June 18, 2018

**Cover letter**

To: Dr. Jacques TASSIN

Bois et Forêts des Tropiques

Dear Editor-in-chief,

Enclosed you will find a research paper entitled “**Litter and biomass traits of some dominant Moroccan understorey fuels in five fire-prone forest ecosystems**”, by S. Essaghi¹,²\*, M. Hachmi², M. Yessef¹, M. Dehhaoui¹, A. Sesbou², a joint contribution from (1) Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II BP 6202 Rabat-Instituts Rabat, Morocco and (2) Ecole Nationale Forestière d'Ingénieurs BP 511 Tabriquet 11015 Salé, Morocco, (\*) Corresponding author.

This work addresses the lack of data on the structural traits of plants, particularly the litter and fuel bed bulk density and fuel load per size class in five different geographical areas in Morocco. These traits have been of particular interest to us because they are considered as input variables in several fire behaviour prediction systems. Moreover, bulk density is a measure of fire spread rate, fire intensity and heat release, while litter depth and height to lowest branch are an expression of ignitability. The fine fuel content, on the other hand, gives an idea of the plant consumability. The shrubs have been targeted in this work because they provide vertical continuity of the fuel and are known for their high flammability. They are also one of the most dominant landscapes in the Mediterranean area. From a practical standpoint, the present work provides an easy and quick method for estimating the fine fuel content of a shrub using simple measurements of shrub size. This method is intended to help forest managers estimate the fire hazard associated with a shrub due to its fine fuel content. This is particularly interesting since it is our understanding that the fine fuel biomass ignites first and more quickly during a fire.

We are submitting a research paper, containing original and timely research results that has not been published previously (partly or in full) and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. Its publication is approved by all authors and by the responsible authorities where the work was carried out. We have chosen your journal as long as it aims to target southern populations and their development and we hope the paper fits your standards and it could be accepted for publication.

Sincerely yours

Salaheddine Essaghi

(s.essaghi@gmail.com)

List of potential expert reviewers with full contact information and e-mail addresses.

**Younes ABBAS**: Faculté Polydisciplinaire, USMS – Béni Mellal (Maroc). Email: abbayouns@gmail.com