

The French Coopers Federation (Fédération des Tonneliers de France) confident about the Present and the Future of the Merrain Oak Resource

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The French Cooper Federation commissioned studies from the National Institute of Geographic and Forest Information (IGN) and the National Forests Office (ONF) into the current status of the merrain oak resource and its future perspectives.

The aim was to examine, evaluate, and obtain a realistic forecast of the current available volume of barrel-quality pedunculate oak and sessile oak, a prized raw material.

The IGN study covered 25 French departments in central, northern, and northeastern France that historically have an abundance of these species and are favorable for their production. According to the IGN, this standing timber resource currently totals roughly 15 million cubic meters, for the most part in Haute-Saône, Nièvre, Marne, and Allier, 54% in public forests and 46% in private forests. The study brought out two things :

- The volumes available are substantial ;
- they are decreasing in “hautes futaies” (special management of the forest with a high density of trees per acres) and increasing in “taillis sous futaies” (coppice forest with less density of trees per acres).

The ONF study focused on short - and medium- term supply perspectives from national forests.

It looked at 47 forests representing 260,000 hectares, including 160,000 hectares of oak forest, the vast majority sessile, located in two basins that are a traditional supply source for French cooperages : the Loire region and the inland oak forest.

- The ONF anticipates a stable offer for oak from “hautes futaies” ;
- and an increase one in oak from “taillis sous futaies” (coppice forests) in the next 10 to 15 years.

The French Coopers Federation is confident about these findings that confirm the availability of the French oak resource needed for the production of quality casks.

However, the drop in volume the IGN estimates could aggravate the pressure on prices that has been quite noticeable over the last two years.

The cooperage industry accounts for a surplus in the timber industry's trade balance and it currently represents the leading French oak market in value. 70% of supply (or roughly 265,000 cubic meters of logs annually) is sourced from public forests.

About the Fédération des Tonneliers de France:

The French Coopers Federation brings together 50 cooperages located in the leading wine regions of France. During the last fiscal year, they produced 532,990 units accounting for sales of 331.7 million euros. 67% of production was exported, mainly to the United States, Australia, Italy, and Spain. French cooperages continue to be a reference with a high quality of the raw material they are using combined with their expertise, evidenced through a combination of ancestral craft skills and highly innovative techniques.