Assessment of house vulnerability to wildfires in Portugal

M. Conceição Colaço, Hugo Matias, Francisco Castro Rego, Institute of Agronomy – CEABN, Portugal

The present research analyzed which variables influence the probability of a house to burn at the wildland urban interface in the sequence of wildfires. The case study focused on the wildfires in Portugal in 2003 when a very high number (2383) of buildings and households were burned. From the households burned (548), 23% were first residence, 39% second and seasonal residences and 19% were not used. In this study, 9 municipalities were visited and an observation grid was filled with data of 158 houses, 79 houses that were burned and a paired similar non-burned house (control). Using the statistic of Chi-Square the physical variables that were statistically significant to explain the probability of a house to burn were: land-use (houses surrounded by agricultural fields were less probable to burn); slope (houses in the slope or located less than 10 meters from the slope were more probable to burn); house characteristics (houses with a garage had a lower probability to burn).

BIOGRAPHY: Forest engineer, researcher at the Institute of Agronomy, center for applied ecology Baeta Neves, in the fields of Wildfire, Fire communication, fire social vulnerability. PhD student on the environmental education program working on fire risk perceptions.