

Influence of climate variability on radial growth of Oriental beech (*Fagus orientalis*) in the Colchic temperate forest

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Oriental beech (*Fagus orientalis*) is a dominant species of the wetter areas in the mountains that border the southern coast of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea in North Iran (Figure 1). In Turkey, it grows widely across the Black Sea region, from Demirköy (in west) to Hopa (in east), and locally in some Mediterranean parts of the country such as the Marmara region, Amanos Mountains, Adana-Pos forests, and Kahramanmaraş-Andrın (Yaltırık and Efe, 2000). The distribution of this species occupies a wide elevational gradient, from sea level up to 2100 m (Şanlı, 1978). Oriental beech covers almost 2 million ha of pure and mixed forest area, making it the fourth most abundant forest tree species in Turkey (OGM, 2015).

In this study, we identified the most important climate factors affecting radial growth of Oriental beech in a temperate mesic Colchic forest in the Artvin province, of Northeast of Turkey (Figure 2). We built a new Oriental beech tree-ring chronology at a lower elevation range for the species in Artvin province. We compared this new chronology which spans 319 years (1698-2016) with three previous beech tree-ring chronologies spanning over 450 years (Köse and Güner 2012; Martin-Benito et al. 2016; Martin-Benito et al.; in revision) (Table 1). Using response function analysis, we explored the relationships between tree-ring width and climate (temperature and precipitation) from previous October to current October (duration of the hydrological year). Understanding how an ecologically and economically important species responds to climate variability is key to anticipating potential changes in forest productivity under climate change.

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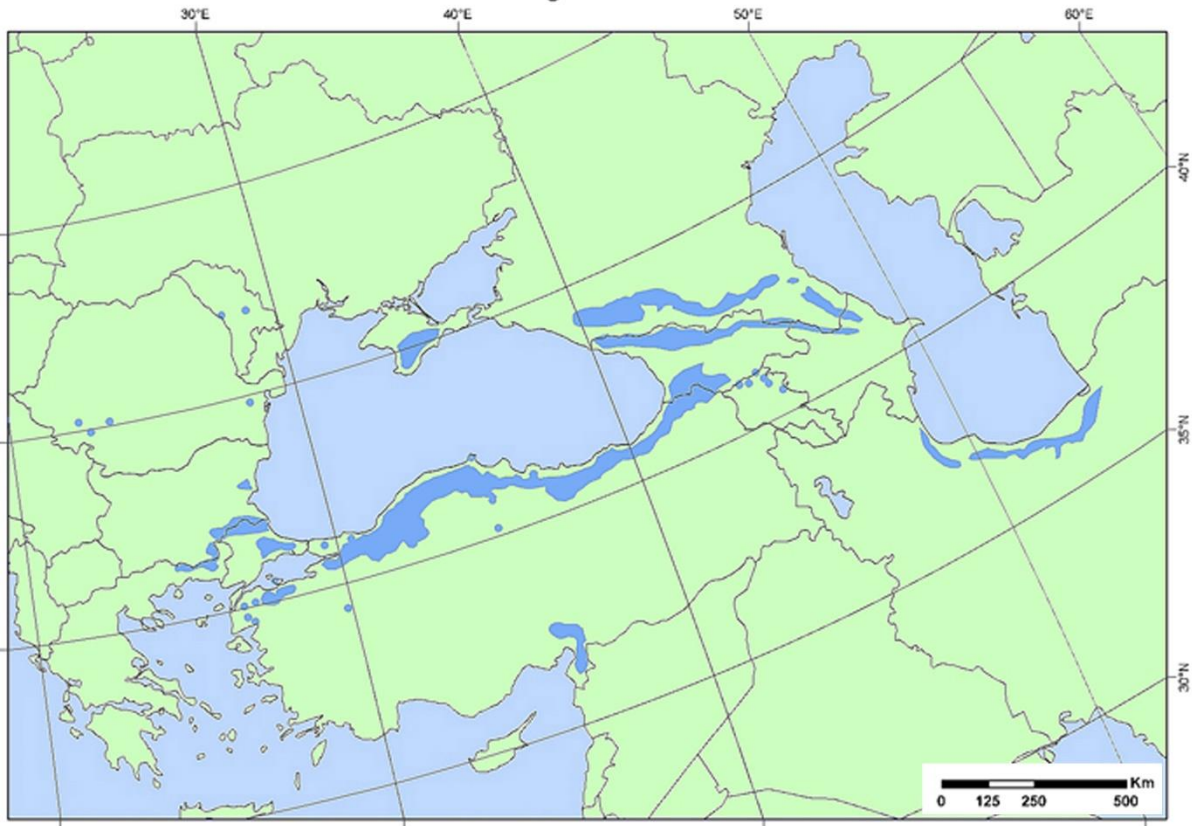


Figure 1: Distribution map of oriental beech (*Fagus orientalis*) EUFORGEN 2009. www.euforgen.org



Figure 2: Location of the study area.

Table 1. Site information and summary statistics for site chronologies.

Site name	Site code	Province	Species	No. of trees/cores	Time span	Elevation (m asl)	Latitude (N)	Longitude (E)
Karadag	KAR	Artvin	<i>Fagus orientalis</i>	19/34	1698 2016	785	41.37	41.59
Gorgit	GOR	Artvin	<i>Fagus orientalis</i>	13/23	1540 2013	1980	41.37	41.94
Kayabası Yaylası	KAF	Artvin	<i>Fagus orientalis</i>	11/20	1159 2008	1830-2120	41.3	41.9
Camili	QPS	Artvin	<i>Fagus orientalis</i>	18/26	1549 2013	1780	41.49	42.04