



ForestSAT 2010 - Operational tools in forestry using remote sensing techniques

From the 7th to 9th of September 2010, the ForestSat conference 2010 was held in the city of Lugo (Spain), focusing on “Operational tools in forestry using remote sensing techniques”, which allow for the improvement of land management in general and forest management in particular. This conference also provided a good opportunity for users to give feedback about their needs and requirements for the development of future remote sensing tools.

The specific objectives of the conference were to:

- Present the tools available for capturing forest information on a mass scale to forestry practitioners;
- Identify state-of-the-art forestry applications in remote sensing;
- Develop and improve the technological transfer methods between science and business users;
- Ensure that the scientific community, forest managers and developers communicate in the same language and share goals;
- Improve accessibility to information derived from new mapping techniques and the management of Spatial Data Infrastructures (SDIs).

Therefore, the presentations and sessions focused on improving the operational use of remote sensing and new technologies so that techniques for capture, analysis and presentation of information are faster, cheaper and more precise, thereby improving their accessibility for different types of users. All presentations will be published on the web-page of ForestSat2010 (<http://forestsat2010.usc.es/>)

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GMES Forest User Session

Stefanie Linser, EAA, Núria Blanes and Alejandro Simon, ETC-LUSI, Jo Van Brusselen and Tim Green, EFI

A dedicated session on the experiences of GMES Forest Users was held on the first conference day, jointly organised by the User Executive Body (UEB) of the GMES Service Element Forest Monitoring (represented by the Environment Agency Austria and the European Forest Institute) and the GMES Land User Platform (represented by ETC-LUSI and the European Forest Institute). The main aim of this session was to raise awareness of the GMES programme and the respective roles/activities of the GMES Forest User Platforms. The session was split into two parts: (1) current GMES Forest user activities; and (2) two splinter sessions in which users and service providers discussed the experiences in GMES and other programmes, with the aim of trying to expand the user involvement in these programmes. The most important findings were presented in a ForestSAT plenary session.

Part 1 was comprised of presentations on:

1. User involvement in GSE Forest Monitoring;
2. Presentation of the main results and deliverables of the GMES Network of Users (GNU);
3. Current and future activities of the GMES Land User Platform organised by geoland2.



Figure 1. (left to right) Tim Green, Stefanie Linser, Núria Blanes, Jo Van Brusselen during the introduction to the GMES Forest User Session



Users sharing experiences

Stefanie Linser, EAA, Núria Blanes, ETC-LUSI

In a splinter session, the present users discussed their experiences and expectations in various EO related programmes. It should be noted that most of participating users did not have any experience with GMES. In brief that user community expressed the following:

With regard to the involvement in the definition of the products/services, the majority of users had a very close cooperation with their Service Providers with intense communication, and experienced an agile development in an iterative and flexible process.

There was broad agreement that users should be involved in the product validation, as with the validation the user justifies its budget to buy the service later.

The most critical user-activities for which financial resources are needed were ranked by the users as:

1. Validation against field data (time consuming and expensive work);
2. Training;
3. Engagement in user networks;
4. Exchange knowledge within the project but also outside to get new ideas (attending user forums, user days, EO related meetings, bilateral contacts).

The participating users saw a clear benefit of joining a larger group of EO users to improve user-driven standardization of requirements and methodology; however, participation in such a group depends on financial, organisational and time resources being available.

Service providers focusing on the users

Jo Van Brusselen and Tim Green, EFI, Alejandro Simon, ETC-LUSI

Service providers also discussed how they optimally see user involvement in their GMES or GMES-like projects. Service providers considered it crucial to involve users in all stages of service development and implementation. They recognized that more thematically focused applications address a more specific user base (ref. GMES Downstream vs. Core), meaning that the more specific a product is in theme and locality, the more specific the users will be. Initial service development is sometimes more technology driven and proves too difficult as an entry point for many users. One service provider suggested that users should be enabled to lead GMES projects through a steering committee (political, technical or steering on both issues) and not just “have the service providers or researchers do it their way”.

Active engagement of the users in the service development process requires a clear user mandate, iterative cooperation and integration of the providers’ and users’ work flows. The involvement of the users also depends on their technical background. Users with a different background will have different contributions in the service definition. Service providers considered training as an essential component of service implementation, for which funding organisations should establish serious funding capacity.

A last issue that was discussed with service providers was that of ensuring service sustainability - it was stated that a service that makes economic sense to the users will sell itself. This requires a clear cost model, which is often absent.

User involvement in GSE Forest Monitoring

Stefanie Linser, EAA, Jo Van Brusselen, EFI, Gernot Ramminger, GAF AG

In the plenary session of the ForestSAT conference S. Linser and J. Van Brusselen of the User Executive Body (UEB) presented how users are involved in GSE FM and how that affects the development of the service portfolio. The service portfolio has its foundations firmly in monitoring needs for environmental and forest policy. Further requirements to the services and products were iterated with real users in organisations with real operational needs. Service level agreements stipulate the bilateral agreement between service provider and user organisation. Users are trained in yearly cycles to use and interpret the service results and usually service utility and benefits are assessed in conjunction with the training. User feedback is then used in turn to improve the services as well as the service provider-user interaction, directly or through the User Executive Body (UEB). The UEB is a top-level representation of users in GSE FM, to share experiences and to give feedback to the GSE FM service network.

Note from editors

We hope that you find the articles in the newsletter interesting and informative. If you have ideas or materials for articles we would be happy to hear from you.

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