m depths, along rocky shores. They have a very important ecological role in the ecosystem functioning, productivity and biodiversity hosting, thus providing a lot of ecosystem services.

The main points raised were the importance to know the biological and ecological characteristics of the species meant to be restored, the local pressures and impact, the methodology to be applied in each restoration intervention and the measures of success. Several case studies, history of successes and failures in the Mediterranean Sea have been presented together with the need for synergistic interactions to support the successful interventions. Identifying public-private partnerships, cross-sectoral collaborations and forms of participation in marine restoration governance arrangements, along with the development of innovative co-funding and crowdfunding of

marine ecosystem restoration are essential to accelerate investments in and promotion of marine coastal restoration.

The discussions were fruitful, with numerous comments and questions, and mostly focused on exchange of successful experiences of restoration cases from different ecosystems. The ethical issue of reintroducing extinct species from other regions has also been discussed, in particular in the light of climate change driven range shifts. The participants exchanged contacts in order to continue further building and consolidating the existing network of marine restoration stakeholders.

The webinar was concluded with the invitation to the stakeholders to compile the form elaborated in AFRIMED, on the expectation of results of macroalgal forests restoration (for more info and the survey: <http://afrimed-project.eu/>).



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